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**University of Southampton**

Faculty of Humanities

History

**Rock and Oak: A new naval history of Gibraltar, 1779-  
1830**

by

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Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2021



## Abstract

Gibraltar's historiography has traditionally placed great importance on its capability as a 'fortress'. Besieged fourteen times in its history, and visibly brimming with fortifications to modern observers, military terminology has consequently dominated approaches to its history. But as a territory almost entirely surrounded by water, the Royal Navy - Britain's traditional 'safeguard' - played an integral role in securing 'the Rock' as a British possession.

Intersecting the naval, Gibraltarian and imperial historiographical fields, this thesis aims to challenge the dominant conceptualisation of Gibraltar as an insular, strategic fortress dominated by its military garrison. Methodologically incorporating the new cultural and social approaches to naval history, employed by historians such as Timothy Jenks and Margarett Lincoln, it builds upon previous histories by engaging more closely with the lived experience of its inhabitants. Gibraltar's involvement in the success of Trafalgar is well appreciated, but the navy's activities impacted its population much more regularly and in ways more complex than has been recognised within Gibraltarian historiography.

Moreover, it also assesses how Gibraltar was more broadly viewed by Britons through a consultation of various forms of literary and visual culture. The 'Great Siege' of 1779-83 through to the end of the Napoleonic era is a crucial period in the historiographies of the 'Rock' and the 'wooden walls' of the Royal Navy that were so integral to constructions of British identity. Jenks argued that 'naval symbols' were increasingly important in British political culture during this period. This thesis contends that the acceptance and understanding of Gibraltar's status as a 'naval symbol' was crucial to its conceptualisation as a British possession in the post-Napoleonic era.



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My passion for history was always lovingly nurtured by my parents, and it goes without saying that I owe them a great debt of gratitude. My brother James has also been a consistent sounding board for ideas, and his own talent for conducting painstaking research was a model for me to follow. More broadly speaking, I would like to thank my family and friends in general for putting up with me during the completion of this project. The assistance and support provided by many people will always be appreciated. The greatest debt is however owed to my fiancé Kim, and my son, William. This thesis would not have appeared in the form it has done without the love, support and, it must be said, the fun and laughter that they provided along the way, and for that I will always be thankful.



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## List of Abbreviations

DHC	Dorset History Centre
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
GA	Gloucestershire Archives
GGL	Gibraltar Garrison Library
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
LA	Lancashire Archives
SHC	Surrey History Centre
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
WSRO	West Sussex Record Office



## DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Scott Daly,

declare that the thesis entitled

Rock and Oak: a new naval history of Gibraltar, 1779-1830

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission;

Signed:

Date: 27/9/21



## Timeline of major events

- 1704: Gibraltar is captured from Spain by a combined Anglo-Dutch fleet during the War of the Spanish Succession.
- 1713: The Treaty of Utrecht sees Spain cede Gibraltar to Britain.
- 1779-83: The 'Great Siege' of Gibraltar – an unsuccessful attempt by the allied forces of Spain and France to retake the Rock during the American Revolutionary War
- 1780: Admiral Rodney defeats the Spanish Admiral Langara off Cape St. Vincent in January, and successfully relieves Gibraltar's besieged garrison.
- 1781: Admiral Darby's fleet successfully enters Gibraltar in April – relieving the garrison once again.
- 1782: The Allied forces attempt a 'Grand Assault' on the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> September, which fails spectacularly when several of the floating batteries explode whilst bombarding Gibraltar from its bay.
- 1782: Admiral Howe successfully relieves the garrison in October, although his subsequent battle against Admiral Cordova off Cape Spartel is inconclusive.
- 1792: The French Revolutionary War breaks out in Europe.
- 1793: The Garrison Library is founded by Captain John Drinkwater Bethune.
- 1797: Admiral Jervis defeats a Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent.
- 1798: Admiral Nelson defeats a French fleet at the Battle of the Nile.
- 1799: Construction begins on the Rosia water tanks at Gibraltar.
- 1801: Admiral Saumarez achieves victory against Admiral Linois in the Algeciras campaign. After an initial defeat at the Battle of Algeciras, Saumarez regroups at Gibraltar and defeats a French and Spanish squadron at the Battle of the Gut.
- 1802-3: The Peace of Amiens sees a cessation of hostilities between Britain and France for just over a year. When the peace treaty is broken the period known as the 'Napoleonic Wars' begins.

- 1805: Admiral Nelson achieves a stunning victory at Trafalgar, establishing British naval dominance for the rest of the war.
- The Commercial Library and Exchange is set up as an alternative to the Gibraltar Garrison Library
- 1806: Napoleon institutes the 'Continental System' – forbidding all of his allies from trading with Britain.
- 1808-12: The construction of a new Victualling Yard at Rosia Bay.
- 1808: An uprising in Spain and the French defeat at the Battle of Bailen at the hands of a Spanish army ends the coalition between the two countries.
- 1815: The Napoleonic Wars end after France is defeated at Waterloo.



## Introduction

At the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, a memorial is dedicated to Gibraltarians killed during the two world wars of the twentieth century. Symbolically carved from 3 tons of Gibraltar limestone, it stands as a physical replica of the 'Rock'.<sup>1</sup> It also stresses the unique strategic location that has for centuries rendered Gibraltar geo-politically significant. Two etched inscriptions labelled 'Strategic Fortress' and 'A Meeting Point of Continents' reinforce this point. Underneath the latter inscription reads the following text:

After the British victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 the body of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson was brought ashore at Gibraltar before repatriation to England.

Kathleen Wilson has argued that by the time of his death, Nelson's body became a vessel through which the war's participants could 'project their own experience, identifications, and desires for recognition'.<sup>2</sup> By conceptually immortalising the hero's memory within the territory, it is tempting to think that Nelson's body served a similar purpose for the Rock's nascent and evolving community as a whole.<sup>3</sup> The idea that Nelson's body resided briefly at Gibraltar connected the territory spiritually to the British metropole, and specifically to Britain's 'pantheon' – St Paul's Cathedral – where the body was finally laid to rest. Conversely, in Gibraltar, a cemetery formerly known as the 'Southport Ditch cemetery' became

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Brugada, 'The Gibraltar War Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, UK', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal*, Vol. 22 (2016): 94.

<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Wilson, 'Nelson and the people: manliness, patriotism and body politics', in *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy*. Edited by David Cannadine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Colin White has demonstrated that many contemporaries were eager to promote Nelson's 'immortality' in letters, books and paintings immediately after his death. Colin White, "'His dirge our groans – his monument our praise": Official and Popular Commemoration of Nelson in 1805-6', in *History, Commemoration and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar 1805-2005*. Edited by Holger Hook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 43-4.



Figure 1: The Gibraltar War Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. Picture obtained through Creative Commons.

known as the 'Trafalgar cemetery' – despite having only two victims of the battle buried there. The cemetery regularly plays host to Gibraltar's Trafalgar Day commemorations, and in 2005, on the bicentenary of the battle, a bronze statue of Nelson was erected outside its entrance. In 2011, the government of Gibraltar issued a new set of £20 banknotes, which featured Clarkson Stanfield's 1853 painting *HMS The Victory Bearing the Body of Nelson Towed into Gibraltar after the Battle of Trafalgar* on the reverse. The image has also appeared on Gibraltarian 50 pence and £2 coins, as well as various sets of commemorative stamps. The co-opting of the heroic image of Nelson's body, alongside on-going celebrations of Britain's greatest naval victory, attests to the key role played by the Royal Navy historically in reinforcing the shared Gibraltarian and British identity.

Unfortunately, no documentary evidence exists to suggest that Nelson's body ever came ashore on Gibraltar after his death at Trafalgar.<sup>4</sup> Recent biographies of Nelson have not mentioned it, and historians of Gibraltar usually avoid it, or are gently dismissive of the myth.<sup>5</sup> Despite this, a strong tradition persists in Gibraltarian society that the body of Nelson, hero of Trafalgar, did indeed come ashore on the Rock one last time in 1805.<sup>6</sup> The myth of Nelson's body coming ashore at Gibraltar plays a fairly minor role in his overall mythology, and its specific origin is unclear.

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Archer, for example, simply states that Nelson's body was 'probably not brought ashore'. Edward G. Archer, *Gibraltar, Identity and Empire* (London: Routledge, 2006), 155; Tito Benady, *The Royal Navy at Gibraltar* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Books, 1992), 88; William Jackson, *The Rock of the Gibraltarians: A History of Gibraltar* (Grendon: Gibraltar Books, 1990), 200.

<sup>5</sup> None of the biographies written by Tom Pocock, Christopher Hibbert, Andrew Lambert or Roger Knight commented on whether the Admiral's corpse was landed at Gibraltar. Tom Pocock, *Horatio Nelson* (London: Pimlico, 1987); Christopher Hibbert, *Nelson: A Personal History* (London: Viking, 1994); Andrew Lambert, *Nelson: Britannia's God of War* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004); Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: The life and achievement of Horatio Nelson* (London: Penguin, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> "The Importance of Rosia Bay", *The Gibraltar Magazine*, accessed 11 March 2019, <https://thegibraltarmagazine.com/the-importance-of-rosia-bay/>; "Nelson's Anchorage", *Visit Gibraltar*, accessed 11 March 2019, <http://www.visitgibraltar.gi/see-and-do/beaches/nelsons-anchorage-100-ton-gun-17>.

Yet it speaks to a desire for a shared history of patriotic reciprocity between the British metropole and Gibraltar, existing at the imperial periphery. According to John Mackenzie, the nineteenth-century image of Nelson as a 'mythic hero' not only promoted shared ideals of Britishness across the empire, but also 'performed vital economic and strategic roles'.<sup>7</sup> This dual aspect of Nelson's legacy was evident in Gibraltar, which became simultaneously more 'British' and commercially successful as the nineteenth century progressed. For Krishan Kumar, national myths encapsulate a truer sense of identity than simply telling the history of a place – and crucially, their creation is often mired in rumour and half-truths. Nelson's body had certainly come close to Gibraltar after Trafalgar, and in July 1805, Gibraltar was the first location he had set foot on after two whole years at sea, before returning to Britain on leave.<sup>8</sup> Kumar also stresses the link between national myth and war, arguing that in times of difficulty they serve to 'summon up energies and commitments that make difficult tasks easy, and apparently impossible ones feasible'.<sup>9</sup> For Andrew Lambert, Nelson's death at the moment of victory made Trafalgar 'magical', and the battle thereafter 'transcended mere matters of fact to become iconic'.<sup>10</sup> Although Edward Archer does not comment upon the Nelson myth any further than to deny it, he acknowledges that Gibraltarian identity has been forged through shared myths and historical memory.<sup>11</sup> The veracity of this legend notwithstanding, its appropriation into an official commemoration of more recent conflicts reveals how notions of twentieth-century Gibraltarian sacrifice continue to be played out against a backdrop of conflict and resistance anchored in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era. In the context of eighteenth-century and

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<sup>7</sup> John Mackenzie, 'Nelson Goes Global: The Nelson Myth in Britain and Beyond', in *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy*. Edited by David Cannadine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 144.

<sup>8</sup> Gareth Stockey and Chris Grocott, *Gibraltar: A Modern History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 30.

<sup>9</sup> Krishan Kumar, '1066 and all that: Myths of the English' in *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*. Edited by Gerard Bouchard (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 95.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Lambert, 'The Magic of Trafalgar: The Nineteenth-Century Legacy', in *Trafalgar in History: A Battle and its Afterlife* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 155-6.

<sup>11</sup> Archer, *Gibraltar*, 195.

early nineteenth-century Gibraltar, the Royal Navy played a pivotal, but as yet underexplored role in influencing the social and cultural climate through which the Rock was viewed, both from inside the territory, and in how it was perceived from the British metropole.

As the meeting point between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, the Straits of Gibraltar have been recognised as geo-politically significant for centuries.<sup>12</sup> This importance is rooted in antiquity, as along with Ceuta, the location now known as Gibraltar was said to form one of the ‘pillars of Hercules’, the two opposing mountains that command the straits. As well as representing an east-west maritime frontier, the area has also served as a ‘bridge’ between southern Europe and North Africa.<sup>13</sup> Gibraltar itself is indeed a testament to this – its name is understood to derive from the Arabic *Jabal Tarik*, meaning ‘Tarik’s Mountain’ after Tarik ibn Ziyad, the commander of an Islamic conquering force in 711, and its ‘Moorish castle’ remains a prominent tourist attraction. Its history as a British possession began during the War of the Spanish Succession, when Admiral George Rooke led an Anglo-Dutch expedition that captured the Rock in 1704. Its capture did not result from a deliberately targeted plan, but instead occurred immediately after a failed attempt to take Barcelona and an unsuccessful attack on Cadiz (led by Rooke) in 1702. In this context, Gibraltar was not initially conceptualised as a ‘prize’ over and above any of its geographical neighbours. The prize, in a general sense, was a fortified presence within the vicinity of the Mediterranean. The British had, however, serendipitously stumbled upon the superior stronghold. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) saw Gibraltar ceded to Britain ‘for ever, without any exception or impediment whatsoever.’<sup>14</sup> The true implications of the treaty were not immediately obvious, particularly as the limelight regarding the repercussions for British trade in the Mediterranean was shared with Minorca, which had also been

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<sup>12</sup> Martin Modaresi, ‘The Strait of Gibraltar as the “meeting of the two seas” from the Quran: References in medieval Spanish and North African texts’, *The International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 29, no. 2 (2017): 422-3.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *The Gibraltar Crusade: Castile and the Battle for the Strait* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Gold, *Gibraltar: British or Spanish?* (London: Routledge, 2005), 338.

acquired from Spain. In fact, Minorca was often viewed as more beneficial to British aims in the Mediterranean.<sup>15</sup>

Over the course of the next century however, Gibraltar, through manifold sieges and inter-European wars, was gradually recast from an isolated and barren fortress into an imperial location of great value to the British metropole. Its capture, along with that of Minorca, is often recognised as marking the beginning of British global dominance.<sup>16</sup> This thesis argues that the Royal Navy was a key engine in driving this process. Gibraltar's geological composition, as a narrow promontory surrounded on three sides by water, ensured that capturing and holding the Rock required a strong naval presence. Maintaining a secure presence at the Rock also proved crucial in managing the countervailing interests of the multifarious state entities that competed for supremacy in the western Mediterranean on a continual basis throughout the eighteenth century (and beyond). The 'Great Siege' of 1779-83 was a key event in cementing Gibraltar's strategic importance. Over a period of three years and seven months, its future as a British possession was in doubt as Spain and France attempted to take advantage of the militarily overstretched British during the American Revolutionary War. Ultimately, the Rock was retained – in part due to three successive naval reliefs, and the failure of a massive allied attack upon it in 1782. The Royal Navy – in political, social and cultural terms a crucial and influential state institution by the turn of the nineteenth century – was an integral factor in this crucial British success as the war drew to a close. Consequently, Gibraltar's position within the empire, when looked at through the lens of the Royal Navy, became infused with culturally prominent naval symbolism that transcended simplistic modern observations of its geo-political location.

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Gold, 'Identity Formation in Gibraltar: Geopolitical, Historical and Cultural Factors', *Geopolitics*, Vol. 15, no. 2 (2010): 368.

<sup>16</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), 30; Roger Morriss, *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy: Resources, Logistics and the State, 1755-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 36.

Nevertheless, Gibraltar's image as a 'fortress' - small in size and agriculturally barren (and culturally, to many observers) - has led to it being largely isolated from wider historiographical trends. Despite its key role in influencing patterns of trade and strategic policy, Gibraltar has thus far not featured prominently in histories of the British Empire. Its geographic position in the western Mediterranean, whilst strategically important, simultaneously isolated it from wider historical processes that have drawn significant attention. It had no major connection to the East India Company, who preferred to victual their vessels at ports off West Africa, and it was not a significant location for the Atlantic slave trade. Furthermore, Gibraltar had no discernible staple export that could associate it with wider historiographies of empire, in the same way that, for example, sugar could for Britain's relationship with the Caribbean.<sup>17</sup> Historiographic trends of naval history have compounded this position, as historians have typically neglected to assimilate the community of Gibraltar within wider works that were more broadly concerned with naval strategy. The Royal Navy, however, provides a connecting institutional thread through which Gibraltar's relationship with the wider British Empire can be further elucidated and defined. When it has been deemed significant, Gibraltar's status as a British possession has mainly been viewed through a strategic lens. Its capture in 1704 is often judged to have heralded a new era of British dominance in the Mediterranean, while its strategic capacity became fully realised in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the building of the Suez Canal and the development of the naval dockyard apparently transforming the Rock into a key link in Britain's communications chain to India.<sup>18</sup> But Gibraltar's position as a major location through which cultural transfer occurred between Britons and the wider world has not received significant attention from historians. Geoffrey Plank, for example, has recently argued that because of its geopolitical location and internationally diverse

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<sup>17</sup> Sian Williams, 'The Royal Navy in the Caribbean, 1756-1815'. *University of Southampton, Faculty of Humanities, Doctoral Thesis* (2014), 2-4.

<sup>18</sup> Jeremy Black, *The British Seaborne Empire* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 13.

social make-up, Gibraltar is 'unique' as a setting for 'examining human interactions', particularly with reference to the defining of British identity.<sup>19</sup>

Modern Gibraltarian historiography has placed a high degree of emphasis on the civil community's interaction with the military garrison. However, this garrison-centric paradigm has led to military interpretations dominating all aspects of its own historiography, meaning that the economic, cultural and social interactions of its community are often viewed solely through this prism. Gibraltar's status as something of a colonial 'relic' in the modern age has also received much focus. John Darwin, for example, has termed it one of Britain's post-war 'limpet colonies'.<sup>20</sup> Such definitions are strongly rooted in recent developments that have caused historians to perceive the Rock's history as a British possession squarely through political events of the twentieth-century. This was an era when, crucially, the navy's presence at the Rock was in severe decline. Don Lawson's *The Lion and the Rock* (1969) was written amidst this atmosphere of strategic adjustment and argued that Britain's outlay in maintaining Gibraltar (stated to be £15 million annually) was unnecessary due to the American naval base not far from Cadiz at Rota.<sup>21</sup> Although few have disputed the importance of eighteenth and nineteenth-century events, they regularly abate in importance in comparison to their twentieth-century counterparts. As a result of both an over-representation of modern events and an under-investigation of those more distant in time, Gibraltar's overarching experience as a British possession has typically been presented as homogeneous across its now three-hundred-year timespan. Periodically recurring political tensions often render Gibraltar's landward border closed and the territory 'besieged', allowing for successive commentators to conclude that this aspect is and always has been the dominant influence upon the Gibraltarian psyche.

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<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Plank, 'Making Gibraltar British in the Eighteenth Century', *History*, Vol. 98 no. 331 (2013): 349.

<sup>20</sup> Darwin's term 'limpet colonies' is quoted in David Lambert, "'As solid as the Rock'? Place, belonging and the local appropriation of imperial discourse in Gibraltar", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 30, no. 2 (2005): 207.

<sup>21</sup> Don Lawson, *The Lion and the Rock* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1969), 151.



Although Gibraltar has recently received greater attention from historians, much of this work has continued to be influenced by the current garrison/fortress orthodoxy, leading to a proliferation of the interpretations described above. But during the period covered in this study, the inhabitants of Gibraltar were also acutely aware of the Rock's intimate relationship with its immediate environs in the Mediterranean, and its position within the wider British Empire – relationships that were enabled, nurtured and protected by the Royal Navy both within and outside the colony's confines. In this context, Gibraltar's status in the British world prior to the second half of the nineteenth century can be better understood through a deeper exploration of how the Rock interacted with and benefited from the navy's successful presence in the western Mediterranean. The image of Gibraltar as an isolated location, whose uniquely constrained geography heavily influenced its community and identity has been historiographically resolute and secure. Through an interrogation of the Royal Navy's relationship with Gibraltar in the revolutionary and Napoleonic era, this thesis seeks to interrogate and challenge that image.

As noted above, several recent works have attempted to shed more light on Gibraltar's history during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. As well as engaging with the broader spectrum of Gibraltarian historiography, this thesis's argument is particularly targeted in response to three modern scholarly enquiries. The first of these, Stephen Constantine's *Community and Identity: The making of modern Gibraltar since 1704* (2009) is the most authoritative and extensive modern history of Gibraltar. Nonetheless, it also exemplifies many of the historiographical shortfalls that other works have displayed towards the Rock. That is, an overreliance on the community's relationship with the garrison, a reticence throughout to appreciate Gibraltar's maritime connections (and by extension, the Royal Navy) and a vast chronological framework that renders specific conclusions contextualised within more precise time periods ultimately unachievable. As an extension to these historiographic trends, Hannah Weiss Muller's 2013 article 'The Garrison Revisited: Gibraltar in the Eighteenth Century' used the experience of Gibraltar to expand upon Harold Laswell's hypothesis of the 'garrison state'. But

Muller's work remained constrained within a methodological framework that conceptualises Gibraltar primarily as an isolated fortress, whose inhabitants experienced political and social processes in a predominantly insular fashion. As this thesis will show, this approach is problematic – particularly when recourse is made to letters, travelogues and even artworks produced by contemporary residents and visitors to the Rock. Lastly, Geoffrey Plank's 2013 article 'Making Gibraltar British in the Eighteenth Century' provided an important historiographical stimulus in attempting to connect Gibraltar to cultural processes occurring in Britain and her empire. However, his main explanation for how Gibraltar was 'made' British – the stoic resistance of the garrison during the 1779-1783 Great Siege – is simplistic and further demonstrates the prevalence of the military garrison in the Rock's historiographical landscape. Therefore, this thesis uses Plank's work as a jumping-off point from which to further elucidate the extent of Gibraltar's 'Britishness' during this period. In doing so, it will show that the performance of the Royal Navy was heavily incorporated into cultural reactions to the Rock both at Gibraltar and in Britain. Crucially, this was not limited to the period immediately after the Great Siege, but in fact continued throughout the Napoleonic period and beyond. The studies listed above advanced the historiography of Gibraltar in useful ways, but they each share a common unwillingness to incorporate histories of the Royal Navy that can assist in uncovering more about the lived experience of the Rock and its inhabitants.

## Methodology

It is not the intention of this thesis to produce an archetypical 'naval' history of Gibraltar. As will be shown, studies that have adopted strategic approaches towards Gibraltar have failed to shed adequate light on the lived experience of people, British or otherwise, that resided there during the period covered by this study. Therefore, the aim will be to emulate alternative approaches to naval history that have favoured the use of social and cultural sources to investigate the link between the navy and the development of national identity during this period. To this end, extensive recourse will be made to personal correspondence, journals and

travelogues kept by people that resided at or visited Gibraltar. Crucially, these will not necessarily be 'naval' in origin or relate specifically to naval personnel. As this study will show, people of all categories interacted with the navy in a myriad of ways – sometimes via transactional relationships, but also through observations made in the privacy of their own writings. These observations will provide a gateway into how exactly Gibraltar was perceived by the people that resided there. For too long, conclusions have been drawn exclusively from the official correspondence of generals, admirals and politicians, men who held their own preconceived ideas and professional concerns. As one recent study has observed, histories of Gibraltar have focused on such individuals because they have largely upon official sources.<sup>22</sup> As C. A. Bayly observed, 'the formal statements of constitutions or colonial minutes are a poor guide to real social and political change'.<sup>23</sup> Naval history has also suffered from a similar tendency to prioritise official correspondence. Roger Knight's comment on the recent broadening of approaches, that a 'vast amount of material relating to the navy exists outside the ADM classes' of the National Archives can be taken further and applied to a wider range of sources and archives more generally.<sup>24</sup> Official sources will not be completely excluded, but in moving beyond them, previously underexplored voices, such as those of women, can be included. Consulting the accounts of Elizabeth Wynne and Sarah Fyers, for example, gave William Jackson fresh insight into Gibraltar's community when he noted that they did not reference an ill-disciplined garrison in the years leading up to the 1802 mutiny against the Duke of Kent.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Sam Benady commended the Great Siege accounts produced by Mrs

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<sup>22</sup> Grocott and Stockey, *Gibraltar*, 5.

<sup>23</sup> C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), 9.

<sup>24</sup> Knight did recognise in the same article that 'The future is at least in part interdisciplinary. After all, economic, political, war studies and cultural histories of the navy are but dialects of a greater language.' Roger Knight, 'Changing the Agenda: The 'new naval history of the British sailing navy'', *The Mariner's Mirror* Vol 97 no. 1 (2011): 228; 242.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson, *Rock of the Gibraltarians*, 190.

Green and Catharine Upton for providing personal details largely missing under those authored by their male counterparts.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, an extensive range of cultural reproductions concerning Gibraltar will be referred to. A key argument of this thesis is that historians have vastly underappreciated British culture when analysing Gibraltar's place in the British Empire. For Peter Burke, advances in cultural history and its associated fields would not have been possible without the willingness of historians to incorporate the study of images into their work.<sup>27</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova has written that artworks and cultural artefacts are key to a historian's interpretation of the past, because they

have passed through the minds and bodies of people who exercised choice in the past... makers of objects and images manifest forms of visual intelligence, preferences and skills, which entitle them to be understood as historical actors, as witnesses to past states of affairs.<sup>28</sup>

Accordingly, any historical study that seeks to investigate how a specific place was experienced and thought about in the past must incorporate the study of cultural artefacts. This thesis contends that greater study of cultural images and literary works that included Gibraltar might have led to alternative assumptions being made about the lived experience of people residing there. Some artworks concerning Gibraltar have received scholarly attention from historians. John Bonehill, Holger Hoock and Cicely Robinson have all produced studies centred on varying aspects of the representation of Gibraltar's Great Siege in the fine art of the

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<sup>26</sup> As Upton explained of her account: 'I was not situated to know the exact number of men killed and wounded each day, but it is interspersed with such things as, I hope, will render it in some degree entertaining to my Readers.' Catharine Upton, *The Siege of Gibraltar, From the Twelfth of April to the Twenty-seventh of May, 1781. To which is prefixed, some account of the Blockade* (London: J. Fielding, 1781), vi; Sam Benady, 'Women of Gibraltar', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal Vol. 10* (2003): 68.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images As Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 11.

<sup>28</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 7.

period.<sup>29</sup> Such modern scholarship will be incorporated, as well as commentary on previously underappreciated cultural works. A wide range of literary works also function as visual sources, especially personal accounts written from Gibraltar itself which describe the intense experience of witnessing naval battle from a close vantage point.<sup>30</sup>

By the 1780s British newspapers and print readership had both greatly expanded. The number of regional titles had doubled from twenty-four to fifty between 1723 and 1780, and annual sales rose from two and a half million in 1713 to fourteen million in 1780.<sup>31</sup> The narrative of the Great Siege then, as told by British newspapers, expressed itself at the height of eighteenth-century regional newspaper readership, essentially allowing its importance to be conveyed to a greater number of people than ever before. Furthermore, the ongoing digitisation of newspapers into online archives has transformed their accessibility to the modern historian.<sup>32</sup> Incorporating this newly available material provides fresh perspectives into how Gibraltar was represented within the British press. The fierce opposition in newspapers to rumours of the Rock being traded away likely reflected wider public opinion rather than proprietorial influence; as Hannah Barker has argued, eighteenth-century newspapers were instrumental in promoting the concept of 'public opinion', and in encouraging the wider public to 'involve

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<sup>29</sup> The work of the authors listed here is explored further in chapter 4.

<sup>30</sup> As Jordanova and Florence Grant have written, 'The activation of visual evidence involves complex and layered analyses that integrate visual materials with texts and other types of sources. Recovering the ways in which such materials embody social relationships is key to establishing connections between them and the phenomena that historians are interested in.' Florence Grant and Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Introduction', in *Writing Visual Histories*. Edited by Florence Grant and Ludmilla Jordanova (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Black, *A Subject for Taste: Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), 148.

<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the rapidity of modern digitisation programmes can outpace even the quickest of researchers. The *British Newspaper Archive*, which this thesis makes extensive use of, is estimated to be growing by over one hundred thousand pages a month. Bob Nicholson, 'Digital Research', in *Research Methods for History*. Edited by Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 176.

themselves in the nation's political life'.<sup>33</sup> An obvious caveat is that although literacy rates had broadly increased during the eighteenth century, illiteracy was still a factor in the early-modern society, particularly when factoring in differences in gender, class and age.<sup>34</sup> The same can be said for works of fine art, which were evidently more likely to be viewed by those from a wealthier socio-economic section of British society. Accordingly, and even with the benefit of a greatly expanded wealth of source material to draw from, the modern historian can never be truly certain of how reflective the print and artistic output was of public opinion. Nevertheless, print culture provides an invaluable resource to ascertain the broad characteristics of the context in which Gibraltar was presented to the British public through this medium. Moreover, this thesis does not necessarily seek to fully explain how reflective the appearances of Gibraltar in British culture were of any definitive concept of precisely how it was viewed by the British reading or art-viewing public. Rather, it aims to illuminate how its representation was often characterised in naval and maritime terms as opposed to the more accepted 'fortress' terminologies that dominate its historiography in modern times.

Additionally, the development of specialist texts made naval information readily available to an increasingly knowledgeable public. The *Naval Chronicle* (published between 1799 and 1818) is recognised as the most authoritative contemporary record of naval events.<sup>35</sup> As Jenks has identified, its appearance in the 1790s reflected an increased appetite for ancillary naval material in the public sphere - a space that was made increasingly patriotic through the publication of such martial

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<sup>33</sup> Hannah Barker, 'England, 1760-1815', in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820*. Edited by Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94.

<sup>34</sup> Putting an exact figure on literacy rates in the eighteenth century is difficult. As Sarah Pearsall notes, 'Overall, more and more individuals could read and write, and more were able to purchase books.' Sarah M. S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 35.

<sup>35</sup> *The Naval Chronicle: The Contemporary Record of the Royal Navy at War. Volume 1: 1793-1798*. Edited by Nicholas Tracy (London: Chatham Publishing, 1998), viii.

texts.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the *Chronicle's* publication of biographies, histories, correspondence, etchings and literature (including poetry and songs) catered to a contemporary need for the celebration and commemoration of both past and present naval personnel, events and locations. Indeed, the creation of a British 'Temple of Honour' populated by worthy naval heroes was a central intention of the *Chronicle's* proprietors upon its foundation.<sup>37</sup> Alongside being well read in naval circles, its proprietors readily advertised it to the wider public in regional newspapers.<sup>38</sup> At the resumption of hostilities in 1803, an advert in the *Hampshire Telegraph* alerted readers to the *Chronicle's* acquisition of

extensive arrangements with Gentlemen resident at the principal Naval Stations, to transmit the most authentic and minute accounts off all engagements that may take place between his Majesty's Ships and those of the enemy.<sup>39</sup>

Gibraltar was one such 'principal Naval Station' from which information was transmitted into the pages of the *Naval Chronicle* throughout its existence. As will be shown, however, the Rock was not simply a passive provider of naval information. Rather, alongside national and regional newspapers, the pages of the *Naval Chronicle* came to reflect the increased ardour felt by the British public towards Gibraltar as a naval location. Just as naval personnel and vessels dominated artistic representations of the Rock, reports in literary publications of all types were consistently more likely to be framed through the Royal Navy's activities and relationships in the bay and Straights of Gibraltar.

However, Gibraltar's presence in British culture is not well represented in scholarly historiography. Rather than take a narrow case-study approach, therefore, this

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<sup>36</sup> Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, 159.

<sup>37</sup> D. A. B. Ronald, *Youth, Heroism and War Propaganda: Britain and the Young Maritime Hero, 1745-1820* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 2.

<sup>38</sup> *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette*, Saturday 1 November 1800; *Hampshire Telegraph*, Monday 13 August 1804; *British Press*, Thursday 21 February 1805.

<sup>39</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph*, Monday 20 June 1803.

thesis aims to build upon new approaches to naval history by examining how a wide range of paintings, literature, and local newspapers can, amongst other sources, illuminate the field and link Gibraltar's status in the British world to wider historiographical trends. As will be demonstrated below, modern Gibraltarian historiography often carries problematic associations with recent geo-political events that can distort interpretations of more distant periods of the Rock's history. Therefore, accessing these varying and under-utilised forms of cultural production allows for access points into the history of Gibraltar rooted in the precise context of the period discussed here, with the aim of illuminating previous time periods rather than explaining modern political events and trends.

### The Royal Navy in Gibraltarian historiography

Almost universally across its historiography, the word 'fortress' has become inextricably linked with descriptions of Gibraltar. Naturally, many histories of the 1779-83 siege have been produced, making the Rock's association with siege warfare a key component of its historiography.<sup>40</sup> But Gibraltar's security as a British possession was conceptualised in more complex ways, and furthermore it's resolutely unexchangeable status has not always been beyond doubt. Alan Frost stressed that even as late as 1782 (at the height of the Great Siege) the prospect of Britain exchanging it was not completely off the table.<sup>41</sup> H. W. Howes expressed shock that the idea was even countenanced, let alone directly discussed amongst monarchs and senior politicians.<sup>42</sup> That it did not happen during the 1783 peace negotiations has been attributed to two factors: French diplomatic pressure on

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<sup>40</sup> T. H. McGuffie, *The Siege of Gibraltar 1779-1783* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1965); Jack Russell, *Gibraltar Besieged 1779-1783* (London: Heinemann, 1965); James Falkner, *Fire over the Rock: The Great Siege of Gibraltar 1779-1783* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2009); Roy and Leslie Adkins, *Gibraltar: The Greatest Siege in British History* (London: Little Brown, 2017).

<sup>41</sup> Alan Frost, *The Global Reach of Empire: Britain's maritime expansion in the Indian and Pacific oceans 1764-1815* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2003), 100.

<sup>42</sup> H. W. Howes, *The Gibraltarian: The Origin and Development of The Population of Gibraltar from 1704* (Colombo: The City Press, 1950), 74.



Spain, and a public backlash against the idea in Britain.<sup>43</sup> Douglas Fordham uses George Bickham's 1749 satirical print *Conduct of the Two Brothers*, which depicted Gibraltar as a limb being severed from the body of Britain, to suggest that public opinion was very much against the idea of it being traded away.<sup>44</sup>

The public resistance to the idea of ceding Gibraltar from the British public forms a key theme of this thesis. More specifically, it asks the question: what role did the Royal Navy play in the refashioning of Gibraltar in the wider British world during the eighteenth century, and particularly after the American Revolution? One problem facing modern historians is that contemporary opinion across the eighteenth century was seemingly divided on the question of Gibraltar's value to the British Empire. Indeed, it is possible to find evidence to back either a positive or a negative argument – including from George III himself.<sup>45</sup> Historians should not, however, view the monarch's diplomatic judgements as reflective of the wider political mood, as the king's opinions were frequently at odds with those of his senior ministers.<sup>46</sup> Writing in the 1940s, Stetson Conn specifically warned 'the student of today' against 'the expression of any positive judgement on the wisdom of England's retention of Gibraltar'.<sup>47</sup> Somewhat surprisingly (given the time that has passed since it appeared), Conn's *Gibraltar in British Diplomacy in the Eighteenth Century* (1942) has remained the authoritative guide for scholars wishing to

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<sup>43</sup> Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions, 1783-1793* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 12; J. R. Ward, 'The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748-1815', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Eighteenth Century*. Edited by P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 419.

<sup>44</sup> Douglas Fordham, 'Satirical peace prints and the cartographic unconscious', in *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of display and the British Empire*. Edited by John McAleer and John M. Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 69.

<sup>45</sup> Gold, *Gibraltar*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> Black refers to the king's opposition to the Egypt expedition of 1801 – an opposition that he later retracted when the campaign turned out to be highly successful. Jeremy Black, 'British Strategy and the Struggle with France 1793-1815', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 31, no. 4 (2008): 562.

<sup>47</sup> Stetson Conn, *Gibraltar in British Diplomacy in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 256.

interpret Gibraltar's political status across this tumultuous period. He concluded that British public opinion steadily warmed to retaining Gibraltar throughout the century, and that the Great Siege of 1779-83 represented a patriotic endpoint, whereby exchanging it with Spain was no longer politically possible for any British government.<sup>48</sup> Andrew Stockley drew heavily upon Conn's work in analysing the American War's various stages of peace negotiations, arguing that the British cabinet's regard for the territory steadily increased during the siege in direct response to heightened public anxiety.<sup>49</sup> Neither Conn nor Stockley sought to explain exactly how the public reaction manifested itself in Britain, their work instead being rooted in political and official discourse and sources. This thesis will show that the increasing regard in which British politicians and the wider public alike held Gibraltar came to be framed in explicitly naval terms.

Much of Gibraltar's historiography remains focused upon viewing it as a purely strategic location. Recent work, however, has suggested that Gibraltar was deployed by artists and the institutions that sponsored their work, in order to promote idealised forms of 'Britishness' and ideas surrounding the new role of the empire in the post-American Revolution era. The Royal Navy was integral in re-shaping the image of Gibraltar in this way. The period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars saw the navy occupy an increasing amount of physical space and institutional importance within Gibraltar itself, as efforts were made by the British state to improve its operational facilities. Histories of Gibraltar have also overlooked this relationship, which has often been viewed through traditionally patriotic objects of study, such as Gibraltar's connection to the Battle of Trafalgar and Horatio Nelson. For Howes, the Treaty of Utrecht (that saw Gibraltar officially ceded by Spain) was transformational for Britain and its navy. Quoting Mahan, he stressed that prior to 1713, Britain was one of many sea powers, whereas

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<sup>48</sup> Conn, *Gibraltar in British Diplomacy in the Eighteenth Century*, 265.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Stockley, *Britain and France at the Birth of America: The European Powers and the Peace Negotiations of 1782-1783* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), 118.

afterwards it alone dominated the maritime sphere.<sup>50</sup> Jeremy Black contended that the British naval presence at Gibraltar consolidated gains made by victory in the Battle of Quiberon Bay in 1759, by negating a union of the Bourbon Atlantic and Mediterranean fleets.<sup>51</sup> Michel Mollat du Jourdin saw Gibraltar as a pivotal location for Europe's relationship to the sea, arguing that such a relationship 'has depended upon the conjunction of its two maritime faces'. This analysis is framed in naval terms – for Jourdin, British possession of Gibraltar, alongside the victory at Trafalgar, allowed European maritime trade routes to be subjugated.<sup>52</sup>

Howes' account of this period places Gibraltar firmly within the strategic destiny of the Royal Navy and Britain's empire, drawing metaphorical and direct lines between the Rock ('the Key to the Western Mediterranean'), the eastern Mediterranean, the Battle of the Nile, and the Australian and Indian colonies.<sup>53</sup> He also raised the possibility that a British loss at Trafalgar would have seen the French eventually occupy Gibraltar.<sup>54</sup> Amongst historians of Gibraltar, the debate surrounding its importance to the British Empire has inevitably revolved around Horatio Nelson, and its close geographical proximity to Trafalgar. P. W. C. Dennis made the dubious claim in 1939 that Gibraltar's strategic worth only became apparent when the British fleet put in there after the battle in 1805.<sup>55</sup> Ernle Bradford's view of Gibraltar during this period was framed heavily through the lens of Nelson – Bradford deemed Gibraltar's significance to be indisputable almost primarily because Nelson had deemed it so.<sup>56</sup> His work also reinforced stereotypical views of sailors ashore, as he claimed that the high number of prostitutes and grog

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<sup>50</sup> Howes, *Story of Gibraltar*, 47-8.

<sup>51</sup> Jeremy Black, *The British Seaborne Empire* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 121.

<sup>52</sup> Michel Mollat du Jourdin, *Europe and the Sea* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 228.

<sup>53</sup> Howes, *Story of Gibraltar*, 67.

<sup>54</sup> Howes, *Story of Gibraltar*, 71.

<sup>55</sup> P. W. C. Dennis, 'Gibraltar', *Scottish Geographical Magazine* Vol. 55, no. 6 (1939): 333.

<sup>56</sup> Ernle Bradford, *Gibraltar: The History of a Fortress* (London: Granada Publishing, 1971), 140.

shops operating in Gibraltar was evidence of the naval influence there.<sup>57</sup> However, the work of George Hills has had perhaps the most profound effect on how the naval history of Gibraltar during this period is viewed. On the shore facilities, Hills was particularly scathing; his argument can be summed up in one short extract: that 'Gibraltar was better than nothing'. He is also at pains to diminish the impact of Admiral Saumarez's victory, often called the Battle of the Gut, which occurred within sight of Gibraltar in 1801. With his view firmly fixed upon the wider geo-political ramifications, he may have a point in suggesting that the victory was not a factor in forcing peace.<sup>58</sup> However, the psychological and patriotic impact of such a victory, occurring within visible distance of Gibraltar, should not be underestimated. The engagement was emblematic of how its evolving community experienced conflict, with small-scale but common (and highly visible) naval skirmishes contributing towards the embattled psyche of the town. They also provided regular boosts to morale expressed through patriotic fervour when the besieged landward border remained often tedious and uneventful. But as Stockey and Grocott explain, Hills' analysis was strongly influenced by his sympathetic stance towards Spanish sovereignty.<sup>59</sup> William Jackson's history of Gibraltar was subsequently an attempt to counter Hills' arguments, but his political leniencies as an ex-Governor (1978-1982) were unfortunately apparent in his book.<sup>60</sup> Jackson's work also keenly emphasised the Rock's connection to Nelson and Trafalgar – one chapter confidently labelling Gibraltar 'The Base for Trafalgar'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Quite why these industries would not have also flourished because of the large military garrison was not answered by Bradford. Bradford, *Gibraltar*, 139.

<sup>58</sup> George Hills, *Rock of Contention: A History of Gibraltar* (London: Robert Hale, 1974), 365.

<sup>59</sup> Hills had also written a biography of Franco – the back cover of which carried a photograph of the author enthusiastically shaking hands with the Spanish dictator. Stockey and Grocott, *Gibraltar*, 156.

<sup>60</sup> An example of the political considerations evident in Jackson's work is his sympathetic analysis of the Duke of Kent's disastrous tenure as Governor, which ended in a mutiny against him. Jackson wrote: 'Poor Prince Edward; he went too far but the discipline of the garrison did improve and Gibraltar was the better for his short period as governor on the Rock'. Jackson, *Gibraltarians*, 195.

<sup>61</sup> For 'The Base for Trafalgar' chapter, see: Jackson, *Gibraltarians*, 180-201.

Some historians have focused on the navy's relationship to Gibraltar in more specific terms. Unsurprisingly, Gibraltar features heavily in David Syrett's *The Royal Navy in European Waters during the American Revolutionary War* (1998). Focusing mainly on the navy's activities during the Great Siege, Syrett ably demonstrated both the British eagerness to resupply Gibraltar (the relief undertaken by Admiral Darby in 1781 effectively removed the bulk of the Channel Fleet from British waters), and the skill and perseverance displayed by British seamen in doing so under concentrated Spanish fire.<sup>62</sup> However, Syrett's approach was resolutely strategic. Taking a broader chronological approach, Tito Benady's *The Royal Navy at Gibraltar* (1992) was the first to make a more explicit connection between Gibraltar and the Royal Navy. Benady was forthright in his preface, stating that his work was not intended as a history of Gibraltar.<sup>63</sup> It was in practice concerned more with the naval activities occurring in the wider oceanic orbit of Gibraltar's strategic pull, rather than with the resulting effects of the navy's operations upon the Rock itself.

More recently, Jason R. Musteen's *Nelson's Refuge: Gibraltar in the Age of Napoleon* (2011) sought to expand upon the naval and military history of Gibraltar during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. Whilst wide ranging and extensive in its coverage of the strategic nature of Gibraltar's relation to the wars raging at the time, it follows the same traditions of military history, and of Gibraltarian history described above (as indicated by the reference to Nelson in its title). He identified Gibraltar as crucial in determining how the Mediterranean war was fought, stressing that the three major battles of Cape St Vincent (1797), the Nile (1798) and Trafalgar (1805) were all deeply connected to the Rock in some way. The period between 1793-1815 is described as a 'turning point in the military and naval history of Gibraltar'.<sup>64</sup> This is undeniable. However, it can be convincingly argued that this period was transformative from a social,

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<sup>62</sup> David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in European Waters during the American Revolutionary War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 140-2.

<sup>63</sup> Benady, *The Royal Navy at Gibraltar*, x.

<sup>64</sup> Jason R. Musteen, *Nelson's Refuge: Gibraltar in the Age of Napoleon* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 2.

cultural and economic standpoint also – and that Gibraltar’s naval history itself became intertwined with these aforementioned factors. Janet Macdonald was highly critical of Musteen’s work, focusing upon its ‘inadequate research’ into the military establishments such as the victualling yard.<sup>65</sup> Such criticisms notwithstanding, the book’s narrow approach rendered other potential historiographical insights ultimately unachieved. Both Benady and Musteen resisted interrogative approaches into the navy’s relationship with Gibraltarian society and identity.<sup>66</sup> Musteen’s work in particular also displays a tendency to allow its focus to drift towards events happening far away from the Rock, meaning that the main focus of his work recedes into the background far too often. In his conclusion, Musteen notes that the legacy of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars is highly visible through Gibraltarian street names, tourist locations, and notably through the survival of the ‘Trafalgar Cemetery’.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, he does not relate the significance of these legacies to broader themes of an emerging Gibraltarian identity or the internal processes that may have contributed to its formation. Similarly, the new scholarship surrounding the correspondence of Susanna Middleton (the wife of a Dockyard Commissioner), which has provided fresh perspectives from which to view the naval presence at Gibraltar, is disappointingly overlooked.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Janet Macdonald, ‘Review of *Nelson’s Refuge: Gibraltar in the Age of Napoleon* by Jason R. Musteen’, *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 24 no 1 (2012): 509.

<sup>66</sup> Sara Caputo has recently drawn attention to a similar trend in work concerning Scotland and the Royal Navy, arguing that concepts of ‘Englishness’ or ‘Britishness’ have assumed priority over any urge to investigate the smaller component parts that made up the British whole. Sara Caputo, ‘Scotland, Scottishness, British Integration and the Royal Navy, 1793-1815’, *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 97 no 1 (2018): 86-87.

<sup>67</sup> Musteen, *Nelson’s Refuge*, 144.

<sup>68</sup> Although Ellen Gill and Richard Wragg’s interpretations came after Musteen’s book was published in 2011, Lincoln’s work on Middleton’s letters from Gibraltar was available from 2007. Richard Wragg, ‘A Naval Wife: The Letters of Susannah Middleton’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol 90 no. 2 (2014); Ellen Gill, *Naval Families, War and Duty in Britain, 1740-1820* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016).

Events throughout the twentieth century ensured that Gibraltar's importance as a British imperial possession has remained highly relevant. In the era of decolonisation Gibraltar became, according to John Darwin, a political 'conundrum'.<sup>69</sup> It has remained a conundrum for historians, who must place a developing historiography alongside contentious events unfolding in the present.<sup>70</sup> Stephen Constantine commented on the difficulty of writing Gibraltar's history during the continued existence of the 'Gibraltar problem' – the Rock's contested constitutional status in the post-colonial world.<sup>71</sup> This 'problem' emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War and was particularly shaped by the prevailing international mood that favoured the decolonisation of imperial territories. Consequently, a large portion of Gibraltarian historiography is framed through twentieth-century events. Ashley Jackson places the imperial history of Gibraltar exclusively in the twentieth century, rather than through more distant events.<sup>72</sup> The twentieth century was undoubtedly a tumultuous time for Gibraltar. In 1953, a Royal visit caused a diplomatic incident with Franco's Spain, leading to heightened tensions at the border and a boycott of Spanish ports by the Royal Navy. This powerfully reinforced the Gibraltarian sense of British identity, as well as providing yet another occasion for the British metropole to be proud of the stubborn resistance exhibited by the Rock's community.<sup>73</sup> In the context of the post-Suez crisis British world, Gibraltar embodied what Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich have described as Britishness surviving and thriving beyond the metropole, and outliving

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<sup>69</sup> John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1988), 310.

<sup>70</sup> The difficulty of writing about Gibraltar in a modern context is inter-disciplinary. Michael Waibel, a Professor of Law, wrote that he commented on the territory 'with considerable trepidation. The issues are very complex, continually changing, and I am a complete outsider.' Michael Waibel, 'Gibraltar: A Unique Territorial Dispute?', in *Britain, Spain and the Treaty of Utrecht 1713-2013*. Edited by Trevor J. Dadson and J. H. Elliott (Oxford: Legenda, 2014), 107.

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Constantine, *Community and Identity: The making of modern Gibraltar since 1704* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>72</sup> Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 24; 115.

<sup>73</sup> Philip Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 64-5.

the demise of the empire.<sup>74</sup> Subsequently, however, the Royal Navy's importance in Gibraltar events has diminished. Darwin has described Gibraltar's naval base as being of 'marginal importance' by the 1970s.<sup>75</sup> By the 1980s, the yard had passed into private ownership. Consequently, the navy's past activity does not provide a connecting link for historians writing about the Rock today. It is also significant that a rise in the intense 'display' of Gibraltar identity, which Constantine identifies as having begun in the 1960s, occurred alongside a sharp reduction in Britain's naval presence there.<sup>76</sup> This inverse correlation has rendered Gibraltar's relationship with the Royal Navy (in a cultural as well as a strategic sense) seemingly less significant than Gibraltar's heritage as a garrison town. At a time when the navy was receding from view, and yet the Rock still appeared to be under siege, histories of Gibraltar reconfigured its present through explicitly militaristic terminologies. Indeed, both George Hills and Jackson use the terminology of sieges to refer to the period between 1969-1985.<sup>77</sup> This period, when the border with Spain was closed, has had a lasting impact on Gibraltar culture and history. David Alvarez, himself a Gibraltar, described the resulting 'collective expressions' of patriotism and identity as having an 'embattled and restricted feel'.<sup>78</sup> Spain's aggressive stance towards the Rock (particularly under Franco) has firmly encouraged this embattled psyche. In a territory where politics and history are closely intertwined, it is unsurprising that Gibraltar politicians have leveraged the Rock's history as a defiantly British outpost to differentiate its inhabitants from those of Spain.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, 'Mapping the British World', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Volume 31, no. 2 (2003): 8.

<sup>75</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 309.

<sup>76</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 414.

<sup>77</sup> Hills called the period Gibraltar's 'last siege', whilst Jackson referred to it as Gibraltar's 'fifteenth siege'. Hills, *Rock of Contention*, 455; Jackson, *Gibraltarians*, 317.

<sup>78</sup> David Alvarez, 'Colonial Relic: Gibraltar in the Age of Decolonization', *Grand Valley Review*, Vol. 21, no. 1 (2000): 20.

<sup>79</sup> Chris Grocott, 'British Identity and Constitutional Reform in Gibraltar', in *Islands and Britishness: A Global Perspective*. Edited by Jodie Matthews and Daniel Travers (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 149.



Gareth Stockey and Chris Grocott's *Gibraltar: A Modern History* (2012) provided helpful context on the connection between the construction of Gibraltarian history and the development of a distinct Gibraltarian identity. They write that:

interest in the Rock's history, particularly on the part of the Gibraltarians, has often been driven by a desire to understand (and construct) Gibraltarian identity. Sometimes, this has led historians of Gibraltar to posit a particular view of Gibraltarian identity, where evidence is selected on the basis of its usefulness in weaving a teleological narrative. Such an approach can easily become ahistorical.<sup>80</sup>

Gibraltarian histories have often aggressively constructed identity in response to political events. This is a late twentieth-century phenomenon – as early as 1946 R. A. Preston was able to point to a distinct lack of historiography regarding Gibraltar's 'internal development'.<sup>81</sup> For David Lambert, Spanish attempts to dismiss the Gibraltarian population as 'artificial' initially drove the creation of Gibraltarian-authored 'accounts of belonging'. But crucially, Gibraltarians were also forced to continually respond to the attitudes and opinions towards what remained of the empire within Britain itself.<sup>82</sup> Political events continually altered this landscape, as Joseph Garcia's *Gibraltar: The making of a people* (1994) demonstrated. Garcia identified the 1983 closure of the naval dockyard as a threat to Gibraltar's economy but also as a sign that a declining British empire 'might be pulling out on them'.<sup>83</sup> In the book's second edition, published in 2002 in the wake of the British government expressing a willingness to discuss shared sovereignty with Spain, Garcia's reading of Gibraltarian history evoked a strong warning to the mother country in its highly combative foreword: 'The lesson of history is that the Gibraltarians do not take kindly to bullying or to being pushed in a direction where they do not want to go'.<sup>84</sup> T. J. Finlayson's *Gibraltar: Military Fortress or Commercial Colony* (2011) was

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<sup>80</sup> Stockey and Grocott, *Gibraltar*, 3-4.

<sup>81</sup> R. A. Preston, 'Gibraltar, Colony and Fortress', *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol 27 no. 4 (1946): 403.

<sup>82</sup> Lambert, ' 'As solid as the Rock'? ', 211.

<sup>83</sup> Joseph Garcia, *Gibraltar: The making of a people* (Gibraltar: Panorama Publishing, 2002), 216.

<sup>84</sup> Garcia, *Gibraltar*, foreword.

similarly inspired by what the author described as ‘the struggle of its civilian inhabitants to achieve some degree of say in the running of their affairs’.<sup>85</sup> The title of Finlayson’s work was not posited as an enquiry, but rather as a direct statement on the condition of Gibraltar’s contentious history, during which the Gibraltarians struggled to impose their identity against overbearing British overseers. Nowhere is this propensity for pugilistic identity construction more visible than in Finlayson’s response to an enquiry from Hew Dalrymple (the Lieutenant-Governor 1806-8) concerning non-British inhabitants of Gibraltar, when Finlayson inserts: [his full capitals] ‘THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE NEEDS OF A MILITARY FORTRESS AND THE ASPIRATIONS OF A COMMERCIAL COLONY WAS WELL UNDER WAY!’.<sup>86</sup> Within Gibraltar’s historiographical landscape the atmosphere of a community embattled against external foes can be all-pervasive. These were not always expressed in a homogenous, pro-British fashion.

Whilst not as bellicose in its approach, Stockey and Grocott’s own work demonstrates other drawbacks that arise from taking a more protracted chronological focus. Occasionally, this can allow for simplistic conclusions regarding Gibraltar’s early history as a British possession to emerge, as not enough space is apportioned to fleshing out contextual evidence that might lead to more diversified conclusions. In their discussion of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, precedence is given to the ‘frontier town’ aspect of its existence and its status as a military garrison. Intriguingly, Stockey and Grocott include a passage from Lieutenant General George Cockburn, who visited the Rock in 1810-1811, and railed against it as being ‘remarkable for drunkenness’.<sup>87</sup> The deployment of such derogatory statements remains a characteristic of Gibraltarian historiography of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Unfortunately, the authors did not include another of Cockburn’s observations, which stressed Gibraltar’s centrality

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<sup>85</sup> T. J. Finlayson, *Gibraltar: Military Fortress or Commercial Colony* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Books, 2011), vii.

<sup>86</sup> Finlayson, *Military Fortress or Commercial Colony*, 84.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Stockey and Grocott, *Gibraltar*, 33.

within its geographical landscape and the 'great number of ships, transports, and vessels of all nations anchored' within its bay.<sup>88</sup>

There can be no doubt that the Rock's recent history has influenced the perspective through which the navy's relationship with the Rock has been viewed by historians, and that, broadly speaking, notions of Gibraltar as an imperial node outwardly connected to wider imperial trends have given way to methodologies that focus upon constrained and inward-looking studies of its populace. Lawrence Sawchuk and Stacey Burke's numerous anthropological studies of Gibraltar have assisted in constructing the current paradigm.<sup>89</sup> Somewhat understandably, Gibraltar's unique geographic, social and political context draws attention from multiple scholarly fields, as its seemingly isolated nature allows the community to be studied within a methodological petri dish. Sawchuk's own history of Gibraltar, *Deadly Visitations in Dark Times: A Social History of Gibraltar in the time of Cholera* (2001) studied the Rock specifically through the lens of nineteenth-century Cholera epidemics. Such subjects inevitably, and often justifiably lead to narrow conclusions based upon the local politics of a small colonial outpost. Focused methodologies can be beneficial to the naval historian; the mention of Gibraltar in Brian Vale's discussion of British strategies to combat scurvy highlights how knowledge gained at sea was utilised to safeguard the Rock's community in wartime.<sup>90</sup> However, Sawchuk's approach feeds off a larger assumption, that of Gibraltar as a perpetually insulated 'fortress'. Despite writing that Gibraltar 'was an important commercial centre and an

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<sup>88</sup> Sir George Cockburn, *A Voyage to Cadiz and Gibraltar, Up the Mediterranean to Sicily and Malta in 1801, & 1811. Including a description of Sicily and the Lipari Islands, and an Excursion in Portugal* (London: T. Harding, 1815), 132.

<sup>89</sup> Some of these works include: Stacey Burke and Lawrence Sawchuk, 'Alien encounters: The *jus soli* and reproductive politics in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century fortress and colony of Gibraltar', *The History of the Family*, Vol. 6 no. 4 (2001); Stacey Burke and Lawrence Sawchuk, 'A matter of privilege: infant mortality in the garrison town of Gibraltar, 1870-1899', *Journal of Family History* Vol. 27 no. 4 (2002); Stacey Burke and Lawrence Sawchuk, 'Tuberculosis mortality and recent childbirth: a retrospective case-control study of Gibraltarian women, 1874-1884', *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 56, no. 3 (2003).

<sup>90</sup> Brian Vale, 'The conquest of scurvy in the Royal Navy 1793-1800: a challenge to current orthodoxy', *The Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 94, no. 2 (2008): 164.

international port of call', Sawchuk argues that 'it was first and foremost a fortified garrison post.'<sup>91</sup> This description may apply to Gibraltar's experience at specific points of its history, but it is unhelpful when deployed as a universally applicable axiom. It sits uneasily alongside the experience of residents during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era, when Spanish gunboats operating in the bay were a constant threat to Gibraltar's security yet contrastingly, life inside the garrison could be described in dull, monotonous terms.

The concept of 'community' has become increasingly significant in Gibraltar's modern historiography – more specifically, how its apparently introverted community developed a particularly strong culture of British identity. Conversely, Gibraltar's historiography has itself become isolated from histories that might re-orient the current orthodox view of the apparently embattled Gibraltarian psyche away from the Spanish border and towards the ocean. Constantine's approach in *Community and Identity: The making of modern Gibraltar since 1704* (2009) focused (as its title suggests) upon the Gibraltarian community, primarily through the study of census records and statistical population data. Unfortunately, the navy's presence and influence remain very much in the background of his conclusions, even when it is heavily implied within the context of his own findings. For example, in the conclusion to a chapter entitled 'A fortress economy, 1704-1815', despite recognising that Gibraltar was 'handicapped by its separation... from its geographical hinterland', no consideration is given to the potential economic benefits derived from the Royal Navy's dominance, as a protector of convoys, a conduit for intelligence gathering or as a preventative force that dissuaded would-be plunderers from assailing maritime trade routes.<sup>92</sup> The 'post-Trafalgar superiority of the Royal Navy' and its effects upon the security of trade is recognised in a later chapter, but reference to written sources authored by inhabitants of Gibraltar could have produced a deeper understanding of how this

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<sup>91</sup> Lawrence Sawchuk, *Deadly Visitations in Dark Times: A Social History of Gibraltar in the time of Cholera* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Government Heritage Division, 2001), 22.

<sup>92</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 62.

impacted life on the Rock.<sup>93</sup> The vast chronological scope of modern histories (over three centuries), and the need to evaluate Gibraltar's history against modern political events, also inhibited any further enquiry into specific periods of conflicts further removed in time, and any resulting nuances regarding the significance of this period in the advent of a distinct proto-British-Gibraltarian identity.

The ever-present link between Gibraltar and its history as a garrison town continues to preclude the Royal Navy (in the age of sail) from debates concerning the origin and propagation of a shared Gibraltarian-British identity. Consequently, it is fair to conclude that the historiographies of Gibraltar and the Royal Navy, despite encouraging developments in each, are currently on distinct and diverging paths. Hannah Weiss Muller has recently applied Harold Laswell's concept of the 'garrison state' to Gibraltar during the eighteenth century. In the 1940's, Laswell had predicted the rise of such states through a combination of the military-industrial complex and increased state control through military personnel. Muller successfully demonstrates that this is a useful lens through which to analyse the composition and character of the resident community. There can be no doubt that Gibraltar was politically dominated by the military – one of the key definitions for determining a 'garrison state' – and that this had repercussions for the type of society that it grew to become.<sup>94</sup> However, in Muller's analysis the maritime context of Gibraltar, and more specifically the naval presence there, is not afforded enough space. Muller refers to Gibraltar as being 'profoundly isolated'.<sup>95</sup> She also correctly identifies Gibraltar as being 'profoundly shaped by its surrounding environment'.<sup>96</sup> Although she mentions Gibraltar's 'proximity to Morocco and Algeria' in her assessment of what constituted its problematic environs, maritime concerns, and by extension the navy are sorely missing from the conclusions she arrives at.<sup>97</sup> Gibraltar's status as a

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<sup>93</sup> Constantine, *Community and identity*, 137.

<sup>94</sup> Hannah Weiss Muller, 'The Garrison Revisited: Gibraltar in the Eighteenth Century', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol. 41, no. 3 (2013): 354.

<sup>95</sup> Muller, 'The Garrison Revisited', 361.

<sup>96</sup> Muller, 'The Garrison Revisited', 368.

<sup>97</sup> Muller, 'The Garrison Revisited', 368.

'garrison state' is surely unique amongst most others, in that its 'sieges' can also be classified as maritime blockades, and that it was fortunate to have been relieved on three successive occasions by the Royal Navy. Nor was Gibraltar's garrison a static force during this time. Michael Duffy has shown how Gibraltar was used to acclimatize British troops to overseas service before being shipped on to the West Indies during the 1790s.<sup>98</sup> This ensured that the makeup of the garrison was continually shifting and changing to suit Britain's imperial needs in a global context. Britain's dominance of the maritime sphere enabled it to effect and protect such troop movements across the Atlantic. Furthermore, Gibraltar was culturally characterised in maritime and naval terms by British contemporaries.

Muller's attempt to expand the 'garrison state' approach to include the treatment of non-Gibraltarians is constrained by the extant image of Gibraltar as a resolute and imposing fortress. She concludes that inhabitants of Gibraltar 'were terrified by a sense of their profound dependence', and that this led to greater acceptance of 'aliens' within Gibraltar than previously appreciated.<sup>99</sup> The profound awareness of the maritime sphere exhibited by these inhabitants is, however, a crucially underexplored component of this analysis. As a result, a nuanced interpretation of exactly *how* inhabitants of Gibraltar experienced this 'profound dependence' is not realised. The substantive reliance upon 'outsiders' and external forces for information, sustenance and security inevitably forced the Rock's population to look and think beyond the confined space of the garrison. Muller's attempt to 'reflect on the concerns that preoccupied this garrison's commanders and inhabitants' fails to fully incorporate the navy as an important cultural and social institution in the Rock's society.<sup>100</sup>

Thus, the 'garrison state' hypothesis remains pre-eminent, and is further buttressed by recent references to Foucauldian theory. Michel Foucault's structural

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<sup>98</sup> Michael Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 154, 159.

<sup>99</sup> Muller, 'The Garrison Revisited', 369.

<sup>100</sup> Muller, 'The Garrison Revisited', 369.

hypotheses of state power and surveillance have heavily influenced postcolonial approaches and have found convenient application to Gibraltarian historiography.<sup>101</sup> Rachel Heeter Smith's PhD thesis "'A disgrace to her Colours": The Mediterranean population problem & tactics of Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century Gibraltar' (2016) argued that 'technologies of governmentality were consciously deployed... in an effort to closely manage and control its Mediterranean inhabitants'.<sup>102</sup> Ilya Berkovich's study of 'Discipline and Control in Eighteenth-Century Gibraltar' compared the Rock directly to the panopticon, the concept of state oversight developed by Jeremy Bentham and utilised by Foucault.<sup>103</sup> Resulting interpretations of Gibraltar as a fortress dominated by its resident military personnel have created a misconception of the Rock as an insular society, in which the hopes and fears of its inhabitants inevitably ricocheted off hypothetical barricades and back inwards upon the confined community. Thus, the popular perception of Gibraltar as an isolated citadel eclipses its undeniably maritime character.

Surrounded by water on three sides and connected to Spain by a narrow isthmus, the Rock was in fact highly dependent upon the Royal Navy. Gibraltar was spoken of as a fortress, but through their lived experience at the Rock and the broader consumption of cultural material, Britons throughout the empire deeply appreciated that its security was highly reliant upon British success in the maritime sphere – meaning that naval pride and Gibraltar's place in the wider British world were closely intertwined. Gibraltar's position is perhaps better contextualised through Bayly's study of the British Empire between 1780-1830. Bayly argued that 'colonial despotisms' – strategic locations with aristocratic forms of military government entrenched hierarchies of racial division overseas. Gibraltar surely falls

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<sup>101</sup> Dane Kennedy, *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 54.

<sup>102</sup> Rachel Heeter Smith, "'A disgrace to her Colours": The Mediterranean population problem & tactics of Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century Gibraltar'. *University of Illinois, Doctoral Thesis* (2016), 3.

<sup>103</sup> Ilya Berkovich, 'Discipline and Control in Eighteenth-Century Gibraltar', in *Britain's Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715-1815*. Edited by Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 121.

into this category, but unlike other locations such as India, it did not have the resulting tax and military that resulted from presiding over large swathes of territory under British suzerainty. Bayly attempted to assess whether strategic or commercial motivations lay behind British ideas of Empire during this period.<sup>104</sup> Gibraltar's benefit to Britain in this regard lay in its ability to strategically control the financial rewards that resulted from commanding the entrance to the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, it is worth considering how the composition of Gibraltar's population during this period, with many Britons serving in naval, military or civilian capacities, can point to a different way of configuring their lived experiences on the Rock. Andrew Lambert's book *Seapower States* (2018) establishes an interpretation of British culture that has ramifications for Gibraltar during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. Lambert differentiates between 'sea power', as a strategic aim achievable by any large state with a navy, and 'seapower' as a form of identity that defined states whose security and prosperity depended totally upon the sea.<sup>105</sup> Previous histories of Gibraltar have evaluated it primarily through British 'sea power', that is, how it related to the navy in strategic terms, without fully appreciating the crucial role it played in the formation of British 'seapower' as an identity through which Britons interacted with the world. Furthermore, many Britons that travelled to Gibraltar during this period, including soldiers of varying ranks ostensibly employed in a military capacity, overtly espoused the ideology commensurate with being a citizen of a 'seapower'. Additionally, Gibraltar's evolving and diverse community were increasingly involved in naval ceremonies and celebrations. Many of these occurred alongside actively witnessing naval combat taking place in Gibraltar's bay. Lambert's work built upon a burgeoning field of historiography linking Britain's political and social history with its relationship to

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<sup>104</sup> Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 8-10.

<sup>105</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict that made the Modern World* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), 4.



the sea.<sup>106</sup> However, Kevin McCranie was correct in asserting that, at least culturally, Lambert's argument was not fully articulated.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, room remains in which to expand Lambert's thesis to include a diverse range of cultural productions in interpreting the British imperial experience.

A closer look at the development of naval architecture certainly reveals a more nuanced picture of the navy's relationship with the Rock. The physical space and social community of Gibraltar was intimately connected to the ocean-going sailors, officers and vessels of the Royal Navy by a series of shore-based institutions, which included the dockyard and the victualling station. These required large numbers of individuals to be stationed upon Gibraltar itself, as naval bases and military towns are typically dependent upon the local population for supplies and services.<sup>108</sup> Stockey and Grocott have correctly identified its importance as a destination for naval prizes - cargoes of which were a boon to merchants throughout periods of warfare.<sup>109</sup> Francisco Oda Angel has also noted the positive effect that the establishment of a Vice-admiralty court had upon the Gibraltarian economy.<sup>110</sup> Joseph Garcia identified the auctioning of prize vessels as 'the first real basis of Gibraltar's wealth'.<sup>111</sup> However, the attention devoted to the poor facilities at Gibraltar's dockyard prior to the redevelopments that occurred in the latter half of the nineteenth century represent something of a recurrent motif within naval historiography. Piers Mackesy did not doubt the Rock's strategic importance, but

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<sup>106</sup> For more on this see: Glen O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea since 1600* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jonathan Scott, *When the Waves Ruled Britannia: Geography and Political Identities, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>107</sup> Kevin D. McCranie, 'Review of Seapower States: Maritime Culture, Continental Empires and the Conflict that Made the Modern World', *Naval War College Review* Vol. 72, no 4 (2019): 172.

<sup>108</sup> Stephen Constantine, 'Monarchy and constructing identity in 'British' Gibraltar, c.1800 to the present', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 34 no. 1 (2006): 25.

<sup>109</sup> Stockey and Grocott, *Gibraltar*, 31.

<sup>110</sup> Francisco Oda Angel, ' "The Beauty of the Inexplicable" ', in *Bordering on Britishness: National Identity in Gibraltar from the Spanish Civil War to Brexit*. Edited by Andrew Canessa (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 48.

<sup>111</sup> Garcia, *Gibraltar*, 8.

his listing of its operational deficiencies (lack of harbour, inadequate water supply, danger of attack from Spanish gunboats) seemed to call its true efficacy as a naval base into question.<sup>112</sup> Jonathan Coad argued that Gibraltar was ‘little more than a staging post and supply depot’ for the Royal Navy – a situation that continued, he maintained, until the late nineteenth century.<sup>113</sup> For Brian Lavery, its harbour was ‘very poor’, whilst Martin Robson compared its facilities unfavourably to Lisbon’s.<sup>114</sup> These descriptions have unfortunately led some commentators to view Gibraltar in one-dimensional terms as a poor naval location. Historians have also been drawn to explicit, but selective quotes that cast Gibraltar in negative terms. Macdonald in particular highlighted Admiral John Jervis, Lord St Vincent’s comment on Gibraltar as having ‘the vilest wharf in the universe’.<sup>115</sup> Such quotes have driven detrimental interpretations of Gibraltar’s importance during this period. Ellen Gill’s description of Gibraltar, inspired by the analysis of Hills, as ‘not a major naval or military stronghold’, is one example that overlooks several significant factors.<sup>116</sup> Whilst Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, St Vincent had nevertheless shown great interest in how facilities might be improved on the Rock.<sup>117</sup> In 1808 its security was deemed significant enough for an attack on Ceuta to be proposed, for the purpose of relieving pressure and diverting Spanish resources elsewhere.<sup>118</sup> If nothing else, this signified that its security was deemed integral to Britain’s operational capacity in the western Mediterranean. Despite its inadequate

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<sup>112</sup> Piers Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean 1803-1810* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), 13.

<sup>113</sup> Jonathan Coad, *The Royal Dockyards 1690-1850: Architecture and Engineering Works of the Sailing Navy* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989), 315.

<sup>114</sup> Brian Lavery, ‘Dockyards and Industry’, in *Nelson, Navy and Nation: The Royal Navy and the British People 1688-1815*. Edited by Quintin Colville and James Davey (London: Conway, 2013), 62; Martin Robson, *Britain, Portugal and South America in the Napoleonic Wars: Alliances and Diplomacy in Economic Maritime Conflict* (London: I. B. Taurus & Co., 2011), 37.

<sup>115</sup> Janet Macdonald, *The British Navy’s Victualling Board, 1793-1815: Management Competence and Incompetence* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 96.

<sup>116</sup> Gill, *Naval Families*, 163n.

<sup>117</sup> Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), 194; Roger Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture, 1760-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 160.

<sup>118</sup> Christopher D. Hall, *Wellington’s Navy: Sea Power and the Peninsular War 1807-1814* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2004) 40.

facilities, the yard at Gibraltar also proved itself capable of refitting damaged vessels in a quick and efficient manner.<sup>119</sup> As another riposte, Gibraltar's facilities were noticeably improved, and its overall naval presence increased during this period. The aforementioned victualling yard was constructed, but a major focus was also directed towards the construction of an underground reservoir, to ensure British vessels could acquire provisions and fresh water.<sup>120</sup>

Some recent scholarship has been directed at fleshing out in clearer terms the picture of Gibraltar's naval facilities during the age of sail. Howes had commented upon the shore establishments as early as 1950, but he did not go further than simply stating that the number of 'government' employees had risen dramatically by 1814.<sup>121</sup> In 2006, the Naval Dockyards Society produced a special volume of their journal *Transactions of the Naval Dockyards Society* that did much to advance the historiographical picture of Gibraltar from a naval perspective. Macdonald's article on the victualling yard during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars emphasised the changing nature of the yard during this time. The shifting focus of the wars, which began with more emphasis upon the eastern Mediterranean before pivoting back to the west when the Peninsular War started, meant that the navy's programme of victualling its fleets from Gibraltar was not constant or unchanging.<sup>122</sup> In their study of the navy and Britain's contractor state between 1793 and 1815, Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox state that Gibraltar was the most important of Britain's overseas bases. They do, however, recognise that Gibraltar's facilities had previously been 'limited in scale'.<sup>123</sup> Disparaging contemporary comments have led historians to present Gibraltar's poor facilities as unremittingly bad at this time, but in reality Gibraltar's facilities steadily developed and improved over this period. The increased naval footprint ashore had other ramifications, most

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<sup>119</sup> Benady, *The Royal Navy at Gibraltar*, 78.

<sup>120</sup> Coad, *The Royal Dockyards*, 322.

<sup>121</sup> Howes, *The Gibraltarian*, 74.

<sup>122</sup> Janet Macdonald, 'The Victualling Yard at Gibraltar and its role in feeding the Royal Navy during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars', *Transactions of the Naval Dockyard Society*, Vol. 2 (2006): 60.

<sup>123</sup> Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet, 1793-1815: War, the British Navy and the Contractor State* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 33.

importantly upon the social and cultural development of Gibraltarian society. Broadly speaking, the historiography of naval dockyards has remained focused squarely upon the strategic operation of the navy itself. This is entirely understandable – dockyards were, after all, industrial locations crucial to the global success and reach of the Royal Navy. Yet especially in Gibraltar’s case, there remain opportunities to approach them as social and cultural locations.<sup>124</sup> Without a significant hinterland from which resources could be drawn or into which people could spread, the dockyard workforce’s relationship with Gibraltar went far beyond the successful production of materials for the navy’s use.<sup>125</sup> Constantine has linked what he calls ‘the theatre of military authority’ to a developing sense of British identity amongst the civilian population during the period discussed here. As he recounts, the British flag that flew from the Moorish castle was undoubtedly joined by many others.<sup>126</sup> The increased naval presence surely contributed to this, as Union Jacks flying from vessels moored in the bay added to those flying from naval shore establishments. Events on shore could intermittently have a significant impact upon the navy’s operational capacity. Gibraltar was highly susceptible to epidemics of yellow fever and malaria during this period. Macdonald has written about the effect of the 1804 yellow fever outbreak upon the dockyard workforce, but the effect upon the social relationship between the navy and the Rock sadly goes unexplored.<sup>127</sup> The propensity for epidemics at Gibraltar, as well as its limited geography and high population density are naturally stressed as contributing

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<sup>124</sup> Julian Gwyn’s study of the Halifax naval yard before 1820 and James Thomas’s assessment of Portsmouth’s relationship to its dockyard during this period are examples of how an exploration of a yard’s industrial capacity to serve the navy can be accompanied by an enquiry into the social ramifications for the town’s populace. Julian Gwyn, *Ashore and Afloat: The British Navy and the Halifax Naval Yard before 1820* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004); James Thomas, ‘Portsmouth yard and town in the age of Nelson’, *Transactions of the Naval Dockyards Society* Vol. 1 (2006): 93-107.

<sup>125</sup> This approach has been taken for later historical periods. See, for example: Philip MacDougall, ‘Gibraltar Dockyard: Problems of recruitment 1939-1945’, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, Vol. 82, no. 4 (1996).

<sup>126</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 71-2.

<sup>127</sup> Macdonald, *The British Navy’s Victualling Board*, 68.

factors.<sup>128</sup> The resulting historiographical analysis has further contributed to its conceptualisation as a garrison community that continually felt itself to be under siege and embattled. In minimising Gibraltar's shore facilities a metaphorical portcullis is lowered over the substantial maritime traffic that flowed between the Rock and the wider world. This has further served to obscure the navy's relationship with Gibraltar in the context of the surrounding Mediterranean world, where it provided crucial intelligence regarding epidemical outbreaks in the surrounding maritime community, and subsequently allowed for quarantine procedures to be implemented. Furthermore, the presence of the Naval Hospital, built in 1740, ensured that naval surgeons were often on the front line of treatment and containment – both during warfare and peacetime. It continued to play a major role in Gibraltarian life, as the first civilian hospital was not built until 1816.<sup>129</sup>

Archer and Traverso placed British naval supremacy as central to Gibraltar flourishing as a port and entrepot in the first half of the nineteenth century. British hegemony of the western Mediterranean ensured its safety and allowed its population to nearly double between 1807 and 1813. Attracting immigrant merchants from across the Mediterranean, the navy acted as an engine of commercial change and diversification, as the community moved away from merely servicing the garrison and towards the re-export of goods.<sup>130</sup> The period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars is crucial in this regard, for it saw an increased development of a shore-based naval infrastructure physically on Gibraltar. The resulting interactions driven by the navy at Gibraltar were myriad and multifaceted. Sam Benady, investigating the origin of the term 'Rock Scorpion' (a derogatory term for Gibraltarians), speculates that it may have been used in the

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<sup>128</sup> Sawchuk and Stacie Burke do acknowledge that Gibraltar was a 'node in a trade and military shipping network', but any further mention of the Royal Navy is curiously absent from their work. Lawrence A. Sawchuk and Stacie D. A. Burke, 'Gibraltar's Yellow Fever Scourge: The Search for Scapegoats', *Journal of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 53, no. 1 (1998): 5.

<sup>129</sup> C. Montegriffo, 'History of Medicine in Gibraltar', *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2 no. 6136 (1978): 553-4.

<sup>130</sup> E. G. Archer and A. A. Traverso, *Education in Gibraltar 1704-2004* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Books, 2004), 11.

context of inexperienced naval dockyard workers as early as 1818.<sup>131</sup> From an altogether different viewpoint, the letters of Susanna Middleton, wife of Gibraltar's dockyard Commissioner, written between 1805 and 1808, have recently invigorated the historiography of naval wives and familial experience of service abroad. For Lincoln, the letters reveal that life at Gibraltar was a harsh existence for Middleton. Lincoln's study focused primarily on Middleton's experience of her own domestic setting, rather than providing a perspective on how they illuminate the British experience at Gibraltar.<sup>132</sup> Gill stresses the variety of social interactions found within Middleton's writings. Social gossip, the affairs of her domestic household, commentary on Gibraltarian society, and internal dockyard operations all challenge the current impersonal, strategic approach to shore-based naval institutions.<sup>133</sup> Rooted in historiographies of gender and the family, Lincoln and Gill's interpretations, whilst useful, overlooked noteworthy events such as the celebration and commemoration of naval events at the Rock. Citing the oft-quoted Colley, Richard Wragg focused upon Middleton's excursions into neighbouring Spain, concluding that existing cultural stereotypes were reinforced by Middleton's encounters with the 'other'.<sup>134</sup> Neither Lincoln, Gill nor Wragg successfully incorporated Middleton's correspondence into new interpretations of Gibraltar's historiography.<sup>135</sup> The letters, however, call in to question current orthodoxies regarding Gibraltar's community, and such sources are not usually found in general histories of Gibraltar that have traditionally favoured wide chronological time frames and thus neglect to study the period discussed here in enough detail.

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<sup>131</sup> Sam Benady, 'Rock Scorpions and other creatures', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol 22 (2016): 109. (109-111)

<sup>132</sup> For example, Lincoln focused upon one of Middleton's comments regarding the inability of Gibraltar's residents to entertain because of the cost. However, Middleton attended many dinners and balls whilst at Gibraltar. Margarette Lincoln, *Naval Wives and Mistresses* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2007), 126.

<sup>133</sup> Gill, *Naval Families*, 148.

<sup>134</sup> After one such excursion, Susanna described a Spanish general as looking like a 'farm hand', and after viewing some Spanish soldiers, commented that they would have 'little chance with a regiment of English soldiers'. Wragg, 'A Naval Wife', 113; 117.

<sup>135</sup> Wragg mentioned Susanna's visit to St Michael's cave, but no reference is made to the celebrations conducted there on 13 September, the anniversary of the destruction of the floating batteries. Wragg, 'A Naval Wife', 117.

Middleton's correspondence points to the ways in which the social and cultural history of Gibraltar's relationship to the navy (and more broadly speaking, the sea) might be better understood. Through studying surviving examples of journals, diaries, travelogues and written correspondence from a diverse spectrum of Gibraltar's society, a very real facet of the community's mind-set can be elucidated. Sources of this type demonstrate a clear understanding that the naval presence in the Rock's surrounding waters was just as crucial to its survival as the bravery and fortitude of the military garrison along its short border with Spain.

### Gibraltar and cultural representations of the Royal Navy

Geoffrey Plank has argued that Gibraltar was 'made' British in the aftermath of the Great Siege, 'only when it seemed to stand alone against the world'.<sup>136</sup> However, Plank fails to address the key role played by the Royal Navy, both in how Gibraltar successfully resisted and how the siege was subsequently conceptualised. Curiously, despite recognising that by the latter half of the eighteenth century 'the ocean dominated British perspectives on Gibraltar', Plank concluded that the 'seemingly isolated' garrison endured out of a solemn fortitude and perseverance – any assistance provided by the three naval reliefs going unmentioned.<sup>137</sup> Patently, a great deal of fortitude and stoic resistance was indeed shown in withstanding the Allied assault. But a broader enquiry into exactly how the siege was remembered in the years that followed reveals that the Royal Navy's role in resisting the siege was deeply appreciated by the British public. Plank's argument was reflective of how Gibraltar's historiography has placed great importance upon its military character.<sup>138</sup> Focusing mainly upon the Great Siege also obscures the subsequent

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<sup>136</sup> Plank, 'Making Gibraltar British', 369.

<sup>137</sup> Plank, 'Making Gibraltar British', 365; 369.

<sup>138</sup> For Martin Blinkhorn, even in 1830 when Gibraltar was granted Crown Colony status 'its foremost worth was always that which it had held since Utrecht: as a strategically positioned Fortress', and it was only in the nineteenth century that 'it acquired a secondary, though largely compatible, role in the British consciousness, namely as a staging-post of commerce and empire.' Martin Blinkhorn, 'A question of Identity: How the people of Gibraltar became Gibraltarians', in *The United*

importance that Gibraltar acquired during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. Gibraltar was not officially besieged again during this period, but it was subjected to many of the same processes via naval warfare – processes that, like the Great Siege, reinforced its connection to the British metropole. Lars Peters' observation that a lack of military action on British soil caused naval actions to take on greater significance in British culture also has ramifications for the study of Gibraltar.<sup>139</sup> As this thesis will show, the fear and expectation of another siege was continually present, and naval warfare was a constant spectacle in Gibraltar's bay. National pride in the Royal Navy was often leveraged in assuaging fears that surrounded Gibraltar's security as a British possession.

Whilst Gibraltar's absence in traditional imperial histories is conspicuous, the events surrounding the 'Great Siege' of 1779-1783 have featured more prominently in culturally centred historical interpretations of the aftermath of Britain's overall defeat in the American Revolutionary War. Historians of art and culture have focused upon the siege's memorialisation in works such as John Singleton Copley's 1791 painting *Defeat of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, September 1782*. Holger Hock has drawn direct parallels between Gibraltar's resistance and Rodney's success at the Battle of the Saintes in 1782. According to Hock, Gibraltar's 'Great Siege' and the Battle of the Saintes were the two most reproduced episodes of the war.<sup>140</sup> Anthony Page relates that alongside Rodney's victory, the British defiance at Gibraltar was enthusiastically reported in print, and served to bolster British morale in the war's final stages.<sup>141</sup> Amongst other

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*Kingdom Overseas Territories: Past, Present & Future*. Edited by David Killingray and David Taylor (Brentwood: Doppler Press, 2005), 51.

<sup>139</sup> Lars Peters, 'Warrior Sailors and Heroic Boys: Images of Masculinity in English Nautical Novels on the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars', in *War Memories: The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Modern European Culture*. Edited by Alan Forrest, Etienne Francois and Karen Hagemann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 139.

<sup>140</sup> Holger Hock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War, and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London: Profile Books, 2010), 83-4.

<sup>141</sup> Rodney was responsible for Gibraltar's first relief during the 'great siege', and it is surely not coincidental that the Spanish vessel *Fenix*, a prize from Rodney's victory in 1782, was renamed *Gibraltar* by the British whilst the Great Siege was still



maritime vistas, painted depictions of the siege were heavily represented in the Royal Academy's annual show in 1784.<sup>142</sup> For Eleanor Hughes, their presence was indicative of a move to 'reconceive' the empire in overtly maritime terms after the loss of the American colonies.<sup>143</sup>

Furthermore, naval successes of the 1790's provoked increased patriotic feeling that artists looked to exploit.<sup>144</sup> Hoock has also argued that Copley's representation of the siege, aside from celebrating the defence of Gibraltar, allowed British 'national humanity' to be publicly displayed, particularly in the depiction of drowning Spanish sailors being rescued by actively sympathetic British seamen led by Roger Curtis.<sup>145</sup> John Bonehill argues that Copley's painting engaged directly with emerging contemporary attitudes towards sensibility and warfare; deploying Benedict Anderson's memorable phrase when describing how Copley allowed audiences to reconfigure the British 'imagined community' in virtuous, sympathetic terms.<sup>146</sup> In Copley's interpretation the navy was placed in a delicate balancing act of prominence with the military officers of Gibraltar's garrison. Bonehill argues that the garrison's officers heavily influenced the siege's immediate historical memory. Copley's original plan was to organise his work solely around the destruction of the Spanish floating batteries and the garrison's subsequent relief by a British naval force. However, he was persuaded by veteran officers of the siege that they should be included in the painting.<sup>147</sup> This, along

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on-going. Anthony Page, *Britain and the Seventy Years War, 1744-1815: Enlightenment, Revolution and Empire* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 38.

<sup>142</sup> Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination*, 119.

<sup>143</sup> Eleanor Hughes, 'Ships of the 'line': marine paintings at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1784', in *Art and the British empire*. Edited by Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 142.

<sup>144</sup> Holger Hoock, *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 188.

<sup>145</sup> Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination*, 180.

<sup>146</sup> John Bonehill, 'Exhibiting war: John Singleton Copley's *The Siege of Gibraltar* and the staging of history', in *Conflicting Visions: War and Visual Culture in Britain and France, c.1700-1830*. Edited by John Bonehill and Geoff Quilley (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 154-5.

<sup>147</sup> Bonehill, 'Exhibiting War', 146-7.

with the 1785 publication of John Drinkwater's account of the siege, indicates that the navy's role in securing Gibraltar was, if not completely obliterated, then partly side-lined.<sup>148</sup> A small panel included by Copley below the painting depicted the final naval relief. Flanked by portraits of Admirals Howe and Barrington, it was perhaps suggestive of the artist's original intent.<sup>149</sup>

After the siege, Gibraltar was utilised by a multitude of artists to patriotically display the British national character. Much focus has been placed on Copley's depiction, but as the output at the Royal Academy indicated, a myriad of paintings were produced, many of which pointedly oriented their work around the explicitly naval aspects of the siege. Joseph Wright's *View of Gibraltar during the destruction of the Spanish Floating Batteries, 13 September 1782* (1785), produced before Copley's painting, was one of many that according to Philip Shaw united 'figures of all parties in expressions of popular acclaim.'<sup>150</sup> The siege's importance continued well into the Napoleonic period; alongside other famous British victories, it was a regular subject of staged re-enactments at aquatic regattas.<sup>151</sup> Later representations of the battles of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars have occupied much of the scholarship devoted to the connection between navy and nation. But Hughes maintains that Gibraltar, along with other sites 'crucial to imperial naval strategy', remained highly visible in cultural depictions of what Hooch called the 'global imperial

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<sup>148</sup> John Drinkwater was an army Captain at Gibraltar during the Great Siege, and his personal account was celebrated and read widely. He also worked closely with Copley on his painting that depicted the defeat of the Spanish floating batteries.

<sup>149</sup> Bonehill, 'Exhibiting War', 151.

<sup>150</sup> For Bonehill, Wright's painting displayed a similar expression of sentimentality that was evident in Copley's work: 'the nation's forces engaged in bloody conflict, yet benevolent in victory'. John Bonehill, 'Laying Siege to the Royal Academy: Wright of Derby's *View of Gibraltar* at Robins's Rooms, Covent Garden, 1785', *Art History*, Vol. 30 no. 4 (2007): 540; Philip Shaw, 'Conflicted Identities: Soldiers, Civilians and the Representation of War', in *Civilians and War in Europe, 1618-1815*. Edited by Erica Charters, Eve Rosenhaft and Hannah Smith (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 150.

<sup>151</sup> Hooch, *Empires of the Imagination*, 357.

landscape'.<sup>152</sup> Gibraltar, then, in the aftermath of the Great Siege became a crucible through which evolving ideas of empire and masculinity coalesced and aligned themselves alongside artistic and public demonstrations of the Royal Navy's dominance at sea. Developing ideas of British national identity in the late eighteenth century were, as argued by Linda Colley, forged in the fulcrum of on-going imperial warfare.<sup>153</sup> Kathleen Wilson argued that responses to the war and Britain's losses highlighted the empire's 'role as a bulwark and emblem of English superiority and benevolence'.<sup>154</sup> Colley stated that losing America caused Britain to 'look anxiously and inquiringly inwards'.<sup>155</sup> Gibraltar's Great Siege was chronologically and geographically crucial to this re-orienting of the British imperial mind-set after the loss of the American colonies – the siege, in some ways, served as the metaphorical hinge upon which British national pride pivoted. Whilst the patriotic artistic outpouring that followed the siege is acknowledged, it has not been properly re-considered in the light of emerging historiographical approaches to the Royal Navy, and the further role played by the navy in connecting Gibraltar to the British metropole through a differing array of cultural media remains unexplored. Furthermore, Copley's painting and the myriad depictions of Roger Curtis's rescue of Spanish sailors off Gibraltar correlated with later depictions of the navy's display of humanity amidst triumphant success. Geoff Quilley has highlighted how artistic representations of the battle on the Glorious First of June (1794) were heavily imbued with what he termed 'the parallel narrative of magnanimity towards the defeated'.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Eleanor Hughes, 'Sanguinary engagements: Exhibiting the naval battles of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars', in *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of display and the British Empire*. Edited by John McAleer and John M. Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 107.

<sup>153</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 3-4.

<sup>154</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 282.

<sup>155</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 4.

<sup>156</sup> Geoff Quilley, *Empire to Nation: Art, History and the Visualization of Maritime Britain 1768-1829* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), 196.

Naval historians have recently incorporated historiographical developments into fresh interpretations of the relationship between the Royal Navy, British political culture and empire.<sup>157</sup> Richard Harding has suggested that naval history is undergoing an assimilation with broader cultural and social histories that represent 'meeting points' between navies and themes such as identity and national cultures.<sup>158</sup> For James Davey and Quintin Colville, recent developments have helped to breach naval history's previously 'self-contained world', which was primarily concerned with issues such as 'warfare, command and leadership, strategy and tactics, technology and weaponry'.<sup>159</sup> Studies of the navy that embrace interdisciplinary approaches and integrate socio-cultural historiography are now commonplace.<sup>160</sup> Margarette Lincoln's book *Representing the Royal Navy: British Sea Power, 1750-1815* (2002) argued that cultural attitudes to the navy's performance at sea can give new meaning to the political and strategic policy that shaped its administration.<sup>161</sup> For Isaac Land the period of 1750-1850 'was the era in which British national identity was perhaps most closely identified with the Royal Navy'.<sup>162</sup> In *Naval Engagements: Patriotism, Cultural Politics, and the Royal Navy 1793-1815* (2006), Timothy Jenks stressed the increasingly important relationship between what he termed 'naval symbols' and British political culture.<sup>163</sup> The new naval historiography and its relationship to British identity can shed new light on how Gibraltar was experienced, particularly in interrogating Gibraltarian historiography's currently dominant 'garrison' paradigm. This thesis argues that Gibraltar, through the period from the Great Siege to the conclusion of the

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<sup>157</sup> Don Leggett, 'Navy, nation and identity in the long nineteenth century', *Journal for Maritime Research*, Vol 13 no. 2 (2011): 153-4.

<sup>158</sup> Richard Harding, *Modern Naval History: Debates and Prospects* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 126.

<sup>159</sup> James Davey and Quintin Colville, 'Introduction', in *A New Naval History*. Edited by James Davey and Quintin Colville (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 1.

<sup>160</sup> Davey and Colville, 'Introduction', 6.

<sup>161</sup> Margarette Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy: British Sea Power, 1750-1815* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), ix.

<sup>162</sup> Isaac Land, *War Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 7.

<sup>163</sup> Timothy Jenks, *Naval Engagements: Patriotism, Cultural Politics, and the Royal Navy 1793-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

Napoleonic War, became a culturally prominent naval symbol, and provided a platform for naval personnel to exhibit heroic behaviour that was then distributed on a national scale through various cultural forms. Gibraltar's visibly increased maritime trade is also indicative of the navy's importance to how it was viewed, as according to N. A. M. Rodger contemporaries closely understood the 'single symbiotic system' that existed between naval superiority and British dominance of the trading sphere.<sup>164</sup>

Analyses of public and political responses to the success of the Royal Navy have largely focused upon the emerging personality cults of prominent Admirals and specific battles.<sup>165</sup> Gerald Jordan and Nicholas Rogers' earlier work on the place of the Admiral as 'hero' within eighteenth-century British culture argued that they took precedence over Generals, and that their successes were utilised within political discourse.<sup>166</sup> During this period several naval officers were celebrated for their actions at the Rock, helping to elevate both themselves and Gibraltar into higher streams of British cultural consciousness. The careers of several Admirals became indelibly linked with Gibraltar in this period – firstly with Rodney, Howe and Roger Curtis in the context of the Great Siege, and later with James Saumarez and, as described above, Horatio Nelson. As far as the commemoration of battles is concerned, Gibraltar's multiple reliefs during the siege have not traditionally been placed alongside more famous engagements such as St Vincent, the Nile or Trafalgar.<sup>167</sup> Stephen Conway's assessment of the euphoric reaction to Rodney's

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<sup>164</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 580.

<sup>165</sup> See also: Brian Lavery, *Nelson and the Nile: The Naval War against Bonaparte 1798* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1998), 269-285; Marianne Czik, 'Nelson and the Nile: The creation of Admiral Nelson's public image', *The Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 88 No. 1 (2002); Marianne Czik, 'Nelson, Navy and National Identity' in *Nelson, Navy & Nation: The Royal Navy and the British People 1688-1815*. Edited by Quintin Colville and James Davey (London: National Maritime Museum, 2013), 188-207.

<sup>166</sup> Gerald Jordan and Nicholas Rogers, 'Admirals as Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 28, no. 3 (1989): 202.

<sup>167</sup> Rodney's so called 'moonlight' battle off Cape St Vincent in 1780 preceded his relief, whilst Howe's inconclusive action of 1782 occurred after he had successfully relieved the garrison.

victory at the Saintes stressed the concurrent feeling of Britain being ‘against the odds’ – something that he demonstrates through contemporary cartoons depicting British sailors fighting off all comers.<sup>168</sup> Jennifer McLaren has recently utilised a ‘transnational’ approach that moves beyond the traditional model of centre/periphery imperial networks to analyse how the victory was relayed to Ireland through newspapers.<sup>169</sup> The celebration of naval heroes and specific victories has been recognised by Christer Petley and John McAleer as being integral to how Britons ‘chose to express their identities and attachments’ across the British Atlantic.<sup>170</sup> Gibraltar’s current historiographic ‘fortress’ orthodoxy has unfortunately precluded it from being included in these new approaches to naval historiography. However, its location at the epicentre of the pivotal western-Mediterranean naval theatre, alongside the awareness that its defence relied on events inherently naval in nature led it to acquire sentimental value amongst senior naval policy makers and wider British society.

Gibraltar’s unique physical appearance also provided an increasingly visible reference point for consumers of culture. Jordan Sellers has argued that naval commemoration was a problematic pursuit, as naval battles could not provide physical places ‘for tourists to stand’.<sup>171</sup> But Gibraltar provided a highly visible, and geographically memorable location that was exploited by artists and memorialists. Works such as Copley’s placed the viewer’s perspective upon the Rock itself, looking out towards the maritime scene, whereas others placed the Rock

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<sup>168</sup> Stephen Conway, “‘A Joy Unknown for Years Past’: The American War, Britishness and the Celebration of Rodney’s Victory at the Saints’, *History*, Vol. 86, no. 282 (2001): 198.

<sup>169</sup> Jennifer McLaren, ‘Celebrating the Battle of the Saintes: Imperial News in England and Ireland, 1782’, *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 51, no. 1 (2016): 36.

<sup>170</sup> Specifically, they reference celebrations of Rodney’s 1782 victory in Jamaica, public subscriptions for the relief of those widowed and orphaned by the battle that were collected in Dublin and Belfast, the construction of Nelson’s column in Dublin, and a statue of Nelson being placed in Trafalgar Square, Bridgetown in 1813. Christer Petley and John McAleer, ‘Introduction: The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic’, in *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c. 1750-1820*. Edited by John McAleer and Christer Petley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 13.

<sup>171</sup> Jordan Sellers, ‘Zero Ground: Mapping Maritime Commemoration in the Age of Nelson’, *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 26, no. 6 (2015): 679.

prominently in the background, with British vessels appearing in the foreground. The profusion of public artwork that appeared in the years after the Great Siege cemented Gibraltar's status as a naval symbol, as maritime artists increasingly sought to connect its secure status as a British possession to a correspondingly strong naval presence. This was preceded in the siege's more immediate aftermath by a tremendous amount of press attention, with significant column inches devoted to the events and significance of the ultimate outcome. Despite some attention from cultural historians, and the recent advances in cultural histories of the navy, Gibraltar's importance as a naval symbol penetrated into the British cultural and political landscape in ways thus far underappreciated by both naval and imperial historians. Depictions of Gibraltar in art and print were accompanied by references on stage and in verse, which similarly extolled its importance through naval allusions and terminologies. Crucially, such references that symbolically linked Gibraltar with the Royal Navy continued to be made well into the Napoleonic period, in ways that evolved in response to corresponding political and strategic developments.

Lincoln demonstrated how the patriotic expression generated by the siege found its way into civil life and political discourse in Britain, through speeches given by MPs to local societies, and the grace and favours given to Admiral Rodney by institutions such as the City of London and the Guildhall. She used the example of Sir C. W. Rouse Boughton, who gave a speech in 1798 to a 'parochial meeting' that stressed how the navy's relief of Gibraltar demonstrated the British national character. Significantly, Boughton's speech was intended to raise funds for the defence of Britain – thus demonstrating both that the historical memory of the great siege was still highly relevant, and that the defence of the Rock was inextricably linked to the defence of the British metropole. Lincoln also relates how Rodney's election to parliament as MP for Westminster in 1780 was helped by his new-found celebrity after his relief of Gibraltar earlier in the year.<sup>172</sup> Although the military garrison has received great attention from historians and has since become emblematic of

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<sup>172</sup> Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy*, 62; 59.

Gibraltar's society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, much of the short- and medium-term reaction to the Great Siege was framed in overtly naval terms.

Geoff Quilley has recently suggested that landscape paintings and maritime art came to reflect multiple ideologies of Britishness. Most notably, he argued that British pride in its naval dominance and commercial prowess could be glimpsed in pastoral landscapes. By utilising the theory of 'double consciousness', Quilley's work points to how fresh interpretations can be made with regard to cultural representations of Gibraltar.<sup>173</sup> Even seemingly pastoral artworks (Quilley analyses Loutherboung's *The Evening Coach*) could contain subtle signifiers of Britain's maritime supremacy. Artworks concerning Gibraltar often reveal how integral the maritime sphere was to the fashioning of the Rock's image throughout the wider British world. Moreover, they also show that visitors to Gibraltar, British or otherwise, reflected much more than just its fortress-like qualities in the cultural material produced from their experiences. Take, for example, the work of the Florentine engraver Filippo Benucci, whose *Six views of Gibraltar and its environs* were published in Munich in 1826. Although several of the views placed importance upon the maritime sphere, one resonates with Quilley's interpretation in particular and shows how British naval strength came to be shown through its presence at Gibraltar. Titled *View of the Dockyard*, its foreground depicts a genteel scene as people walk through an Alameda (a tree lined path) whilst a gardener tends to the plants. One man wearing a cocked hat is plainly a soldier, but another is not obviously so. Aside from a single cannon and a castle far to the left, Gibraltar's military character is not overtly on display. Instead, and as the title of the print suggests, the dockyard assumes full prominence, with several vessels moored inside the mole and substantial naval warehouses and buildings shown on shore. Benucci's print details a multitude of factors that might be said to display 'conscious' themes – refined leisure pursuits, engagement with foreign flora, etc. – but crucially, the abiding signifier of British naval power is also undeniably visible.

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<sup>173</sup> Quilley utilised W. E. B. Du Bois's theory of 'double consciousness' in relation to explicitly maritime images (such as the *Brooks* slave ship). Geoff Quilley, 'Art and Double Consciousness: Visual Culture and Eighteenth-Century Maritime Britain', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 48, No. 1 (2014): 27-28.



Indeed, the framing of the print suggests that the fashionable and inquisitive interactions enjoyed by Britons in the Mediterranean were in fact enabled by the strong naval presence. A further interrogation of Gibraltar's appearance in the culture of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period thrusts the Royal Navy into view, presenting new interpretations of how Gibraltar was experienced and memorialised during this time.



Figure 2: Filippo Benucci, *View of the Dock-yard* (1826). British Museum (1917, 1208.695).

They also reflected an obvious reality: that observers and inhabitants of the Rock were continually confronted by the navy's presence, both through a substantive naval presence and the famous naval events that occurred in its vicinity. Lawrence Sawchuk and Jane Padiak analysed nineteenth-century images of Gibraltar published in the *Illustrated London News* and found that several of these views involved the navy – indeed, they noted that a recurrent theme of these 'pictorial images of Gibraltar at the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that of the majestic Rock with ships in the foreground.'<sup>1</sup> Several of the images had a maritime focus. One in particular, titled *The 'defence' of Gibraltar* depicted a mock attack from 1889, when the Governor arranged for the Channel Fleet to approach the rock in order to gauge how the garrison reacted.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this could not puncture the image of the 'fortress' as the dominant understanding of how Gibraltar was perceived, or lead to a more nuanced understanding of how representations also incorporated broader ideologies of British commercial success overseas. Benucci's print is just one of many cultural reproductions from an earlier period that presented the Rock through multiple 'conscious' factors. Thus, Gibraltar's presence as a 'conscious' part of British culture was not homogeneous – in fact, deviations from the insular citadel concept were extremely common.

### Gibraltar and the wider Mediterranean

British Mediterranean colonies have recently been seen as a potential rejoinder to the post-colonial theory of Orientalism, due to their dependence upon the Muslim North African states for trade.<sup>3</sup> Colley, in particular, has argued that Gibraltar, in the 'contested sea region' of the Mediterranean, presents a more complicated view of the imperial encounter with Africans than that originally suggested by Edward

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<sup>1</sup> L. A. Sawchuk and J. Padiak, 'Visual Artefacts of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gibraltar', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol. 7 (2000): 103.

<sup>2</sup> Sawchuk and Padiak, 'Visual Artefacts', 105-6.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 106.

Said.<sup>4</sup> In the context of the historiography of the wider Mediterranean, Gibraltar is usually mentioned only with reference to its antiquarian connections and its position as a gateway into the sea.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, historians of British connections with the Mediterranean have not moved beyond viewing the Rock through its acquisition, which heralded the beginnings of British strength in the region. E. H. Carr, for example, pointed to its 1704 capture as signifying the first in four stages of British policy towards the region.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Robert Holland's study of how the British interacted with the Mediterranean only briefly lands upon Gibraltar, packaging it with the surround Straits as a broader location travellers had to pass through in order to reach more significant destinations to the east.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Gibraltar can be said to exist between two ill-defined 'edges' – with few connections to deeply researched historical processes occurring in the Atlantic, and unattractive in comparison to potential socio-cultural encounters taking place deeper into the Mediterranean world. The Royal Navy, as an amphibious cultural bridge between the Mediterranean, Gibraltar and the world beyond can shed further light on how Britons engaged with and reacted to this underexplored region of the western Mediterranean.

Being a small mountainous promontory, Gibraltar lacked the effective natural resources necessary for refitting and victualling naval fleets. But this did not stop it from playing a crucial role for Britain in the region. Knight and Wilcox have demonstrated how the navy sourced cattle and sheep from the North African ports

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<sup>4</sup> Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600-1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), 103.

<sup>5</sup> As an example of this, the 2003 edited volume *The Mediterranean in History* acknowledges Gibraltar only in reference to the Strait that bears its name. Michel Balard, 'A Christian Mediterranean: 1000-1500', in *The Mediterranean in History*. Edited by David Abulafia (Thames & Hudson, 2003), 216.

<sup>6</sup> Carr identified the second stage as the capture of Malta in 1800, the third was gaining control of the Dardanelles, and the fourth was the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Michela D'Angelo, 'In the 'English' Mediterranean (1511-1815)', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* Vol. 12, No. 2 (2002): 271-2.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Holland, *Warm South: How the Mediterranean shaped the British imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), 67; 106.

in their work.<sup>8</sup> During the Peninsular War, Gibraltar also formed a key network with the Barbary States in procuring essential wheat for the British army in Spain.<sup>9</sup> James Brown's recent book *Crossing the Strait: Morocco, Gibraltar and Great Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries* (2012) has explored these networks and contacts in more detail. Brown focuses upon the appointment of Moroccan consuls in Gibraltar, a posting considered essential by the African state because of the key position of the Rock in relation to Mediterranean trade.<sup>10</sup> He also illustrates the diversity of the Gibraltarian merchant community by narrating how a resident Muslim butcher became wealthy as a result of supplying beef to the Royal Navy. By 1820, according to Brown, closer relations with the North African states had led to a significant increase in Gibraltar's Muslim population.<sup>11</sup> This, and many other encounters were directly and indirectly fostered by the position of the navy within Gibraltarian civic and military society. Hannah Weiss Muller is, however, able to add nuance by demonstrating that Gibraltar's governors periodically feared a breakdown in relations precisely because they were so reliant upon the North African states, and that policy was driven by such fears.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Gibraltar did in fact see an increase in trade by the end of the Napoleonic period – a development that has been seen as heralding a new mercantile age for the colony.<sup>13</sup> Yet curiously, any role that the Royal Navy may have played largely goes unnoticed, that is, aside from Archer and Traverso, who placed particular importance on the development of the naval victualling yard (1808-1812) in establishing Gibraltar's economic success and culturally diverse make-up.<sup>14</sup> As Katarina Galani has recently observed, Gibraltar

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<sup>8</sup> Knight and Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet*, 66.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon: The Organization of Victory 1793-1815* (London: Penguin, 2014), 426.

<sup>10</sup> Jason Brown, *Crossing the Strait: Morocco, Gibraltar and Great Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *Crossing the Strait*, 157.

<sup>12</sup> Hannah Weiss Muller, *Subjects and Sovereign: Bonds of Belonging in the Eighteenth-century British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 88.

<sup>13</sup> Tito Benady estimated that Gibraltar's imports more than tripled in value between 1805 and 1816, whilst the total number of vessels arriving more than doubled. Tito Benady, 'The Maritime Trade of Gibraltar 1805-1819', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, Vol. 19, no. 2 (2010): 189; 197.

<sup>14</sup> Archer and Traverso, *Education in Gibraltar*, 11.

and the other successful Mediterranean British trading outposts (Mahon, Malta and Livorno) were all served by navy victualling agents.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, British merchants regularly sought to protect the Gibraltar trading route through petitions to parliament. Maritime trade, and the necessarily complex routes and relationships needed to maintain it, offer a window into how Gibraltar was not necessarily conceived purely as an isolated, barren outpost during this period.

Gibraltar's governors were exclusively derived from the army – a situation that has perhaps contributed to the under-appreciated nature of the political relationship between the army and navy at Gibraltar during this period. Gibraltar's own internal politics were unstable during this period, particularly under the Duke of Kent, whose disastrous governorship lasted only a year before he was recalled following a mutiny in 1803. There then followed a near eighteen-year period in which nine successive 'lieutenant-governors' ruled the territory under the Duke's nominal governorship. Nevertheless, naval personnel played an integral role both in the internal politics of Gibraltar and in providing intelligence to the military governors. As Roger Morriss has noted, naval officers were heavily involved in correspondence with colonial governors throughout the empire.<sup>16</sup> The garrison's pre-eminence in modern Gibraltar historiography has perhaps dissuaded historians from interrogating these relationships, despite their potential to highlight the distinctly maritime outlook that successive governors displayed towards Gibraltar's security. Unhelpfully, George Hills' characterisation of Gibraltar as important 'only as a post office' after the capture of Malta has not been effectively challenged by any subsequent scholarship.<sup>17</sup> As with the disparaging comments directed towards the dockyard, this remark unhelpfully limits potential conclusions regarding Gibraltar's relationship to its geographic neighbours. Gibraltar's status as a key receptacle of intelligence and as a crucial node in Mediterranean maritime networks was in fact integral to British strategy in the region. Furthermore, these attributes formed a

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<sup>15</sup> Katarina Galani, *British Shipping in the Mediterranean during the Napoleonic Wars: the untold story of a successful adaptation* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 83.

<sup>16</sup> Morriss, *Naval Power*, 263-4.

<sup>17</sup> Hills, *Rock of Contention*, 365.

pivotal aspect of the community's very survival – as discussed above, intelligence and trade networks sustained by the Royal Navy ensured a regular conveyance of goods and information into the territory. As well as being a staging post for military endeavours, Gibraltar's capacity as a 'post office' also assisted in the transmission of sensitive information between British consuls, diplomats and naval personnel serving in the wider Mediterranean sphere. The work of James Davey, who in the context of the Baltic has highlighted the need to investigate the navy's logistical operations alongside British diplomatic efforts there, points to fresh avenues of investigation with regard to Gibraltar and the Royal Navy.<sup>18</sup>

Ian Collier has recently advanced the historiographical concept of the 'revolutionary Mediterranean'. For Collier, the Mediterranean remained 'the great unasked question' of the revolutionary era.<sup>19</sup> In his analysis, the activities of revolutionary France sparked fears and anxieties that forced active responses across the Mediterranean. Curiously, Britain does not appear to figure heavily in Collier's thinking, despite its very real presence in that sea during the period in question. Gibraltar provided a platform from which Britain responded to revolutionary processes that emanated from those states with vastly more substantial Mediterranean coastlines. Despite sharing many characteristics with the numerous Mediterranean islands that Britain fought over during the period discussed here, Gibraltar's short land border with Spain has prevented it from being included in historiographical assessments of British maritime strategy in the region. For example, Davey's recent chapter 'Britain's European Island-Empire, 1793-1815' neglects to seriously consider Gibraltar alongside Corsica, Minorca, Malta, Sicily and the Ionian Islands as part of British empire-building within the Mediterranean. His observation that these European islands have been neglected historiographically because 'historians have tended to think of them as individual, specific cases, rather than as a wider network of imperial possessions' can surely also be applied to

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<sup>18</sup> James Davey, 'Supplied by the enemy: the Royal Navy and the British consular service in the Baltic, 1808-12', *Historical Research*, Vol. 85, no. 228 (2012): 267.

<sup>19</sup> Ian Collier, 'The Revolutionary Mediterranean', in *A Companion to the French Revolution*. Edited by Peter McPhee (Chichester: Blackwell, 2013), 420.

scholarly assessments of the Rock.<sup>20</sup> Once again, the Royal Navy is key to understanding how Gibraltar both enabled and secured the wider British presence during this tumultuous era.

In Joshua Meeks' *France, Britain, and the Struggle for the Revolutionary Western Mediterranean* (2017), Gibraltar figures as a purely strategic location, mentioned only in passing when referencing troop movements and naval manoeuvres. Revealingly, the scholarship that Meeks draws upon for his brief interpretation of Gibraltar is based squarely around the work of Bradford, Hills and Jackson – all of whom contributed to the current paradigm of Gibraltar as an inadequate naval base yet impregnable fortress during this period, and the most recent published in 1987.<sup>21</sup> Whilst working within the emerging historiographical framework of the 'revolutionary Mediterranean' (and with a stated 'western' focus), Meeks' eye is drawn more towards the central maritime zone, particularly around the island of Corsica and its relationship to revolutionary France. Consequently, Gibraltar is cast on the edge of British strategic objectives, as opposed to being a cornerstone of the overall British policy of containing revolutionary processes within the Mediterranean itself. Meeks contends that 'Gibraltar was too distant to adequately project power in the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian Seas', a dubious claim, but one that is redolent of and influenced by Gibraltar's currently stale and dated status within even the most novel of historiographic movements.<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusions

Despite some recent focused scholarly attention upon the development of British Gibraltar, assessments remain very much rooted in the inward-looking, 'garrison

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<sup>20</sup> James Davey, 'Britain's European Island-Empire, 1793-1815', in *Islands and the British Empire in the Age of Sail*. Edited by Douglas Hamilton and John McAleer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 37.

<sup>21</sup> Joshua Meeks, *France, Britain, and the Struggle for the Revolutionary Western Mediterranean* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 25n.

<sup>22</sup> Meeks, *France, Britain and the Struggle for the Revolutionary Western Mediterranean*, 114.



state' orthodoxy that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century. This is very much a recent development as, although the military aspect has always been an integral factor in shaping the outlook of Gibraltar's inhabitants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, resident commentators were also highly aware of the Rock's dependence upon the Royal Navy for security and sustenance. On the whole, some of the blame for the continued oversight of this deep historical connection can be attributed to the wider trends of Imperial history, among which Gibraltar has become somewhat cast adrift and mischaracterised, and rendered unconnected to global processes of change. In some historiographical areas, its absence can be justified, but even so, the idea and image of Gibraltar was eagerly deployed by contemporaries (and by historians ever since) to signify strategic objectives across the empire. In most cases, these references were highly influenced by the contemporary acceptance of Gibraltar's naval usefulness – in direct opposition to some modern conclusions - and with enthusiastic forecasting as to how the Royal Navy's (and by extension, Britain's) influence might be extended across the globe.

Furthermore, modern interpretations of Gibraltar's usefulness as a naval station and harbour continue to be based upon dated and outmoded scholarship, as well as work that successfully portrays one aspect of the Rock's character (the inward-looking characteristics of the 'garrison' state) at the expense of its outward relationship to the maritime sphere, which was shaped fundamentally by the Royal Navy. Historians are still susceptible to assuming that Gibraltar's geographical impediments limited its overall value as a British possession. In fact, as this thesis will show, Gibraltar's relationship to the Royal Navy enhanced its status in the period immediately after the Great Siege, and in ways not previously appreciated by naval historians. In the wake of scholarship by Lincoln, Jenks and others aimed at injecting cultural perspectives into historiographies of the Royal Navy (and explaining how they intersect with political and social approaches), Gibraltar's conceptualisation as a culturally important imperial outpost became heavily infused with naval symbolism and naval demonstrations of commemoration and celebration. In further appearances in contemporary forms of culture, it came to

reflect the hopes and fears of the domestic British scene, particularly in relation to reports of potential invasion, and concerns over the Royal Navy's fighting capability. Despite the absence of interrogative histories examining how Britain and Gibraltar were mutually constituted during this period, the Gibraltar memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum demonstrates that historical ties remain key to modern political expressions of Gibraltar's 'Britishness'. Moreover, the summoning of a potential link to Nelson, the enduring British mythic hero of the age, underlines that the Royal Navy during the age of sail continues to be a useful historical signifier of a shared British/Gibraltarian history and identity.

## Thesis structure

This thesis utilises a diverse methodological approach in interrogating Gibraltar's relationship with the Royal Navy, consistent with the historiographical trends associated with naval history and described at length above. Chapter 1 provides context of how the navy interacted with Gibraltar during this period. Rather than studying Gibraltar through a strategic, operational lens, it seeks to understand how the experience of naval officers and military personnel serving there came to reflect an implicit consensus regarding its value as a British possession. Gibraltar's history of siege, epidemics and as a crucial hub for the movement of goods and information is examined through the actions and correspondence of naval personnel. This chapter demonstrates that Gibraltar was highly valued for a variety of reasons, not least for its capacity to assist Britain in managing the contested seas around it, but also for its propensity to reward officers financially in the form of prizes.

Similarly, chapter 2 explores how the navy's activities at Gibraltar had a profound impact upon residents of and visitors to the Rock during the period discussed. Many written accounts were produced by visitors to Gibraltar, and through them a different angle on the lived experience of the Rock's community is elucidated. Crucially, many of the sources used in this chapter are not 'naval' in origin. In

utilising a broad range of sources from naval and non-naval individuals this chapter demonstrates just how integral the Royal Navy was to how Gibraltar was experienced by those that resided there. Naval warfare occurring in close proximity had the capacity to terrify and awe in equal measure, and ceremonies that brought Gibraltar's nascent community together were frequently oriented around such events.

Finally, Chapter 3 looks at how the relationship between the navy and the Rock played out in Britain, primarily through an analysis of the various forms of contemporaneous culture and artworks that prominently displayed the interaction to Britons. The work of renowned artists such as Copley have occasionally featured in Gibraltar's historiography, but the Rock, and the experience of the 'Great Siege' in particular led to an outpouring of cultural works during this period that has thus far not been fully integrated into discussions of Gibraltar within the British Empire. This chapter builds upon recent scholarship that has sought to study the Royal Navy as a cultural institution. In the process, the historiography of Gibraltar can become more attuned to the modern advances in thinking about the Royal Navy and the wider empire.



## Chapter 1: '[T]he general rendezvous of all our courage': The Royal Navy and Gibraltar 1779-1830

### The Great Siege

On 16 June 1779, partly persuaded by French promises of assistance in the retaking of Gibraltar, Spain declared war on Britain.<sup>1</sup> A blockade and siege of the Rock began almost immediately. The British Mediterranean squadron was completely unprepared and outnumbered, as the Spanish instigated an initially tight cordon around the Rock.<sup>2</sup> But over the siege's more than three-and-a-half-year timespan, the increasing inability of the Spanish navy to impose their blockade effectively enabled British efforts to resupply the Rock. As Gibraltar could not be resupplied by land, and the siege was unlikely to be lifted by any military force, retaining the Rock relied upon naval relief convoys successfully penetrating the Allied blockade. This was duly achieved on three successive occasions.

Rodney's relief of 1780 was particularly successful, delivering not only much needed supplies but also soundly defeating the Spanish fleet beforehand, taking five vessels as prizes and destroying five more at the so called 'moonlight battle' off Cape St Vincent.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the two later reliefs, Rodney's operation was conducted as part of a wider effort that saw his naval force escort a Caribbean-bound convoy into the Atlantic before splitting off to sail for the Rock.<sup>4</sup> Soon after the battle Rodney wrote that Britain 'was again mistress of the Straits', and that 'Great Britain this

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish were also tempted by the promise of recapturing Minorca and Florida from the British. But tellingly, efforts to retake Gibraltar were rapidly put into motion. Matthew Lockwood, *To Begin the World Over Again: How the American Revolution Devastated the Globe* (London: Yale University Press, 2019), 141.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1913), 121.

<sup>3</sup> William Goldsmith, *The Naval History of Great Britain from the Earliest Period* (London: J. Jaques & W. Wright, 1825), 641.

<sup>4</sup> Piers Mackesy, *The War for America: 1775-1783* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 311.



Figure 3: Map of the Straits of Gibraltar, showing local sites of interest. Sourced through Creative Commons.

moment reigns sovereign of the Mediterranean as well as of the ocean'.<sup>5</sup> The importance of Gibraltar to the navy is highlighted by the actions of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Sandwich. By ordering that Rodney's five ships of the line should be augmented with a further seventeen from the Channel fleet he ensured that the British were able to confront the Spanish with overwhelming numerical superiority, and thus easily resupply Gibraltar.<sup>6</sup> Admiral Darby's relief a year later has been the least heralded of the three, yet the circumstances in which it took place attest to the ineffectual nature of the Spanish blockade and the dominance that was routinely enjoyed by the Royal Navy. On his arrival, the Spanish failed to sail out from Cadiz to intercept his squadron, allowing Darby's one-hundred strong fleet easy access to the Rock, where vital supplies were unloaded. Furthermore, Darby was able to transport approximately one thousand civilians back to Britain, substantially lessening the demand for victuals within the garrison.<sup>7</sup> Aside from a small skirmish between some British frigates and Spanish gunboats, no major fleet action had been necessary to effect Gibraltar's second relief.<sup>8</sup> The *Newcastle Chronicle* described Darby's success in the following terms:

The uninterrupted voyage of Admiral Darby to Gibraltar, is a proof that our enemies, notwithstanding the increase of their navy, have not experienced an increase of their courage, and that the impressions which British tars made upon them last war, is not yet irradiated.<sup>9</sup>

The *Oxford Journal* wrote that 'Admiral Darby's riding triumphant, within Sight of the principal Port of Spain... will turn out of as much Advantage to the Empire as almost any *modern naval victory*'.<sup>10</sup> However, Darby's success at Gibraltar had

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<sup>5</sup> *The Life and Correspondence of the late Admiral Lord Rodney*. Edited by Major General Mundy, Volume I (London: John Murray, 1830), 223; 228-9.

<sup>6</sup> Mackesy, *The War for America*, 311.

<sup>7</sup> Falkner, *Fire over the Rock*, 76.

<sup>8</sup> *The Naval Chronicle: Volume XXIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92.

<sup>9</sup> *Newcastle Chronicle*, Saturday 12 May 1781.

<sup>10</sup> The *Oxford Journal* also wrote: 'The relieving of Gibraltar, without the least Disturbance from the Bourbon Fleets, must open the Eyes of all Europe to the truly

unforeseen strategic consequences that seriously affected Britain's chances in other theatres. The French Admiral de Suffren had taken the opportunity of a weakened Channel fleet to set out from Brest to the Indian Ocean, whilst Admiral de Grasse crossed the Atlantic for the West Indies, from where his fleet would eventually go on to play a significant role in the British defeat at Yorktown.<sup>11</sup> The first two reliefs, though each successful in their primary goal, lessened British control of the Atlantic and the western approaches to the Channel, allowing French fleets to take the war to Britain in more remote regions of the globe.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the three traditionally heralded reliefs, a surprisingly large number of smaller fleets and supply vessels managed to evade the Allied blockade throughout the siege. The Spanish failure to institute a strict blockade was undoubtedly one of the factors that led to the siege's ultimate failure.<sup>13</sup> As early as July 1779 three vessels got in, providing Eliott with vital supplies at the outset of hostilities.<sup>14</sup> John Drinkwater recorded that in February 1781 'our supplies from the eastward were now pretty regular, and the boats and vessels in general very successful in their voyages'. Drinkwater admired 'the perseverance of these foreigners' whose voyages to the Rock took them tight along the Spanish coast, at high risk 'from the number and vigilance of the Enemy's cruisers'. Their success was attributed to the fact that the craft greatly resembled those of the enemy, allowing them to blend in before running into Gibraltar under cover of darkness.<sup>15</sup> When Roger Curtis arrived at Gibraltar in April 1781, he did so at the head of a convoy of twenty ships from

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superior State of the Navy of Great Britain, and have a great Effect on Russia and Portugal'. *Oxford Journal*, Saturday 12 May 1781.

<sup>11</sup> Falkner, *Fire over the Rock*, 77; Mackesy, *The War for America*, 387.

<sup>12</sup> David French, *The British Way in Warfare 1688-2000* (London: Routledge, 1990), 80.

<sup>13</sup> Sam Willis, *The Struggle for Sea Power: The Royal Navy vs the World, 1775-1782* (London: Atlantic Books, 2015), 469; R. J. B. Knight, 'The Royal Navy's Recovery after the Early Phase of the American Revolutionary War', in *The Aftermath of Defeat: Societies, Armed Forces, and the Challenge of Recovery*. Edited by George J. Andreopoulos and Harold E. Selesky (London: Yale University Press, 1994), 23.

<sup>14</sup> Paul K. Davis, *Besieged: An Encyclopedia of Great Sieges from Ancient Times to the Present* (Oxford: ABC Clio, 2001), 184-5.

<sup>15</sup> John Drinkwater Bethune, *A history of the late siege of Gibraltar* (London: T. Spilsbury, 1786), 135-6.



Minorca.<sup>16</sup> Many other recorded instances of ships entering Gibraltar demonstrate the blockade's impotence. Immediately prior to Admiral Darby's arrival in April 1781, a 14-gun privateer evaded four Spanish vessels in the bay and provided the garrison with news of the impending relief.<sup>17</sup> In February 1782 a solitary Brig got in, even after sailing in full sight of the Spanish batteries across the bay at Algeciras.<sup>18</sup> Clever ruses were also used to slip the blockade; in May 1782 three storeships delivered essential ammunition by flying French flags and then sailing into Gibraltar after circumventing the Spanish gunboats.<sup>19</sup> In July 1782 two Italian vessels brought supplies along with news of Rodney's victory at the Saintes - a significant morale boost for the besieged.<sup>20</sup> Jonathan R. Dull argued that the British could have based their entire strategy around allowing Gibraltar to be relieved by this constant trickle of small merchant vessels, thus freeing up their line-of-battle ships to adequately protect British interests in other theatres.<sup>21</sup> In retrospect that policy might have succeeded, but conditions on the Rock were undoubtedly precarious, and abandoning it in that way increased the possibility of its succumbing to attack. Even with regular resupplying, Eliott was forced to impose severe rationing upon his charges, who consequently endured extreme hardship. The fortitude displayed by the garrison was indeed immense, but without the maritime situation around Gibraltar itself being strongly in Britain's favour it would surely have gone unrewarded.

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<sup>16</sup> These ships arrived just a week after Darby's relief, but nevertheless they provided useful supplies to the garrison. Benady, *Royal Navy*, 54.

<sup>17</sup> Drinkwater, *A history of the late siege of Gibraltar*, 138.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Ancell, *A Journal of the Late and Important Blockade and Siege of Gibraltar, from the twelfth of September 1779, to the third day of February 1783* (Edinburgh: Samuel Ancell, 1784), 170-1.

<sup>19</sup> Adkins, *Gibraltar*, 285-6.

<sup>20</sup> Upon receiving news of Rodney's victory Eliott ordered a celebratory bombardment of the Spanish lines. Walter Gordon observed that the enemy 'knew the cause of our joy, and severely felt the effects of our rejoicing. Every heart blessed the gallant Rodney; a more sincere feu de joie was never observed'. Quoted in Adkins, *Gibraltar*, 288-9.

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence: A study of Arms and Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 225.

The diary of Miriam Green, wife of engineer Colonel William Green provides extra context into how the siege was experienced by Gibraltar's non-combatants. It ran from 1 June 1779 to 13 June 1781, and according to its author was not created for public consumption.<sup>22</sup> Concerns regarding the performance of the navy were prevalent early on, as she writes 'We had our Fears particularly as our admiral did not seem overforward to let any of our ships go out to stop any Thing'.<sup>23</sup> The Admiral was Robert Duff, and Green's perturbation at his conduct appeared to be shared by the garrison. When he was late getting out to meet a Spanish convoy she recorded that 'This occasioned great discontent and in consequence some Vowes &c were made.'<sup>24</sup> Several such instances were to occur. On 9 October Green recorded an event that 'gave great displeasure to the Garrison'. A vessel 'loaded with Bullocks from Barbary was spotted in the bay, yet despite it being 'Supposed that We might have brought Her Into the Mole with Ease' Duff again did nothing, and apparently acted indifferently to being slighted by officers of the Navy and Army as a result. After yet another moment of inaction in November, Green wrote that 'Several very Severe Papers were put up on the Different Parades Reflecting upon the Admiral's Conduct.'<sup>25</sup> The opening months of the siege were relatively quiet compared to what lay ahead, but activities in the bay commanded the attention of Gibraltar's besieged residents. It is quite telling that on 1 January 1780 Green could record that 'The Troops are in good Health and Spirits, and have been so during the whole Blockade.' Although there had been intermittent exchange of artillery fire, the term 'blockade' was a more apt description of the siege's initial phase.<sup>26</sup> When a British storeship successfully entered the harbour in January 1780 Green exclaimed 'Oh! What a Joyful Sight!' When the vessel was brought into the New Mole – 'with more than half the Garrison looking at Her!' – it emerged that she brought news of an impending relief fleet, with 'one of the young Princes' on-board

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<sup>22</sup> Green wrote of her diary: 'I fear I should fall short of any Style or Method, were it intended for any Persons information except such of my Family Friends who perhaps will not Dislike to pass an Idle hour in looking over these pages.' Green, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 15-17.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 21.

*Prince George*.<sup>27</sup> This was Prince William, then serving as a young midshipman. Rodney's victory off Cape St Vincent consolidated morale in Gibraltar and allowed for celebrations in the wake of what had been anxious times. The news was hailed as 'great and Glorious', and Admiral Duff 'hoisted the Royal Standard and fired 21 Guns, the Drums all beating, the Men of War giving 3 Cheers'.<sup>28</sup> The Fleet's arrival also had social ramifications, as the Green's hosted the prince, who Mrs Green found to be 'a very fine Youth'. They then entertained a 'very large Party at dinner' with 'many of our Navy Acquaintances'.<sup>29</sup>

The months following Rodney's departure did not see an increase in hostilities. Green wrote that 'this last Month the Enemy may have been rather slow in their business of all kinds... Would to God They either would leave us or show themselves in Earnest'.<sup>30</sup> However, the siege still caused great uneasiness. Green's diary makes constant reference to the high costs of provisions and the presence of smallpox, especially amongst the children of the garrison. A fire-ship attack launched by the Spanish on 7 June 1780 signalled a change of atmosphere. On seeing the ships approaching Green described them as looking like 'so Many Moving Mountains of Fire!' and being 'actually Stupid with Fright'.<sup>31</sup> The attack was ultimately unsuccessful, but its immediacy caused great anxiety – one vessel got between the shore and *Panther* whilst still burning, threatening the New Mole with destruction. Green's entry concluded by stating that she 'was, as well as many others, much affected with this unexpected alarm.' Later that month the Spanish commenced attacks from what Green called 'Boats of a particular Construction'. In the dark, the gunboats 'were low in the water' and 'could not be distinguish'd except from the Flashes of their Guns'.<sup>32</sup> Over the course of the year, the Spanish works on the Isthmus steadily encroached closer towards Gibraltar, as expressed by Green on 5 November when she wrote that 'Every Body seems Anxious to Move to the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 51-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 54-5.

Southward.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, as gunboat activity intensified to the south vessels continued to run the blockade. One example on 25 December of a ship that brought in '300 Casks of flour' at a time when supplies were drastically low was typical of how these events boosted the morale of the defenders, as Green described it as putting 'every Body into high Spirits.'<sup>34</sup> After Darby's relief of 1781, the Spanish unleashed an immense bombardment, and redoubled their efforts at harrying the shoreline with their gunboats. This period overlapped with that later described by Upton. Green appears to have benefitted from greater distance as her house was further from the shore and had a newly constructed bomb-proof shelter. But her terror was manifestly similar, as her house suffered a near miss when a shot landed in the garden.<sup>35</sup> The last journal entry dated 13 June 1781 that simply stated 'Westerly Wind; all quiet from Gun Boats' neatly encapsulates how intrusive and affecting their impact had been upon Gibraltar's besieged population.<sup>36</sup>

Modern interpretations of the siege have invariably drawn upon the courage displayed by Gibraltar's garrison. But the Royal Navy was crucial to its retention, with the three naval convoys providing essential relief to the garrison when supplies were critically low, raising the morale of the Rock's besieged inhabitants and blunting that of its attackers.<sup>37</sup> Although the siege lingered on until February 1783, its real climax occurred in September and October of 1782. Firstly, a co-ordinated 'grand assault' by the allied forces was successfully repulsed by the British defenders. Bolstered by the addition of French forces after the capture of Minorca, the Allies attempted a huge bombardment of the Rock with self-proclaimed fire-proof floating batteries. This assault was defeated through a

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>35</sup> When she left Gibraltar, she took with her 'a Large piece of this Shott, it being Esteem'd a Curiosity in its kind.' Green, 108.

<sup>36</sup> Miriam Green left Gibraltar in June 1781, and with her health failing died a year later on 21 June 1782. Her husband had been refused permission to return to England on leave. R. H. Vetch, rev. W. Johnson, 'Sir William Green', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 23. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 544.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Conway, *A Short History of the American Revolutionary War* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2013), 166.

combination of the garrison firing red-hot shot at the floating gun-platforms, causing some of them to explode, and a successful counteraction by the naval commander Roger Curtis.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, Lord Howe's successful relief and subsequent repelling of the Allied fleet off Cape Spartel reinforced not only the garrison but also the afore-mentioned perception of the Royal Navy's superiority.

The confined ordeal of the military garrison whilst besieged has been the siege's enduring legacy. However, the siege could be alternatively described as a naval blockade. Gibraltar was confronted by siege lines constructed by the Spanish as the siege progressed, but as its landward border was only eight-hundred metres long it stands to reason that any 'siege' of the Rock would be strongly maritime in character. After all, the Allied 'Grand Assault' strategy depended upon the bombardment from the floating batteries acting in co-ordination with an amphibious assault.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the maritime and military experiences on Gibraltar were not disconnected by the siege. As will be shown, members of the garrison regularly looked to the sea for the Royal Navy's assistance, and sailors performed the duty of soldiers – most notably in the successful sortie against the Spanish lines in November 1781. The camaraderie that existed as a result of the siege is strikingly shown by Eliott later referring to himself in his correspondence with Curtis as a 'half sea officer'.<sup>40</sup> Soldiers of the garrison were also entitled to prize-money for having assisted in the destruction of the floating batteries in 1782. The bounty was awarded to the 'officers, soldiers, seamen, and marines' of Gibraltar's garrison and naval department.<sup>41</sup> In recognising the siege's success, it is surely noteworthy that

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<sup>38</sup> An excellent visual representation of this attack can be found in Rene Chartrand, *Gibraltar 1779-83: The Great Siege* (Oxford: Osprey, 2006), 76-7.

<sup>39</sup> Falkner, *Fire over the Rock*, 102.

<sup>40</sup> NMM MSS/72/077, 'Letters from Gen G. A. Eliott to Capt Roger Curtis, 1782-4, at Gibraltar'.

<sup>41</sup> *The Statutes at Large, from the Magna Charta to the end of the Eleventh Parliament of Great Britain*, Vol. XXXIV (Cambridge: Charles Bathurst, 1782), 222-3.

Gibraltar itself was treated like a naval vessel, with prize money divided out between all of its surviving defenders.<sup>42</sup>

Although military explanations of Gibraltar's survival, derived from the resulting stories of bravery and suffering displayed by the garrison are readily found within histories of the siege, the importance of the navy has also been recognised.<sup>43</sup> Of course, in a siege of over three years the garrison necessarily withstood a period of immense adversity. And it was not totally passive, as Elliott's pre-emptive sortie against the siege works in November 1781 set back Spanish plans for assaulting the Rock by at least several months.<sup>44</sup> But operationally, the maritime sphere emerged as a major factor in determining the siege's successful outcome, and the Royal Navy's ability to overcome its adversaries in the straits ultimately rendered the siege unsuccessful. Indeed, the way the siege was experienced by those on Gibraltar as a mixed military/maritime endeavour offers a corrective to modern Gibraltarian historiography, and its tendency to map modern political issues onto past experiences. Gibraltar's capacity as a fortress was an important factor, but it was not the only one that led to Allied failure. The navy's performance in repeatedly outmanoeuvring the Allied fleets was as important as the stoic resistance offered by the British soldiers in occasioning a change to Gibraltar's status within the British public and political mood.

As will be shown, the Great Siege had a profound effect upon Gibraltar's political and cultural place within the wider British Empire. But Britain's determination to retain the Rock is revealing of Gibraltar's ascending position before the siege began. Britain's empire was built on global trading routes that depended upon strategically

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<sup>42</sup> It was surprisingly common for visitors to Gibraltar to use maritime terminologies and descriptions when referring to the Rock. Examples of this can be found in chapter 3.

<sup>43</sup> For more on this, see Richard Harding's review of Roy and Leslie Adkins's work on the siege, which argued that more work needs to be done on how the siege relates to Gibraltar's growth as 'a vital naval base that was essential to the growth of the British Empire in the nineteenth century'. Richard Harding, 'Gibraltar: The greatest siege in British history', *The Mariner's Mirror* Vol. 106 no. 1 (2020): 102.

<sup>44</sup> Adkins, *Gibraltar*, 255.

important naval bases such as Gibraltar for protection. The entry of France and Spain into the American war threatened British naval pre-eminence and consequently its maritime trading network. The loss of some or all of these bases could have ruinous consequences not just for British pride but also for the war effort, itself heavily dependent upon credit raised from the City of London. Losing Gibraltar and subsequently a large portion of Britain's Mediterranean trade would have seriously affected the government's ability to even continue paying for the war.<sup>45</sup> It would also have diminished Britain's maritime superiority in a reconfigured post-war world. British strategy in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars prioritised the maintenance of naval superiority and protection of trade over land campaigns.<sup>46</sup> But the military 'fortress' of Gibraltar was not isolated from the economic maritime warfare that followed – rather, it found itself centrally located in one of the main theatres.

As the only passage from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, the straits of Gibraltar funnelled merchant shipping into its narrow corridor and allowed for a greater possibility of enemy privation. Subsequently, the importance of maintaining British control of the area was a foremost consideration for naval personnel. Possessing Gibraltar gave Britain a constant physical presence in the heart of the straits, where enemy operations could be better observed and British vessels repaired and kept seaworthy. The actions of enemy privateers in the straits were a constant and very real threat to British commercial interests throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Upon taking command of the Mediterranean squadron in 1795, Admiral John Jervis wrote to Spencer that

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<sup>45</sup> Andrew Lambert has recently argued that 'Britain could have secured peace with Spain by surrendering Gibraltar and Minorca, but doing so would have been a national disgrace and annihilated British trade in the Mediterranean.' Andrew Lambert, 'The British Grand Strategy', in *The American Revolution: A World War*. Edited by David Allison and Larrie D. Ferreiro (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Books, 2018), 36.

<sup>46</sup> Lambert, *Seapower States*, 283.

Gibraltar and its environs will require a considerable degree of attention, both on account of supplies to the garrison, and the general trade, to and from the Mediterranean

Accordingly, Jervis suggested that 'two sixty-four-gun ships, four frigates, and two sloops' would be sufficient for the task.<sup>47</sup> In 1799, Nelson wrote to Admiral Duckworth from Palermo that he was 'exceedingly anxious to keep the Straits free', and that any naval vessels departing for England should endeavour 'to take the trade from Gibraltar'.<sup>48</sup> Later that year, Jahleel Brenton's successful action in Gibraltar Bay against twelve Spanish gunboats was celebrated for having cleared the straits of enemy vessels for two months afterwards, allowing British trade to pass through securely.<sup>49</sup> John Gore remarked to Nelson in June 1804 that 'French Privateers in the Gut to the Eastward of Gibraltar have lately committed many outrageous acts of violence upon British merchant vessels'. Gore estimated that at least seven enemy ships were operating in the Gut, and that collectively their force could threaten that of British frigates.<sup>50</sup> Nelson wrote to Gore in August praising his recent actions off Gibraltar, 'for the good and protection of the Trade of His Majesty's Subjects against the unprincipled conduct of the French Pirates'.<sup>51</sup> Nelson's appreciation for Gore's conduct in the Straits was inextricably linked to the protection of trade; in a letter to the first secretary to the Admiralty William Marsden, Nelson commented:

I very highly approve of the meritorious conduct of that excellent Officer... and for the great and perfect security which he has afforded with his little Squadron to our Trade to, and from, this Country.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Jedediah Stephens Tucker, who published Jervis's memoirs in 1844, noted sarcastically that the Admiral 'never received any answers' to this set of queries, of which Jervis's concerns about Gibraltar formed part of. Jedediah Stephens Tucker, *Memoirs of Admiral the Right Honorable the Earl of St. Vincent Vol. I* (London: Richard Bentley, 1844), 203.

<sup>48</sup> *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, Volume III*. Edited by Nicholas Harris Nicolas (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), 465-6.

<sup>49</sup> *The Naval Chronicle, Volume V* (London: Bunney & Gold, 1801), 494.

<sup>50</sup> NMM CRK/6/36, 'Gore to Nelson, HMS Medusa, Gibraltar, 21 June 1804'.

<sup>51</sup> *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Horatio Nelson, Volume VI*. Edited by Nicholas Harris Nicolas (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), 137.

<sup>52</sup> *Dispatches and Letters, Volume VI*, 266.



Gore later wrote that the actions of the Spanish since he had assumed command of the Gibraltar station had afforded him 'ample subject for animadversion'. The act of detaining Spanish shipping in the straits had clearly led to a deterioration of relations. Gore's comments were mentioned in parliament during a debate on the war with Spain, in response to concerns raised by the Spanish ambassador about British activities in the straits of Gibraltar. Gore felt the British actions justified, in part due to 'the open partiality they have marked towards our enemies'.<sup>53</sup>

The British desire to protect their commercial interests, alongside well-founded suspicions regarding the true allegiance of the Spanish, led to the maritime space around Gibraltar becoming a flashpoint between the two nations. British captains had been instructed not to detain Spanish vessels, but their orders to 'require the Commander of such Ship to return directly to the Port from whence she came', and to detain them if they refused were always likely to lead to conflict.<sup>54</sup> Previous agreements between France and Spain also made Britain intensely suspicious of the supposedly neutral Spanish. Spain had not renounced the Treaty of San Ildefonso (1800), which required them to provide naval and military assistance to France, and observations of naval armaments at Spanish ports heightened British expectations of an impending formal alliance.<sup>55</sup> In a June 1803 dispatch to John Hookham Frere, the British envoy at Madrid, the foreign secretary Lord Hawkesbury made it clear that any signs of an imminent Franco-Spanish alliance should be communicated immediately to naval officers in the Mediterranean, specifically at Gibraltar and Lisbon, so that they might intercept Spanish vessels attempting to get through the

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<sup>53</sup> The Spanish ambassador had written to the British foreign secretary, Lord Harrowbury, in November 1804 concerning the detention of the Spanish frigate *Mathilde* by Gore in the straits. Both sides disputed the others' version of events – Gore maintained that his vessels had not used undue force, whereas the Spanish ambassador Jose de Anduaga argued that *Medusa* had fired a broadside at the *Mathilde*. *The Parliamentary Debates, from the year 1803 to the present time Vol III* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1812), 300; 305.

<sup>54</sup> *Papers Relative to the Discussion with Spain in 1802, 1803, and 1804* (London: A. Strahan, 1803), 401.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 179; *Papers Relative to the Discussion with Spain*, 396-397.

straits.<sup>56</sup> In this context, it is unsurprising that war did eventually broke out. Gibraltar was evidently a key concern, being a focal point of the heightened tensions where hostile maritime encounters between the two nations was liable to occur. What is noteworthy however, is that it was manifestly not its fortress-like status that did so – but rather, the operational ability provided by Gibraltar’s dockyard and its strategic location adjoining the pivotal straits that allowed the Royal Navy to protect British interests in the region.

Gibraltar’s geographical location made it distinctly advantageous for the Royal Navy’s ability to protect trade. Situated almost equidistant from Britain and the farthest reaches of the eastern Mediterranean, it served as an extremely useful rendezvous for naval vessels that could protect merchant convoys travelling in either direction. Pertinently for naval policy makers, this allowed for extremely specific orders to be given – such as those transmitted to Captain Thomas Briggs of *Agincourt* by Nelson in April 1804. Briggs was ordered to Gibraltar, from whence he was to convoy merchant vessels to Malta and return from there to Gibraltar with ‘all our trade which may be collected there, from the Levant and Adriatic’. Finally, he was then to accompany any merchant ships waiting there to Britain. Nelson’s letter finished with a warning for Briggs to oversee every ship closely, ‘the protection of our Commerce being an object of great importance’.<sup>57</sup> Gibraltar was the proverbial safe port in a tumultuous, disputed sea - a strategic hinge from which British commercial interests in multiple theatres and directions could be protected. Even in times of peace, naval vessels regularly conveyed merchant remittances to Gibraltar and on to Britain from ports along the Mediterranean coastline. Captain John Markham was sent on a cruise to Barcelona and Marseille for that specific purpose in September 1785.<sup>58</sup> Often performed simultaneously with the protection of merchant vessels, in wartime this duty took on greater

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<sup>56</sup> *Journals of the House of Commons 1688-1834, Volume 60* (1805), 549.

<sup>57</sup> *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, Volume V*. Edited by Nicholas Harris Nicolas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 510.

<sup>58</sup> NMM MRK/100/2/138, ‘9 September 1785, Captain Blankett to Markham, HMS Sphinx at Leghorn’.

significance. Where orders were unclear or Captains unsure how to act, the general protection of trade and transmission of specie was a standard default position to assume. The captain of *Gibraltar*, George Ryves, sailed for Cadiz from the Rock in June 1804 after some confused discussions with John Gore regarding orders – he ended up taking four merchantmen home along with ‘some dollars which the merchants wished to send to England’.<sup>59</sup> The sums involved were often significant, as in September 1804, when the 3<sup>rd</sup>-rate *Kent* sailed from Gibraltar to convoy two merchantmen and a shipment of 1 million dollars collected at Cadiz.<sup>60</sup> As well as being logistically a key base for military operations, Gibraltar was also crucial in facilitating the flow of money to finance the British military activities during the Peninsular War.<sup>61</sup> The permanent naval presence at Gibraltar ensured that protection was never far away for British commercial and strategic interests in the region. The protected flow of specie both to Britain and into the Mediterranean allowed for trading interests in the region to flourish, whilst the British war effort on the Iberian Peninsula could be simultaneously securely financed.

The Straits of Gibraltar also offered naval personnel the very real prospect of enriching themselves through prize money. In October 1803, Captain Samuel Sutton of *Amphion* wrote to Nelson from Gibraltar: ‘Had we but a Spanish War. I think one cruise would do the business, both for Hardy and me’.<sup>62</sup> Sutton later turned down the prospect of moving from the fifth-rate *Amphion* to a larger ship of the line, in the hopes of securing prize money on the Gibraltar station.<sup>63</sup> Shortly

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<sup>59</sup> NMM CRK/6/36, ‘Gore to Nelson, HMS Medusa, Gibraltar, 21 June 1804’.

<sup>60</sup> NMM CRK/4/189, ‘James Duff, Consul at Cadiz to Nelson, 7 September 1804’.

<sup>61</sup> Benady, *Royal Navy*, 90; Archer, *Gibraltar*, 53.

<sup>62</sup> Sutton had arranged to share prize money with Captain Thomas Hardy. This comment proved to be particularly prescient, as Sutton was present at the action of 6 October 1804, when three Spanish frigates were captured by a British squadron commanded by Commodore Graham Moore. Sutton received £15,000 in prize money – but the action was influential in leading the Spanish to declare war on Britain in December 1804. NMM CRK/12/119, ‘Sutton to Nelson, HMS Amphion, Gibraltar, 18 October 1803’.

<sup>63</sup> Sutton’s attitude was not completely untypical of naval officers. Those motivated by prize money alone knew that moving to a larger vessel (even with the associated rise in status) also meant that any prize money won would be shared with more

after arriving at Gibraltar in January 1805 captain William Hoste wrote to his father that vessels ‘under the command of Sir John Orde have realised immense fortunes’, and that a separate brig had captured an estimated ‘thirty tons of hard Spanish doubloons and dollars.’<sup>64</sup> In a letter to John Markham in 1806, Admiral George Murray wrote ‘I am told Admiral Knight made near 20,000 at Gibraltar – how I don’t know’.<sup>65</sup> Despite Murray’s shock, great rewards could be garnered in the straits. In December 1806, Lieutenant Granville Waldegrave wrote to his father concerning a vessel that he had a sharing agreement with taking ‘a prize worth 16 or 17000’. The potential bounty was described by Waldegrave as ‘a fine Xmas box thank god’.<sup>66</sup> Gibraltar was indeed an underappreciated source of prize money – in 1807 alone, a total of three hundred and twenty prize vessels were brought there.<sup>67</sup> Unlike the Caribbean, where Admiralty prize courts were present on a number of islands, Gibraltar was, until the capture of Malta the sole destination for captured vessels in the Mediterranean. The influx of captured goods sold at auction in Gibraltar also greatly benefitted every stratum of the Rock’s society, from its military leaders to the merchant class and workforce. In 1797 Governor O’Hara commented on the ‘great advantage’ received by the inhabitants from the actions of sanctioned privateers in the straits, that provided a steady flow of commodities into the Rock.<sup>68</sup> As Stephen Constantine has noted, this activity supported a maritime industry of

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beneficiaries – thus diluting the Captain’s own windfall. Remaining where he was increased Sutton’s chances of frequent contact with smaller enemy craft. That he expected this to be the case near Gibraltar speaks to the flow of maritime traffic that traversed the straits. NMM CRK/12/124, ‘Sutton to Nelson, HMS Amphion, Gibraltar, 27 June 1804’; Julia Banister, *Masculinity, Militarism and Eighteenth-Century Culture, 1689-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 201.

<sup>64</sup> *Memoirs and Letters of Capt. Sir William Hoste Vol. I* (London: Richard Bentley, 1833), 211.

<sup>65</sup> The comment was made in the context of Murray ‘wishing to do everything that is right, and that you will not suspect me of being a money-making admiral’. *Selections from the Correspondence of Admiral John Markham during the years 1801-4 and 1806-7*. Edited by Sir Clements Markham (Navy Records Society, 1904), 227.

<sup>66</sup> NMM WDG/12/34, ‘Letter to Admiral William Waldegrave, Lord Radstock, from his son Lieutenant Granville Waldegrave, Gibraltar, 27 December 1806’.

<sup>67</sup> Archer, *Identity and Empire*, 52.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 55.

creditors, specialist artisans and dock workers that financed and supplied British armed vessels (whether naval or privateer) and processed the results on shore.<sup>69</sup>

The Great Siege reinforced the navy's central role in defending the Rock in the minds of senior naval officers. Orders given to Captain John Markham from Sir John Lindsay (the Mediterranean Commander in Chief) in November 1783 were clear that 'the bay of Gibraltar should never be left without one or more of His Majesty's Ships therein'. The purpose was twofold: firstly, 'for the service of the Governor and the Garrison', particularly through acquiring supplies from the Barbary coast and by regularly sending dispatches to England; secondly 'for the protection of the trade of His Majesty's subjects passing through the streights'. The legacy of the attempted amphibious assault just a year previously was also evident, as Markham was also instructed to 'prevent in the civilest but firmest manner all persons (not belonging to the Garrison or Squadron) from taking soundings and observations of the Bay'.<sup>70</sup> This was tacit recognition of the fact that Gibraltar's security depended upon the integrity of its maritime waterfront. Later, the blockade of Cadiz (1797-1802) placed great strain upon British resources in the area. Lord St Vincent was forced to quit Cadiz to reinforce a squadron off Gibraltar in May 1799. Writing to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Spencer, St Vincent reiterated Gibraltar's precariousness, commenting that 'the coast, from the Tagus to Gibraltar, will have no protection, and this garrison be exposed to great distress for want of refreshments'.<sup>71</sup>

## The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

The American war had seen Gibraltar retained seemingly against all odds but reduced to rubble and ruin in the process. Recovery from this state was slow, as new settlers were understandably reluctant to repopulate the war-torn outpost. Additionally, the newly signed peace treaty meant that attention given to the shore

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<sup>69</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 55.

<sup>70</sup> NMM MRK/100/2/38, '10 November 1783, Sir John Lindsay to Markham'.

<sup>71</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 479.

facilities was understandably lessened. The dockyard seemed to be in a particularly poor state, as John Lindsay reported in August 1784 that 'At Gibraltar there is not an artificer of any kind'.<sup>72</sup> The civilian population did not recover from its pre-siege level of 3,300 until 1787, but in the following decade it more than doubled to 8,000.<sup>73</sup> The Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars saw the Rock emerge as a vital focal point for British considerations. Gibraltar's strategic position was enhanced by the global nature of the conflict, as it became a key station for the shipment of goods and personnel across the globe.<sup>74</sup> Notably, naval events reinforced this, as several significant battles were fought within the vicinity of the straits, and moreover the Mediterranean became a key battleground of the conflict. At the commencement of hostilities with Spain in 1796, Lord Spencer aimed to counter the ability of a combined French and Spanish fleet to end the British presence in the Mediterranean by establishing a dedicated force responsible for the seas between Gibraltar and Cape Finisterre.<sup>75</sup> Spencer's directive to the commander at Lisbon that they were to be responsible for harrying Spanish trade, defending British commerce as well as 'taking every opportunity of annoying the enemy' was always likely to ensure a heightened presence at Gibraltar and a close relationship with its garrison.<sup>76</sup> The central role that Gibraltar assumed in the navy's Mediterranean strategy can be directly seen in communications set out by the Admiralty three years later. Of the 15 clauses contained in Lord Keith's orders when he took up his role as Mediterranean Commander in Chief in 1799, six referred directly to Gibraltar, with a heavy emphasis on providing assistance to the Governor and garrison there.<sup>77</sup> Despite being on the edge of the Lisbon station, the unique strategic characteristics of the straits pushed Gibraltar to the forefront of naval affairs in the region. For much of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars Gibraltar

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<sup>72</sup> *The Barham Papers Volume II*. Edited by John Knox Laughton (London: Navy Records Society, 1910), 175.

<sup>73</sup> Hills, *Rock of Contention*, 361.

<sup>74</sup> Stockey and Grocott, *Gibraltar*, 28.

<sup>75</sup> Martin Robson, *A History of the Royal Navy: The Napoleonic Wars* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2014), 47.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Robson, *History*, 47.

<sup>77</sup> Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Royal Navy 1793-1815* (London: Osprey, 2007), 26-7.

existed in a curious balance whereby the expectation of an assault upon it was imagined as being highly likely, but in reality, such an attack never materialised. However, to the Rock's inhabitants – and indeed to many in Britain - the danger remained very real during this period, as contemporary accounts reveal.<sup>78</sup> The threat did abate significantly by the war's latter stages, as Britain's naval supremacy after Trafalgar, Spain's change of sides in 1808 and the passage of the Peninsular war saw the military focus shift away from the southern European theatre.<sup>79</sup> Gibraltar's eternally precarious situation (perceived or otherwise) led to considerable attention and investment from Britain during this period. Consequently, significant improvements to its facilities and defences were carried out. The naval shore establishment was greatly changed, particularly in the decade of the 1800s.

Relations between the garrison's commanders and naval officers were generally cordial, and both institutions usually understood that the symbiotic nature of the relationship ensured smooth operational practises on land and at sea. However, these occasionally frayed, particularly when resources were scarce or when one party perceived that the other was not performing their role adequately. A major dispute occurred between Admiral Peyton, the Mediterranean Commander in Chief and Major-General Charles O'Hara (Gibraltar's commander in the absence of Governor Eliott) in 1789, regarding the jurisdiction over shipping at Gibraltar's New Mole. Peyton argued that vessels could only dock there with the navy's permission, but in the end the needs of the garrison, and intervention from the absentee Eliott, allowed O'Hara and the military to prevail.<sup>80</sup> The dispute was indicative of the blurred edge between maritime and military space that existed at Gibraltar, which was after all a location profoundly influenced by the presence of both navy and army. Factor in the territory's confined space – there was no considerable

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<sup>78</sup> This will be detailed in later chapters.

<sup>79</sup> Indeed, during this period Gibraltar changed almost overnight from being an object of antagonism for the Spanish into a place of refuge and succour for their soldiers now operating against the French in Andalucía. Gold, *Gibraltar: British or Spanish?*, 8.

<sup>80</sup> Benady, *The Royal Navy*, 64.

hinterland into which personnel might escape from each other - and it is easy to see how these disputes came about. In May 1798 Isaac Coffin, the dockyard commissioner at Minorca, sent a report to the Secretary of State for War, Henry Dundas. Coffin proposed a solution to the constant harassment of British vessels by Spanish gunboats in Gibraltar's bay and straits.<sup>81</sup> He suggested that the forces 'within the control of the Governor, totally inactive at present' should be put to use constructing fifty gunboats, each 'to carry a Gun and Mortar' and 'every soldier in turn exercised in them, with two artillerymen to instruct them in the use of the Gun'. By doing so, Coffin predicted that 'no Spanish Man of War would ever be able to lay twenty four hours safe at an anchor, and all our convoys would be protected going out and in'. Anticipating how his proposal would be received by Gibraltar's governor, Coffin wrote:

The Governor may object to the plan; but of what use is the Garrison cooped up as it is at present? For the effect it has on Spain, it may as well be suspended by a balloon over Madrid, and shower down urine on the Spanish Court.<sup>82</sup>

Coffin's report was undoubtedly influenced by ill-feeling towards the garrison, as he also remarked upon the supposed immorality and ill-discipline among the men on shore. Soldiers were said to be 'constantly intoxicated when off duty' – which could not be rectified because of, in Coffin's opinion, corruption at the highest level of the Rock's military hierarchy ('every pipe of wine drunk is a source of emolument to the Governor'). The Governor at the time, General Charles O'Hara had clashed with the navy, in particular the Mediterranean commander-in-chief Lord St Vincent, over proposed improvements to the naval shore establishments. St Vincent's later

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<sup>81</sup> Gunboats were small, oared craft designed for enhanced manoeuvrability and for use in shore bombardments. They were commonly armed with a single gun, often as large as a 32-pounder positioned in the bow, but occasionally they carried other weaponry such as swivel-guns. According to Robert Gardiner the waters around Gibraltar made them especially dangerous, as their greater flexibility on the water meant they could be 'deadly to both merchantmen and small warships trying to enter or leave the bay.' Robert Gardiner, *Warships of the Napoleonic era: Design, Development and Deployment* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2011), 82.

<sup>82</sup> NMM AGC/2/6, 'Sir Isaac Coffin, Adm: proposal for the better protection of shipping near Gibraltar, 8 May 1798'.



recommendation of Alexander Ball to serve as dockyard Commissioner at Gibraltar, as 'he possesses much temper, which is extremely necessary in all transactions with our friend O'Hara' demonstrates the strength of feeling.<sup>83</sup> Naval officers certainly resented the priority given to Gibraltar's military fortifications over its dockyard facilities. In 1797, Lord St Vincent had written to the Admiralty concerning 'the actual state of Gibraltar, as it relates to watering a large fleet' – tellingly, he also commented that 'there is such a propensity in all military men to increase of fortifications'.<sup>84</sup> This was almost certainly a reference to O'Hara's building of a watchtower at the Rock's highest point, which became infamously known as 'O'Hara's Folly' after it was ruined by lightning shortly after its construction.<sup>85</sup> Even so, the 'military men' believed their motivations to be entirely merited. In a lengthy report on Gibraltar's fortifications sent to the Master of the Ordnance, Lord Cornwallis, dated 2 July 1796, Governor O'Hara believed that the present situation placed them 'probably at the eve of being attack'd', and euphemistically described Gibraltar as being 'not exactly upon velvet'.<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, the spending on increased fortifications clearly rankled with naval officers. Coffin's 1798 report commented on the sums of money spent, 'the propriety of which I am not a judge, being no engineer'. Balanced against this, he

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<sup>83</sup> *Private Papers of George, second earl Spencer, first lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801, Volume IV* (London: Navy Records Society, 1924), 21.

<sup>84</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 425.

<sup>85</sup> O'Hara had ordered the construction of the watchtower because he believed that it could be used to make signal communications with Cadiz. As *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* later commented on this expectation, 'In this opinion, however, he was alone' Ultimately, the mountainous terrain between the two locations was too significant to allow for direct communications. The 'folly' came to epitomise O'Hara's time as Governor. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine no. 325, June 1877* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 78.

<sup>86</sup> In his report, O'Hara made no mention of any function that the Royal Navy could provide towards the defence of the Rock. However, the language used is highly revealing of the state of anxiety the garrison was in. For example, he remarked that 'the universally received opinion of Gibraltar being impregnable should so far have operated against its safety as to cause the neglect we have experienced', and that 'our present garrison consists chiefly of the extremes of youth, and old age, few of whom are capable of favourable exertions'. TNA PRO 30/11/228, 'Letters from Gen Charles O'Hara to Marquess Cornwallis, concerning the defences at Gibraltar'.

recommended building 'Tanks for holding one hundred thousand tons of water'. Whilst stressing the use this could have for residents of Gibraltar ('Many months elapse without rain. The tanks might afford a supply for all the gardens in the place'), he also underlined the tactical benefits that could result:

A moments consideration will evince the necessity of capacious tanks or reservoirs for water being provided, for should our Fleet be shut out of the Tagus, the blockade of Cadiz must cease for want of it.<sup>87</sup>

Implicit in Coffin's report then, is the suggestion that Gibraltar's garrison was in fact a passive and expensive use of British resources, whereas the improvement of its naval facilities would further strengthen Britain's strategic flexibility in the region. Coffin's broader concerns over the activities of Spanish gunboats in Gibraltar's bay were a constant refrain for those commanding there. As well as troubling those in command, a clear sense of despair on Gibraltar, inspired directly by Spanish gunboats often emerges clearly from the record. Writing to Earl Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, from Gibraltar on 21 January 1799, St Vincent had deplored 'The language of despondence which has obtained in this garrison during the last three years', due overwhelmingly, as he saw it, to 'the Spanish Gunboats having been held up as most formidable machines', thus making it difficult 'to persuade any person to face them'. Furthermore, the resources with which this could be done were scarce. Vessels available to the British numbered only three whereas the enemy 'always has from twelve to twenty'.<sup>88</sup> In 1805, William Hoste 'had to fight a stiff battle' with Admiral Knight, so that he could remain at sea and not return to Gibraltar to 'amuse the gun-boats' as Knight desired.<sup>89</sup> Hoste had experience with gunboats at Gibraltar – in 1798 he fought a seven hour engagement against a flotilla that had taken advantage of becalmed winds to attack the convoy he was sailing

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<sup>87</sup> In his 1 September 1797 letter to Evan Nepean, and conveyed to the wider Lords of the Admiralty, St Vincent had argued for the construction of water tanks at Rosia bay. A central point of his request was that as 'it is not probable we shall have Portugal for an ally in future wars, too much attention cannot be paid to this great object for the support of a fleet at Gibraltar. The rock furnishes all the materials, and labour is only wanting to effect everything in this way'. Tucker, *Memoirs*, 425-6.

<sup>88</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 467.

<sup>89</sup> *Memoirs and Letters of Capt. Sir William Hoste*, 239.

with.<sup>90</sup> According to Hoste, Knight was fearful of a Spanish attack upon shipping in the bay, the gunboats being 'uncommonly strong at Algesiras, having no less than forty... besides other armed vessels, and who, from their late movements, seem inclined to attack us.'<sup>91</sup> Collingwood's strategy for dealing with the gunboats was one of direct aggression. In an 1806 letter to Lord Barham he stated: 'It is activity only, and not block-ships, which can give security to the trade in Gibraltar Bay.' He also favoured a less forgiving policy regarding prisoner exchange, directing that 'no prisoner taken in a gun-boat shall be exchanged, but sent to England.' This was in response to what he saw as the 'mere ceremony' of capture – once exchanged, Spanish sailors would often be re-employed in the same gunboat service once more.<sup>92</sup>

In his same 1799 missive to Spencer regarding the gunboats, St Vincent also noted that 'there has been a great want of vigour and exertion in the Dockyard', although he assured his superior that was now 'completely done away, and we think ourselves equal to anything'. St Vincent's famously scathing view of dockyard productivity and corruption was ideological, as he deplored its negative effect on the national finances. He was deeply sceptical of government spending that he deemed unnecessary, and his 1801-4 tenure as first Lord of the Admiralty was characterised by his various attempts at reforming the dockyards that he viewed as corrupt and wasteful.<sup>93</sup> He finished his 1799 letter to Spencer with a statement that directly contradicts the established historiographical opinion concerning the Rock's value as a British possession: 'The only use of Gibraltar is, to furnish the Navy of Great Britain with supplies, and thereby enable it to maintain the empire of the

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<sup>90</sup> *Memoirs and Letters of Capt. Sir William Hoste*, 89.

<sup>91</sup> *Memoirs and Letters of Capt. Sir William Hoste*, 238.

<sup>92</sup> G. L. Newnham Collingwood, *A Selection from the Public and Private Correspondence of Vice-Admiral Lord Collingwood: Interspersed with Memoirs of his Life* (New York: C. & H. Carvill, 1829), 144.

<sup>93</sup> Gibraltar may have contributed partly to St Vincent's views on dockyards. As both P. K. Crimmin and Roger Morriss note, he had spent the winter of 1798-9 there, and taken the opportunity to observe the many improvements and savings that could be made. P. K. Crimmin, 'John Jervis, earl of St Vincent', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 30. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 73; Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, 193-4.

adjacent seas'.<sup>94</sup> Despite his confident assertion regarding the dockyard, its ability to furnish the navy with supplies was an ongoing concern. Just eight days later, St Vincent wrote to the secretary to the Admiralty Evan Nepean regarding the current state of affairs:

We are literally without a fathom of rope, yard of canvass, foot of oak or elm plank, board or log to saw them out of; we have not a bit of iron but what we draw out of condemned masts and yards, nor the smallest piece of fir plank... add to this, that three-fourths of the ships under my command are so much out of repair and shaken, that were they in England, no one would go to sea in them – and you will feel for your friend.<sup>95</sup>

St Vincent was often forthright concerning Gibraltar's dockyard facilities. In March 1799, he wrote to the Comptroller of the Navy Andrew Hammond, complaining about ships being sent out 'in a state of decay', because blockading Cadiz required a large force to be stationed there, and 'nor have we the means of going far into the repairs of ships' bottoms'. In other words, large vessels could not be careened at Gibraltar. But he also wrote of his hope that 'more consideration will be given in future to the exertion of this part of the Naval force of the Country'.<sup>96</sup> He had been scathing in his opinion of some of Gibraltar's existing infrastructure in an October 1798 letter to Lord Spencer, calling the Water Port 'the vilest wharf in the universe'. The Water Port, however, formed part of Gibraltar's Old Mole, the most northerly of its harbour facilities – the part that had been so vulnerable to bombardment during the Great Siege. Its location was evidently problematic, but it had particular deficiencies aside from this, such as having no crane and its wharf being in an advanced state of disrepair.<sup>97</sup> In light of his appreciation for both Gibraltar's strategic usefulness and its operational shortcomings, it is unsurprising that St Vincent was instrumental in the construction of the Rosia water tanks that began in

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<sup>94</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 467.

<sup>95</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 468-9.

<sup>96</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 469-70.

<sup>97</sup> *Private papers of George, second earl Spencer, first lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801, Volume II*. Edited by Julian S. Corbett (London: Navy Records Society, 1914), 485.

1799.<sup>98</sup> In fact, as early as 1797, St Vincent had written to Spencer and the Admiralty Board advocating the construction of water tanks further south at Rosia Bay.<sup>99</sup> In October 1798 he had grown exasperated at the situation, as ‘the scarcity of water is so great at this moment; all the reservoirs are not sufficient to furnish the daily consumption’, making it imperative to construct the water tank ‘without a moment’s delay’.<sup>100</sup>

Gibraltar’s inability to provide sufficient water caused difficulties for naval officers operating in the straits. Lord Hood’s fleet that arrived at Gibraltar in June 1793 was delayed from sailing immediately for Toulon because of a lack of water at the Rock.<sup>101</sup> In September 1800, Lord Keith wrote to Spencer from Gibraltar concerning the arrival of troops. He was forced to convey a portion to Tetuan, ‘where I hope to succeed in getting water for those who are so much in need of it’, before re-crossing the straits to land them at the Rock.<sup>102</sup> The construction of the tanks was contracted to Giovanni Maria Boschetti, a master mason of Italian origin, but it was not completed until 1804 as geological problems and issues with procuring bricks delayed progress.<sup>103</sup> Provisioning water was occasionally a problem even after the new tanks had been built. In 1806 Collingwood commented to Barham that ‘though convenient occasionally’, the Gibraltar tanks were ‘quite incompetent to the general supply of the fleet.’<sup>104</sup> Later that year, Lieutenant Granville Waldegrave wrote to his father, Lord Radstock, that he had been ordered to escort three transport ships to Tetuan to procure water, ‘there being no water in the tanks at Gibraltar’. This appears to have been caused by a lengthy period of warm weather, as Waldegrave commented: ‘If this want of rain continues for many days longer the

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<sup>98</sup> ‘History of the Rosia Water Tanks’, <https://gsda.wordpress.com/about/>.

<sup>99</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 417; 425.

<sup>100</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 455.

<sup>101</sup> Alexander Marin Delavoye, *Life of Thomas Graham, Lord Lynedoch* (London: Richardson & Co., 1880), 39.

<sup>102</sup> *Private papers of George, second earl Spencer, first Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801 Volume III*. Edited by H. W. Richmond (London: Navy Records Society, 1924), 372.

<sup>103</sup> Jonathan Coad, *The Royal Dockyards 1690-1850: Architecture and Engineering Works of the Sailing Navy* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989), 322.

<sup>104</sup> Collingwood, *Selection from the Public and Private Correspondence*, 145.

inhabitants must go on a short allowance'.<sup>105</sup> But these grievances were less common than prior to 1804, and the increased supply of water meant that naval personnel were less reliant on outside sources. Accordingly, this allowed for greater flexibility in consideration of political relationships.<sup>106</sup> The victualling yard and stores were also moved from the old mole to Rosia Bay, adjacent to the new tanks. The new yard was not completed until 1812, at an eventual cost of £87,004. This greatly expanded the available storage capacity, which prior to the construction had consisted of two small storehouses at the Water port and further south at the White Convent.<sup>107</sup> Gibraltar evidently had its shortcomings as a naval base in the first half of the period that this thesis covers. Due to the willingness of naval administrators to invest in and update its facilities, some of these shortcomings were overcome in the latter half, meaning that the maritime Gibraltar that emerged out of the Napoleonic conflict was manifestly different in character from that that had endured the destruction of the Great Siege.

The propensity for clashes between naval officers and Gibraltar's military hierarchy was clearly high, and certainly to be expected given the constricted space and personalities involved. Gibraltar's internal political history was also particularly tumultuous during this period. O'Hara's period as Governor was turbulent: not simply because of his many conflicts with the navy but also for the discovery in 1798 of a plot to hand Gibraltar back to Spain. Over a thousand civilians were expelled for their supposed involvement in the conspiracy.<sup>108</sup> Most conspicuously volatile in character was the brief governorship of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, whose enforcement of a draconian disciplinary regime upon the garrison in 1802, in response to O'Hara's perceived leniency, led to a mutiny by a group of soldiers who planned to murder the Duke. Although this was successfully suppressed, the upshot

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<sup>105</sup> NMM WDG/12/34, 'Letter to Admiral William Waldegrave, Lord Radstock, from his son Lieutenant Granville Waldegrave, Gibraltar, 27 December 1806'.

<sup>106</sup> For example, witness Collingwood's later willingness to offend the Moroccan Emperor, in contrast to the desperation to please exhibited by Governor Eliott in 1784.

<sup>107</sup> Janet Macdonald, 'The Victualling Yard at Gibraltar', 55.

<sup>108</sup> Maurice Harvey, *Gibraltar: A History* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2000), 105.

was that Prince Edward was recalled to Britain. He was not stripped of his role as Governor – meaning that for the next seventeen years a succession of ‘Lieutenant-Governors’ held the role in his stead (see Table 1).<sup>109</sup> Long Governorships were the exception rather than the rule at Gibraltar in the early nineteenth-century. Despite the inherent dangers involved in the role, and the restricted space on the Rock, clashes between the army and naval hierarchies were not inevitable, and some relationships were notably cordial. The pressures of siege warfare forged an affectionate bond between Governor George Eliott and the commanding naval officer Roger Curtis. After the siege’s denouement in 1782, when Curtis had returned to Britain with Howe’s fleet, Elliot wrote expressing his hope that he would be rewarded for ‘the very very great services you have rendered the state’. Eliott later wrote to Curtis from Gibraltar in 1784: ‘I should wish myself in England, and for no reason more than to have the happiness of visiting you’.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, the correspondence between Governor Trigge and Nelson in the early 1800s displayed an understanding of the Rock’s dependence upon both navy and garrison. In 1808 Lieutenant Governor Dalrymple appreciated the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the Mediterranean Commander-in-Chief Admiral Lord Collingwood. He wrote in his memoirs that he had ‘been in the constant habit of confidential correspondence with Lord Collingwood, ever since my arrival at Gibraltar’.<sup>111</sup>

## Epidemics and Intelligence

Gibraltar’s population has had a long history of suffering through numerous epidemics of infectious diseases and pestilential fevers. The confined local context undoubtedly played its part, but its status as a commercial hub and international entrepot also contributed to the presence of diseases such as cholera in the

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<sup>109</sup> Harvey, *Gibraltar*, 105.

<sup>110</sup> NMM MSS/72/077, ‘Letters from Gen G. A. Eliott to Capt Roger Curtis, 1782-4, at Gibraltar’.

<sup>111</sup> Hew Dalrymple, *Memoir of his Proceedings as Connected with the Affairs of Spain and the Commencement of the Peninsular War* (London: Thomas and William Boone, 1830), 33.

town.<sup>112</sup> Gibraltar's proclivity for disease was widely known and feared. In 1804, the dockyard commissioner at Malta, Alexander Ball, wrote to Nelson expressing his outrage at the behaviour of Captain George Mundy, who had convoyed a merchant fleet from Gibraltar in the *Hydra*. Mundy came ashore with the convoy's passengers, who then 'reported such cases of sickness at Gibraltar as alarmed some of the inhabitants here'. Ball continued:

I could not do otherwise than suppose they were exaggerated as it would be accusing the god of Gibraltar of the greatest deviation from his duty, in sending contagion here without putting me in the smallest degree upon my guard.<sup>113</sup>

As it turned out, no 'contagion' was experienced as a result of Mundy's negligence. But Gibraltar was continually associated with the potential spread of disease. Yellow Fever was the ailment that plagued Gibraltar the most during this period. Four outbreaks – in 1800, 1804, 1810 and 1813-1814 – had a devastating impact on the Rock, with a recorded death toll of over six thousand civilians and one thousand soldiers.<sup>114</sup> The threat of transmission profoundly affected how the navy interacted with the Rock, as evidenced by Admiralty orders given to John Orde in 1804:

Should you find it necessary to proceed yourself, or send any of the ships under your orders to Gibraltar, you are to cause particular enquiry to be made whether any epidemic or contagious disease prevails there, in which case you are strictly to prohibit any communication taking place between the respective companies of the said ships and the inhabitants or persons belonging to the garrison.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Lawrence A. Sawchuk, 'Deconstructing an Epidemic: Cholera in Gibraltar', in *Plagues and Epidemics: Infected Spaces Past and Present*. Edited by D. Ann Herring and Alan C. Swedlund (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 104.

<sup>113</sup> NMM CRK/1/148, 'Ball to Nelson, Malta, 20 October 1804'.

<sup>114</sup> Detailed figures do not exist for the 1800 or 1810 outbreaks, meaning that the death toll was likely far higher. Stephen Berger, *Infectious Diseases of Gibraltar* (Los Angeles: Gideon Informatics, 2020), 204.

<sup>115</sup> *Dispatches and Letters relating to the Blockade of Brest 1803-1805 Volume II*. Edited by John Leyland (London: Navy Records Society, 1902), 115.



Clearly then, epidemics were recognised as events that could severely affect the garrison's ability to defend the Rock from outside attack. The decimation caused by the 1804 outbreak led Gibraltar's governor, Thomas Trigge, to seriously acknowledge the Rock's precarious situation in a letter to Nelson. After relaying that upwards of five hundred soldiers were either dead or convalescing, Trigge wrote:

This is a great reduction. The only thing to be apprehended is a coup de main, from the idea of our weakness. I do not think they will attempt it or if they should, they will find enough of us on our legs.<sup>116</sup>

Yellow fever also decimated the shore-based naval personnel who performed crucial work in the dockyard, repairing damaged vessels and acquiring vital supplies for the navy. On the same day that Trigge wrote his letter Joseph King, the Gibraltar yard Boatswain, reported to Nelson that many of the yard's officers were ill, and 'all the Clerks are dead excepting one'. The toll on King was severe; he also remarked that he was 'very much fatigued at present with the duty of the yard and removing the sick and burying dead I scarcely have time to get my meals'.<sup>117</sup> Nelson wrote swiftly to Gibraltar's commissioner William Otway, remarking that he was 'anxious to hear that even the Rock is in our possession'. He sent the Boatswain and the Carpenter from *Victory* to assist King in the yard.<sup>118</sup> The Dockyard was later said to have 'shared the fate of the other parts of the garrison' during the 1804 epidemic.<sup>119</sup> Ultimately, thirty-seven of the dockyard workforce died along with twenty-seven from the victualling yard.<sup>120</sup> The Surgeon William Burd wrote to Nelson from Gibraltar's naval hospital on 1 November 1804, advising him to 'give

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<sup>116</sup> NMM CRK/12/162, 'Trigge to Nelson, Gibraltar, 22 October 1804'.

<sup>117</sup> NMM CRK/8/47, 'Joseph King to Nelson, Gibraltar, 22 October 1804'.

<sup>118</sup> Nelson referred to King as 'one of the great men of the Rock' and revealed something of the constitution of the carpenter he was sending from *Victory* (a Mr. Bunce), when he remarked that 'Nature, I am sure, has fitted him for such a place'. *Dispatches and Letters, Volume VI*, 279.

<sup>119</sup> William Fraser, *A letter, addressed to His Excellency the Right Honorable General the Earl of Chatham, K. G. Governor of Gibraltar, relative to the febrile distempers of that garrison* (London: Callow and Wilson, 1826), 11.

<sup>120</sup> Macdonald, *The British Navy's Victualling Board*, 68.

directions to His Majesty's Ships to have as little intercourse with this place as possible'. By his estimation 3400 people had thus far died, eight hundred of which were soldiers of the garrison.<sup>121</sup> Burd himself succumbed to the fever and died less than a month later.<sup>122</sup> William Fraser later observed that the dockyard was the place most 'favourable to the generation of Marsh Miasmata', yet in 1813 it did not suffer hugely through the outbreak.<sup>123</sup> But it was also a location where quarantine and isolation from the garrison could be more easily practised. The inconsistent experience of the dockyard during epidemics caused confusion as to the true origin of the disease, as physicians struggled to align the orthodox 'miasma' theory of the day with the true situation that occurred.

The study of Yellow Fever did not begin to ascertain its true cause until the latter half of the nineteenth century. As a result, in the early nineteenth century the belief that it was transferred via human contact led to the strict implementation of quarantine procedures. Indeed, quarantine was an accepted fact of life for both naval and merchant personnel that operated along the southern Mediterranean coastline. But authorities often turned a blind eye to seafarers who did not comply as it benefitted trade, and the illicit smuggling trade was by its very nature exempt.<sup>124</sup> Medical opinions concerning the origins of yellow fever could be divided into two camps in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: those that favoured the 'contagion' theory, and those who believed that 'miasma' was to blame. The former held that the disease was spread via human-to-human contact, whereas the latter blamed the unclean and filthy aspects of urban centres for having inculcated the fever.<sup>125</sup> Policies that sought to act upon the separate possible causes could severely affect trade. With the benefit of hindsight, it is

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<sup>121</sup> NMM CRK/2/130, 'William Burd to Nelson, Naval Hospital, Gibraltar, 1 November 1804'.

<sup>122</sup> *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Horatio Nelson, Volume VI. Edited by Nicholas Harris Nicolas* (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), 316.

<sup>123</sup> Fraser, *A letter*, 12.

<sup>124</sup> S. L. Kotar and J. E. Gessler, *Yellow Fever: A Worldwide History* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2017), 108.

<sup>125</sup> J. N. Hays, *Epidemics and Pandemics: Their Impacts on Human History* (Oxford: ABC – Clio, 2005), 188-9.

possible to view the sheer amount of nervous energy expended upon these quarantining efforts as futile and tragically wasted. Quarantine had little effect upon stopping ‘contagion’, as yellow fever is spread by mosquitoes. Not usually native to Europe, it was abnormally high temperatures that caused this mosquito-borne disease to appear in southern Spain.<sup>126</sup> Implementing quarantine procedures was obviously not ideal from a commercial standpoint, yet by adopting a ‘miasmatic’ interpretation of the fever’s origin, officials might effectively be advertising to the world that Gibraltar was the source of the epidemic – also not ideal in a post-epidemic environment where increased trade and visitors to the Rock were desired. Gibraltar’s merchant community did not hesitate to voice their concerns about restrictions to trade via petitions to government; they did so in complaint of Spanish quarantine procedures implemented in 1776 and more notably, in protest against General Eliott’s excessive (as they viewed it) insistence upon adherence to regulations.<sup>127</sup> The apparent threat of disease also provided the Spanish with a useful pretext with which to inhibit maritime activity in the Rock’s surrounding waters by enforcing their own quarantine.<sup>128</sup> The application of quarantine procedures, however, provided a sense of security whilst allowing the epidemic to be blamed on other locations or nationalities.<sup>129</sup> In December 1803, Gibraltar’s governor Thomas Trigge wrote to Nelson informing him that he had cut off communication with Spain because of an outbreak at Malaga, ‘brought by Spanish ships from the Havannah and Vera Cruz in the end of September’.<sup>130</sup>

Aside from also suffering through the disease, the Royal Navy performed a vital role in acquiring and disseminating intelligence from the numerous ports that also

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<sup>126</sup> George C. Kohn, *Encyclopedia of Plague and Pestilence: from ancient times to the present* (New York: Facts on File, 2008), 375.

<sup>127</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 87.

<sup>128</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 86.

<sup>129</sup> J. N. Hays has described how this occurred during a yellow fever outbreak in Philadelphia in 1793, when the merchant community lobbied the government to enforce quarantine so as not to taint ‘all the city’s products and inhabitants’. J. N. Hays, *The Burdens of Disease: Epidemics and Human Response in Western History* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 131-2.

<sup>130</sup> NMM CRK 12/166, ‘Trigge to Nelson, Gibraltar, 4 December 1803’.

experienced outbreaks along the Mediterranean coastline. British intelligence networks afforded naval personnel advance knowledge of which ports were experiencing outbreaks at particular times. Information acquired from John Hunter, the Consul General at Madrid, regarding an outbreak of yellow fever at Malaga in October 1803 allowed Gibraltar's Governor to suspend all communication via land and sea within a week.<sup>131</sup> A year later, Hunter provided Nelson with detailed information of known outbreaks along the Mediterranean coastline, including death figures for Malaga, and updates from Alicante and Cartagena via the resident pro-consuls.<sup>132</sup> The Consul at Cadiz, James Duff, wrote to Nelson on 24 November 1804 informing him that an outbreak of the 'sickness' had since abated there.<sup>133</sup> From the information provided in this way, naval personnel could form an idea of which ports were (at least notionally) safe to approach.

Efforts were often made to target vessels from ports where outbreaks were known to have existed, such as that enforced upon vessels from Malaga in late 1803. James Duff reported that upwards of fifty people per day were succumbing to disease at Malaga, necessitating vessels to be put under a 'rigorous quarantine, or sent back'. Nevertheless, such orders were often impossible to enforce. As Duff noted, a merchant Brig had left Malaga before reports of disease emerged and had since stopped at Gibraltar where three dead crew members had been replaced, before finally docking at Cadiz.<sup>134</sup> Although outbreaks resulted in high death tolls in Gibraltar's garrison and civilian population, the threat of pestilence reaching the Rock repeatedly caused its governors and British officials to look outwards from the garrison and towards the multitude of neighbouring ports and settlements. Quarantining vessels in port had a minimal effect upon the spread of Yellow Fever. However, the key point is that the management of maritime traffic was a key tenet of what was then the widely held medical opinion regarding the disease's

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<sup>131</sup> NMM CRK/7/95, 'John Hunter, Consul General, Madrid, to Nelson, 22 October 1803'.

<sup>132</sup> NMM CRK/7/104, 'John Hunter, Consul General Madrid, to Nelson 21 September 1804'.

<sup>133</sup> NMM CRK/4/190, 'James Duff, Consul at Cadiz to Nelson, 24 November 1804'.

<sup>134</sup> NMM CRK/4/180, 'James Duff, Consul at Cadiz to Nelson, 22 October 1803'.

prevention. The Royal Navy's role in managing quarantining procedures and acquiring intelligence regarding outbreaks along the Mediterranean coastline formed a key part of the British experience at Gibraltar during this tumultuous period.

George Hills' comment regarding Gibraltar's status as a mere 'post office' in the early nineteenth century downplayed both the Rock's role in the war and the role of intelligence gathering in the conduct of naval operations. The lack of grand, military set-pieces taking place at Gibraltar itself during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars relegated it, in Hills' view, to the role of a mere repository for information. However, there can be no doubt that contemporary naval officers did not view Gibraltar in such terms. Nelson was just off Gibraltar in the *Captain* in 1796, when in a letter to Dixon Hoste he remarked that 'you will, perhaps, expect a little news from near the fountain-head'.<sup>135</sup> St Vincent was able to draw upon the flow of information to Gibraltar from consuls and envoys whilst Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean fleet.<sup>136</sup> During the Bruix' expedition in July 1799, when the French attempted to unite their fleet with the Spanish in the Mediterranean, Spencer wrote to St Vincent

I need not say how anxious we are to hear again from Gibraltar, as the nature of the accounts we receive will have an incalculable effect on the whole state of the war not only at sea, but all over Europe.<sup>137</sup>

Writing to Nelson in April 1804, John Gore lamented the lack of a resident senior officer at the Rock, 'for it is the general rendezvous of all our courage, and all intelligence to and from your Lordship'.<sup>138</sup> Gibraltar's quality as a receptacle of both important geo-political intelligence and information of seemingly lesser significance

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<sup>135</sup> *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Horatio Nelson, Volume II. Edited by Nicholas Harris Nicolas* (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), 305.

<sup>136</sup> Martin Duffy, 'British Naval Intelligence and Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition of 1798', *The Mariner's Mirror* Vol. 84, no. 3 (1998): 279.

<sup>137</sup> *Private Papers of George, second earl Spencer, first lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801 Volume IV*, 55.

<sup>138</sup> NMM CRK/6/32, 'John Gore to Nelson, Gibraltar, 18 February 1804'.

could have great ramifications for the navy and British commercial interests in the area. It had certainly proved a useful location for Henry Vassal-Fox (Lord Holland) a year earlier, when the British diplomat 'having no other outlet from Spain but Gibraltar' required passage home from Madrid.<sup>139</sup> In 1803, a ship owner wrote to Gibraltar, asking for a naval escort to be sent to Torrevieja where two British merchant vessels laden with salt were blockaded by French privateers.<sup>140</sup> Correspondence with merchants was utilised across the Mediterranean to supplement official diplomatic intelligence.<sup>141</sup> The navy later proved instrumental in the procurement of intelligence during the Peninsular War. The common practice of establishing correspondents in ports meant that information could be readily acquired, and the passage to Gibraltar by sea ensured a quicker delivery than could be achieved by overland travel on horseback.<sup>142</sup>

### Gibraltar, the Royal Navy and North Africa

As demonstrated above regarding naval manoeuvres and epidemics, Gibraltar was also a crucially important hub that facilitated the flow of information to and from the North African coast. Diplomatic information flowed into Gibraltar from Britain and European capitals (especially Madrid), and was then conveyed to the various locations where British consuls were resident along the Mediterranean coastline. Relations between the British and the North African states were often played out at and managed through Gibraltar. This is not surprising given its geographical location, but it also speaks to how the Rock's connection with its maritime neighbours elevated its importance in the British mindset above that of a strategic

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<sup>139</sup> NMM CRK/5/106, 'Captain Thomas Foley to Nelson, Abermarles, near Llandovery South Wales, 9 November 1803'.

<sup>140</sup> NMM CRK/12/74, 'Andrew Stewart to the Commander in Chief Gibraltar, Torrevieja, 26 June 1803'.

<sup>141</sup> Jane Knight, 'Nelson's old lady': Merchant news as a source of intelligence (June to October 1796)', *International Journal for Maritime Research* Vol 7, no. 1 (2005): 105.

<sup>142</sup> Huw Davies, 'Naval Intelligence support to the British Army in the Peninsular War', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* Vol. 86, no. 345 (2008): 36-7.

stronghold. The Royal Navy was a crucial interlocutor in the management of these relationships, which often required delicate handling. This often concerned rumours of war; in 1788 Andee Newton wrote to his friend Lieutenant William Dyott of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment about rumours of war due to the actions of the Emperor of Morocco, but that 'pulling his ears rather belongs to the navy than to the army'.<sup>143</sup> But more frequently the navy facilitated civil diplomatic relations. In November 1784, a vessel belonging to the Emperor of Morocco arrived at Gibraltar wishing to be 'fitted out in the English manner'. Lindsay wrote to Markham requesting that he 'upon one pretence or other contrive to put off the equipment of this ship' until he had received permission from the Admiralty. The significant cost – estimated at £3000 – required assent from higher authorities, but Lindsay also stressed that if the fitting out was deemed essential by Gibraltar's governor, 'for reasons of state', then it should be carried out 'with all convenient dispatch'.<sup>144</sup> More trivial requests for supplies were common. In June 1784, Gibraltar's Naval Storekeeper was ordered to supply a cable to a Moroccan cruiser out of the yard's stores.<sup>145</sup> Diplomacy was usually a motivating factor in the provision of assistance, and occasionally, expensive gifts. In March 1785, Governor Eliott requested that a naval storeship en route to the West Indies be redirected to transport twenty-four gun carriages that had been made for the Emperor of Morocco, 'as a matter of very great convenience for the publick service'.<sup>146</sup> In 1791, upon a request from James Matra, the British consul at Tangier, the Gibraltar yard officers were required to take a jolly boat from HMS *Eurydice*, and adapt it into a 'small pleasure boat' that could be presented to the Emperor of Morocco.<sup>147</sup>

The availability of assistance from North African ports fluctuated wildly, but the hazards presented by the straits meant that relationships had to be carefully

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<sup>143</sup> Staffordshire Record Office, D3388/24/8, 'Andee Newton to William Dyott, 1788'.

<sup>144</sup> NMM MRK/100/2/82, '24 November 1784, Sir John Lindsay, Trusty, Villa Franca, to Markham'.

<sup>145</sup> TNA ADM/106/1281/250, 'Captain George Campbell of the *Orpheus*, to Daniel Tassell, Naval Storekeeper at Gibraltar, 14 June 1784'.

<sup>146</sup> NMM MRK/100/2/105, '4 March 1785, Governor Eliott, Gibraltar, to Markham'.

<sup>147</sup> TNA ADM 106/2020, 'Navy Board Records: In Letters from Gibraltar, 1790-1797'.

managed. In March 1799, Lord Keith was 'again driven into Tetuan Bay' by the wind, and St Vincent was required to send supplies from Gibraltar. He was hopeful, however, that 'The great plenty of oranges, lemons, and poultry there is at Tetuan' might be acquired by the fleet as 'the Emperor has relaxed much of his rigid treatment'.<sup>148</sup> Four days later St Vincent wrote to Spencer that Keith's squadron – vital to maintaining the blockade of Cadiz – was 'completely victualled and watered'.<sup>149</sup> Until the re-capture of Minorca in 1798, Gibraltar acted as the major victualling base for the Mediterranean fleet. North Africa was a good source of foodstuffs (particularly live cattle) for naval officers, who often acted independently in negotiating advantageous prices and securing victuals for Gibraltar's yard.<sup>150</sup> Amicable relationships with the local North African authorities were therefore highly desirable in achieving the most favourable outcome for British interest in the region. Although Gibraltar's victualling yard was not yet at the standard it would reach following a rebuilding campaign in 1808-1812, the British success at acquiring goods from the North African coast made it generally adequate for the navy's needs in the period beforehand.<sup>151</sup> The southern aspect of the straits was vital for victualling the navy, but it was equally so for Gibraltar's garrison.<sup>152</sup> And by definition, North African produce could only be acquired through the efforts of the navy – either directly or by ensuring a smooth flow of traffic across the contested area.

The confined nature of the straits meant that the relationship with the Barbary coast often intermingled with other important considerations for naval officers operating in the area. In October 1803, the commander of the *Weazel* sloop William Layman wrote to Nelson in response to his desire to 'keep the communication between Gibraltar and the coast of Barbary open', a duty that

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<sup>148</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 473.

<sup>149</sup> Tucker, *Memoirs*, 474.

<sup>150</sup> Knight and Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet*, 66.

<sup>151</sup> James Davey, 'Within Hostile Shores: Victualling the Royal Navy in European Waters during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars', *International Journal of Maritime History* Vol. XXI, no.2 (2009): 246-7; 256.

<sup>152</sup> Brown, *Crossing the Strait*, 130.



involved 'either assisting in the Gutt escorting supplies or convoying mails to and from Lisbon'. But Layman was also keen to perform a more active service:

My wish to render the Weasle [sic] useful would have induced me to block up the four Privateers in Tangiers, until the convoy daily expected from England arrived, but as the Governor wished for a supply of cattle from Tetuan I am now going to escort the boats.<sup>153</sup>

In 1807, the Mediterranean Commander-in-Chief Admiral Collingwood had no compunction over refusing the Moroccan Emperor naval supplies. However, his comment to Admiral Purvis that he would 'very much disapprove' of such a request was accompanied by a hope that 'there will be no difficulty in getting bullocks from Lisbon', suggesting that he was fully cognisant of the likely problems that might result. Collingwood had good reason for denying the Emperor assistance, as the costs involved were often significant.<sup>154</sup> But he recognised that denying naval supplies could have serious strategic ramifications for Gibraltar and the Royal Navy, which in less advantageous times were harder to ignore. Barely a year later Collingwood again wrote to Purvis on 1 February 1808. In full expectation of a French attack on Gibraltar, as well as seeing Ceuta and Tangier as being under threat, he advised Purvis to 'apprize the Emperor, and to assure him that in any attempt of the French to invade his territory he may depend upon the assistance of his Majesty's forces'.<sup>155</sup> Collingwood appears to have had a complicated attitude towards managing the North African relationship. In 1806, he had written to Markham complaining about Admiral Knight, the commanding officer at Gibraltar. Despite the potential ramifications Knight's behaviour could have for British relations with the Barbary coast, Collingwood concluded his observation of Knight

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<sup>153</sup> NMM CRK/8/71, 'Captain William Layman to Nelson, HMS Weasle, Gibraltar Bay 20 October 1803'.

<sup>154</sup> In 1809 Collingwood noted the cost of supplying the Emperor on a previous occasion had exceeded £10,000, and that 'the Emperor must not be encouraged to consider Gibraltar as a place of equipment for his fleet'. However, it is not clear whether Collingwood is referring to the request made in 1807 or to another occasion. *The Private Correspondence of Admiral Lord Collingwood*. Edited by Edward Hughes (Navy Records Society, 1957), 212.

<sup>155</sup> *Private correspondence*, 234.

by remarking 'Yet he is better there [Gibraltar] than in the fleet at sea'. Collingwood explained that Knight was

not of much aid to me, but is constantly embarrassing us with the Moors. If they did not esteem the English more than any people they would have made it a quarrel, for they had provocation.<sup>156</sup>

## Conclusions

The navy proved itself capable of assisting the army during the Peninsular War, and British sea power has been seen as pivotal in the eventual success.<sup>157</sup> Gibraltar's capacity as a naval base was crucial in this, as it assisted in projecting British dominance both on Spain's Atlantic seaboard and into the Mediterranean. The navy's presence in the straits had certainly been precarious during the earlier periods of conflict, but by 1813 its control of the seas was almost total, something that Wellington deeply appreciated.<sup>158</sup> Gibraltar's merchant community even provided the Spanish General Francisco Castanas with a loan that aided in resisting an invading French army in 1808, demonstrating both financial health and a pragmatic flexibility in assisting a very recent enemy.<sup>159</sup> The old adage that Gibraltar provided no benefit to Britain was harder to sustain when it had so demonstrably assisted British troops when they were physically present upon the Iberian Peninsula.

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<sup>156</sup> Markham, 71.

<sup>157</sup> Michael Duffy has written that 'British sea power enabled the government to get reinforcements to the critical spot by sea far faster than the French could by land'. Michael Duffy, 'Festering the Spanish Ulcer: The Royal Navy and the Peninsular War, 1808-1814', in *Naval Power and Expeditionary Wars: peripheral Campaigns and New Theatres of Naval Warfare*. Edited by Bruce A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine (London: Routledge, 2011), 16.

<sup>158</sup> In 1813 Wellington provided a detailed overview of the maritime transport service undertaken by the navy, which included Gibraltar's role in supporting amphibious operations on the Mediterranean coastline as well as assisting in the procurement of flour from Lisbon. Duffy, 'Festering the Spanish Ulcer', 25.

<sup>159</sup> *Proceedings of Inquiry relative to Armistice and Convention concluded in Portugal between Commanders of British and French Armies, December 1808* (House of Commons, 1808), 134.

Gibraltar's stock also rose dramatically in commercial terms. During a period (1802-1814) when overall British exports had grown by only 3.1%, the value of British goods exported to Gibraltar rose from £530,000 in 1802 to £3,450,000 in 1812. Furthermore, the value of re-exports to Gibraltar had increased from £67,000 to £1,030,000 in the same timeframe.<sup>160</sup> Gibraltar had, of course, long been a significant port. But at the conclusion of the Napoleonic War, it was a markedly larger international destination for goods and people than ever before. In her assessment of British Mediterranean trade during the Napoleonic War, Katerina Galani has stated that a 'war-induced market' existed in the region, and that 'the presence of the Royal Navy had a positive impact both on shipping and on trade'.<sup>161</sup> Gibraltar also benefitted from Napoleon's attempted constriction of Britain's trade. For Michela D'Angelo, the years 1807-8 saw Britain's European trade relocate significantly towards the Mediterranean from the north.<sup>162</sup> Galani's work shows that in 1770 Gibraltar was one of twenty-eight ports with direct regular connections to Britain, whereas in 1810 it was one of eleven.<sup>163</sup> The operational dominance enjoyed by the navy in the straits made Gibraltar a secure wartime destination, as it protected British shipping and funnelled enemy commerce into the Rock. Whilst British trade inevitably suffered after 1806, the Rock's geographical position meant that it became a 'nerve centre' for Britain's Mediterranean trade, alongside being

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<sup>160</sup> Lance E. Davis and Stanley L. Engerman, *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: An Economic History since 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 39; Silvia Marzagalli, 'The Continental System: A View from the Sea', in *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System: Local, Regional and European Experiences*. Edited by Katherine B. Aaslestad and Johan Joor (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 93.

<sup>161</sup> Galani, *British Shipping*, 84.

<sup>162</sup> According to D'Angelo, British exports to Southern Europe amounted thirty per-cent of the total between 1802-6, but in the years 1808-12 this figure had increased to sixty per-cent. Michela D'Angelo, 'British Trade and Merchants in the Mid-Mediterranean: An Alternative Market during the Napoleonic Wars', in *Anglo-Saxons in the Mediterranean: Commerce, Politics and Ideas (XVII-XX Centuries)*. Edited by Carmel Vassallo & Michela D'Angelo (Malta: Malta University Press, 2007), 98.

<sup>163</sup> Galani, *British Shipping*, 82.

an ideal location for the smuggling of British goods into Spain.<sup>164</sup> In effect, Gibraltar acted as a highly convenient depot for British goods, which could then be shipped on to other destinations in ostensibly 'neutral' vessels.<sup>165</sup> British trade was subjected to enormous barriers, as it was both shut out of hostile ports and required to stop for extra checks in British ports. But the trade destined for the Mediterranean was transported by vessels protected by the Royal Navy, which had been protecting British commercial interests in the region for many years before the continental system was implemented.

Napoleon's enforcement of the system drew France inexorably into further land campaigns, including the Peninsular War.<sup>166</sup> Yet his noted dismissal of Gibraltar's value is indicative of the dramatic difference in outlooks between the two competing empires. After his defeat and capture in 1815, Napoleon was asked why he had never attempted to capture Gibraltar. David Urquhart later quoted his response:

It was not my business to relieve England from such a possession. It shuts nothing, it opens nothing, it leads to nothing – it is a pledge given by England to France, because it ensures to England the undying hatred of Spain.<sup>167</sup>

Napoleon's attitude toward Gibraltar reflected the ideological dichotomy at the heart of the conflict between the land-acquiring, military focused Imperial France and, to use Lambert's terminology, the 'Seapower State' of Great Britain. As the French largely ignored Gibraltar and made no attempt to take it by force, the British reinforced it by investing in improved naval facilities. As well as benefitting from the continental system, Gibraltar's economic success was also driven by this marked

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<sup>164</sup> Rafael Sanchez Mantero, 'Gibraltar and the Treaty of Utrecht: The Old and the New Gibraltarians', in *Britain, Spain and the Treaty of Utrecht 1713-2013*. Edited by Trevor J. Dadson and J. H. Elliott (Oxford: Legenda Books, 2014), 76.

<sup>165</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 54.

<sup>166</sup> Geoffrey Ellis, *The Napoleonic Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 78.

<sup>167</sup> David Urquhart, *The Pillars of Hercules; Or, a Narrative of Travels in Spain and Morocco in 1848 Vol. I* (London: Richard Bentley, 1850), 44.

increase in naval infrastructure. The enlarged shore footprint provided local merchants with access to contracts and opportunities to supply and victual the Royal Navy. The importance of the navy to Gibraltar at this stage was demonstrated when, at the war's conclusion, the loss of the market for prize vessels and their auctioned goods alongside a decreased expenditure on naval operations at the Rock contributed to a brief economic downturn.<sup>168</sup> The demarcation that has occasionally been made – between Gibraltar as a 'garrison' or 'fortress economy' on the one hand, and the navy's successful performance, but as an institution that merely orbited the Rock's purportedly insular society, on the other – is misplaced. By the latter stages of the Napoleonic War, Gibraltar was visibly transitioning into a fully-fledged commercial colony. The next chapter will investigate the makeup of Gibraltar's naval community in more detail, as well as exploring how inhabitants of the Rock, and those that travelled there more briefly, experienced it through an intense appreciation of the maritime and naval sphere.

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<sup>168</sup> Archer, *Identity and Empire*, 53.



## Chapter 2: '[O]n the water, our hostility was in full vigour': Views of the navy and its activities at Gibraltar

Whilst stationed at Gibraltar in 1803, the naval purser William Mark became 'acquainted with a great number of families, both public officers and civilians.' He grew particularly close to the family of John Woodin, master attendant of the dockyard, and Mark's 'great intimacy' and 'very frequent' visits to their household led him into a relationship with Woodin's eldest daughter.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately for Mark, who was intent on discussing marriage, the yellow fever epidemic struck in the autumn of 1803, confining him to quarantine in a prize-vessel moored in the harbour whilst 'the most distressing scenes imaginable' took place onshore. He kept up a daily communication with Woodin, through which he learned that Woodin's wife had succumbed to the fever; in Mark's words, the family 'were left to bewail their misfortunes on this most unhappy occasion.' The remaining Woodins (John and his three daughters) resolved to return to Britain, leaving Mark's hopes of marriage unfulfilled. Mark later vividly recalled observing their departure aboard the storeship *Prevoyante* from Gibraltar's line wall in January 1804:

This was a trying circumstance for me, but there was no remedy! As the *Prevoyante* was standing into the Gut, some Spanish gunboats pushed out from under Cabrita Point and fired upon her. I was watching from the line wall all the time, but my eyes were bleared with the intensity of staring and the horrid anxiety. The wind sprung up and the *Prevoyante* stood on through the Gut with studding sails set, without further molestation. The dear young lady remained engraved on my memory from that time, and I appeared, to myself, to live for her.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The master attendant was the dockyard officer responsible for the launching, docking and ballasting of naval vessels, and for generally managing the traffic in and out of the naval facilities. Scott Daly, 'Masters of the Royal Navy, 1750-1820', Unpublished Masters Thesis (University of Portsmouth, 2017), 31.

<sup>2</sup> William Mark, *At Sea with Nelson, being the life of William Mark, a Purser who served under Admiral Lord Nelson* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co, 1929), 190-2.

Mark's account forms an intimate perspective on how attacks on maritime traffic in Gibraltar's vicinity evinced deep, emotional reactions from the observers watching on shore. The travails of the Woodin family are also laid bare in his account. John Woodin had served as master attendant at Gibraltar since 1794, when he was joined by his wife and children. Woodin embodied many aspects of the British experience of Gibraltar during this period, including but not limited to years of long, hard service in a military establishment, being bereaved by a tropical disease epidemic and suffering attack by Spanish gunboats whilst transiting Gibraltar's bay. His eldest son, also called John, enlisted in the navy from Gibraltar in 1794. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1804, on Nelson's recommendation, who wrote

Mr. Woodin is the son of a very old and faithful servant of the Country, who was Master with Lord Hood for a considerable time, and has since been appointed Master-Attendant at Gibraltar. He is a worthy, good man, and his services will, I trust, induce their Lordships to promote his son (who was in the Vanguard with me in the action of the Nile, and has always conducted himself with great propriety) to the rank of Lieutenant.<sup>3</sup>

Lieutenant Woodin served on *Belleisle*, where a year later he was killed during the battle of Trafalgar.<sup>4</sup> His family had already left Gibraltar when the British fleet put in there post-battle, but other sailors had familial connections to the Rock. Eight participants in the battle had been born in Gibraltar, including one likely to have been the son of a dockyard gatekeeper.<sup>5</sup>

Personal views of Gibraltar's value as a strategic location were often moulded by personal experiences and/or existing political ideologies. The intention of this thesis is not necessarily to weigh up these opinions to arrive at a positive or negative conclusion regarding Gibraltar's value as a British possession. Rather, it seeks to evaluate the various ways in which these opinions were

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<sup>3</sup> *Dispatches and Letters, Volume VI*, 174.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on John Woodin and the history of the Woodin family see: Daly, 'Masters of the Royal Navy', 49-61.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Blake, 'Seaman who fought at Trafalgar who were born in Gibraltar', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol. 12 (2005): 133-4.



expressed, and how the people expressing them experienced their time there. In focusing chiefly upon these sources as records of how people experienced the Rock, a picture of Gibraltar during this period can be formed that challenges the abiding image of it as a purely military location. The 'garrison' undoubtedly infringed upon and influenced the opinion of people who wrote about the Rock, but this aspect was regularly challenged by the unmistakable importance of the maritime sphere. Furthermore, Gibraltar's maritime character was actively included in many accounts, with observers often remarking upon the naval and merchant shipping present in the bay. Relationships with naval personnel are also a regular feature. Both serving sea officers and those employed as members of the dockyard's management interacted with British visitors in a multitude of ways. Even where these relationships were not explicitly described, visitors had good cause to turn their gaze away from the Rock's fortifications and towards the sea, by which a range of threats such as enemy fleets or epidemical diseases could potentially be transported to Gibraltar. As will be seen, Naval personnel and institutions also played a key role in the formation of Gibraltar's civic identity that emerged out of the post-Napoleonic era.

### Gibraltar between siege and war

In November 1783, a mere nine months after the Great Siege's conclusion, the soldier Lieutenant James Molyneux arrived at Gibraltar. Despite the tenacious resistance so recently displayed by Eliott and his troops, Molyneux was not impressed with his new place of residence. In letters written to his sister Jane he made his feelings clear:

As for this Rock, tho it's exhibition is wonderful yet it is little curious in its productions, and still less interesting in the character, or economy of the inhabitants, and indeed (whatever your state-folks may

conjecture) is of very little importance to society and Great Britain.  
The greatest advantage we sojourners enjoy here is a happy climate.<sup>6</sup>

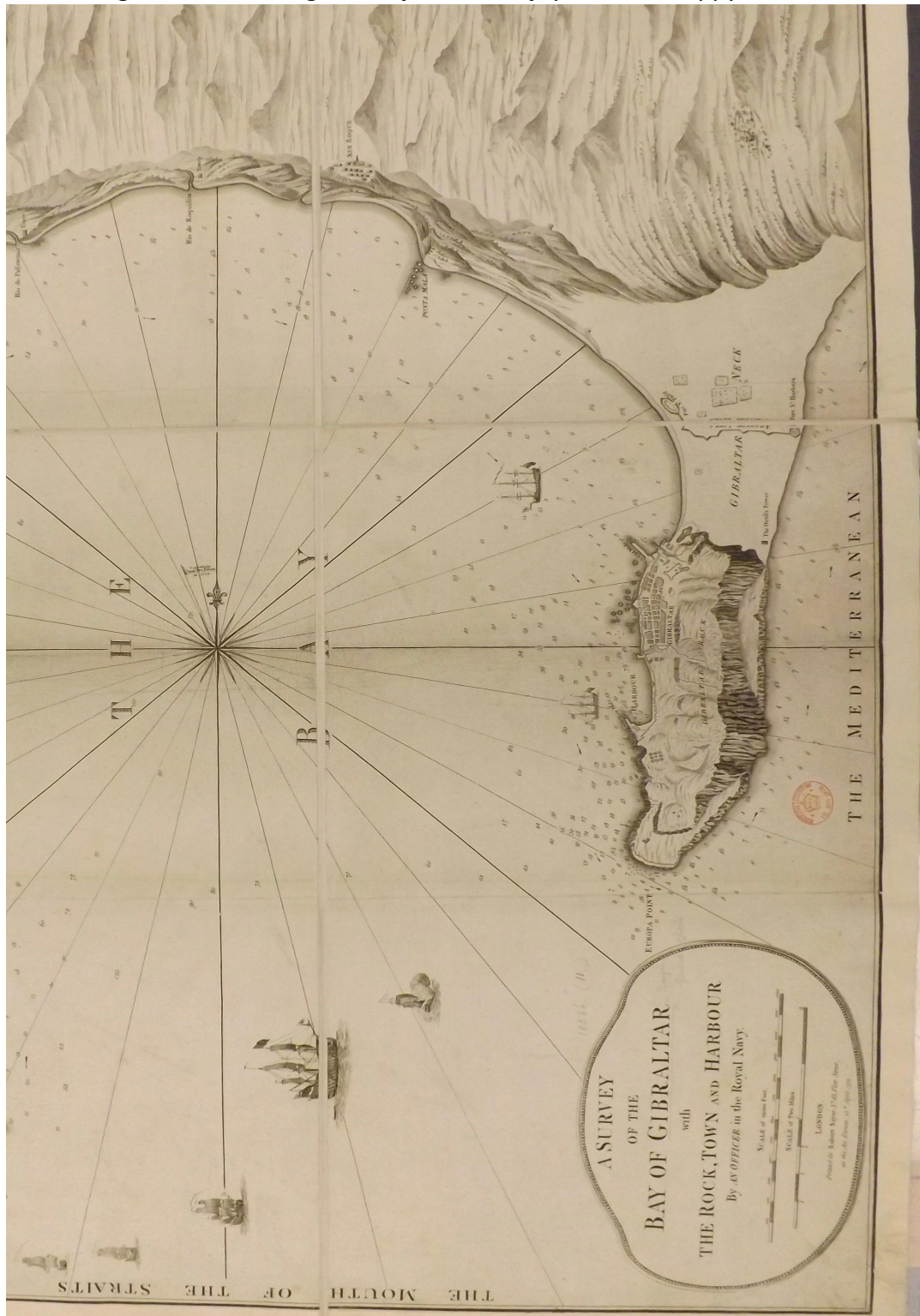


Figure 4: *A Survey of the bay of Gibraltar with the Rock, Town and Harbour, by an Officer in the Royal Navy* (British Library, London: Robert Sayer, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1788).

Jun 1784’.

Molyneux's perception of Gibraltar in the siege's immediate aftermath is revealing of how the destruction had reduced its population and rendered its economy stagnant. The peace of 1783 had secured the Rock as a British possession, but for Molyneux the absence of any action heavily influenced his opinion of the Rock – as he wrote in the same letter to his sister:

Dullness has established her reign here in Gibraltar and under her lethargic influence all remains inactive and uninteresting. We have no amusements, no residents worth mentioning, no novelty.

The calamitous state of the town as a result of the siege had a devastating effect upon commercial activity, a situation compounded by Elliot's measures to restrict contraband trading with Spain.<sup>7</sup> As Molyneux wrote immediately after his arrival there in 1783, 'The town, which was before the siege large, commodious and well peopled, is now, a heap of ruin.'<sup>8</sup> Despite the onset of peace, British vessels calling at Gibraltar were still obliged to perform quarantine when visiting Spanish ports afterwards.<sup>9</sup> It was not coincidental that Molyneux's negative opinion of the Rock was formulated at a time when 'Dullness' had descended upon it and the straits. Its prognosis remained poor when the poet Samuel Romanelli arrived there in 1786. Romanelli, an Italian-born Jew, declared that 'it has nothing to do with anyone by land or by sea' and described it as 'only an observation post guarding the mouth of the narrow strait that divides the two Pillars of Hercules.' Romanelli's desire to leave was clear, and perhaps increased due to his proximity to Spain – a country historically not welcoming to Jews. But the sparsity of maritime traffic meant that 'finding a ship to leave by sea was rare'.<sup>10</sup> He eventually found passage to Tangiers,

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<sup>7</sup> Tito Benady, 'Trade and Contraband in Gibraltar in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in *Anglo-Saxons in the Mediterranean: Commerce, Politics and Ideas (XVII-XX Centuries)*. Edited by Carmel Vassallo & Michela D'Angelo (Malta: Malta University Press, 2007), 70.

<sup>8</sup> SHC, LM/COR/13/229, 'Letter from James Molyneux to Jane More Molyneux, 9 November 1783'.

<sup>9</sup> Finlayson, *Military Fortress or Commercial Colony*, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Romanelli, *Travail in an Arab Land* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1989), 18.

where he made a revealing observation of his new residence. Observing the seashore, he compared it unfavourably to Gibraltar, where 'the creative hand of England' had 'adjusted and perfected its beauty'. For all Gibraltar's faults then, the fortifications at Tangier by comparison disappointed Romanelli. He attributed this to 'the ignorance of the Arabs', but also notable is his observation that 'There is not a single ship on the shore, only fishing boats. They have no warships, only pirate vessels on the high seas.'<sup>11</sup>

Tito Benady identified the year 1791 as being 'the nadir of the Gibraltar economy'. The wars that followed, however, rescued the Rock from its post-siege malaise by funnelling resources and personnel into it.<sup>12</sup> Sawchuk has described the resulting years as turning Gibraltar into a 'Grand Emporium'.<sup>13</sup> The resulting increase in commercial activity and a more diverse population began to be reflected in the written accounts of visitors.<sup>14</sup> In 1795 Lieutenant W. A. Oliver wrote that

We have very few English inhabitants here but there are people here from all parts of the world. French, Spaniards, Moors, Turks Italians, Genoese Portuguese Germans etc etc.

The cultural differences experienced as a British resident of a Mediterranean entrepôt were apparent in Oliver's observation of the Spanish women, whom he described as 'very handsome... but as I cannot yet speak Spanish I have not been able to get acquainted with them, but I hear they are not very partial to Hereticks.'<sup>15</sup> In 1791, forty-five percent of Gibraltar's residents were foreign born, and over half of its total population were Roman Catholic – many of them likely

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<sup>11</sup> Romanelli, *Travail*, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Tito Benady, 'Minorca and Gibraltar in the Eighteenth Century', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol. 21 (2015): 24.

<sup>13</sup> Sawchuk, *Deadly Visitations in Dark Times*, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Gibraltar's population had recovered to its pre-siege level of 3,200 by 1787. Blinkhorn, 'A question of Identity', 48.

<sup>15</sup> GA, D214/F1/160, 'W. A. Oliver, Gibraltar; request for money to buy his majority; description of life in Gibraltar, 26 December 1795'.

Spanish in origin.<sup>16</sup> As well as stimulating its economy and diversifying its population, war energized Gibraltar in other ways. Hudson Lowe, future governor of St Helena and gaoler of Napoleon in exile, was present at Gibraltar as a young lieutenant when war with France broke out in early 1793. He described arriving there to find 'the whole garrison in a state of the greatest excitement' – a feeling that was 'at its height upon the arrival of the British fleet in the bay of Gibraltar, under the command of Lord Hood.'<sup>17</sup> Thomas Graham (later Baron Lynedoch) was at Gibraltar prior to Hood's arrival, and in May had written to his brother-in-law Lord Cathcart that he was 'delighted with Gibraltar at first' but boredom had changed his opinion: 'I own I am heartily tired of it, and wait with great impatience for Lord Hood's arrival.'<sup>18</sup>

War inevitably brought increased risk to Gibraltar's surrounding waters. In a letter to William Wilberforce dated 11 July 1793, the newly appointed British Consul of Algiers, Charles Mace, bemoaned being detained at Gibraltar – first by the French declaration of war, and later by an outbreak of plague at his North African destination. The presence of a French fleet in the Mediterranean, 'and some [French] frigates off the Algerine coast to protect their corn trade from Bona', led Admiral Goodall to deny Mace passage across the straits, in fear of losing the vessel charged with conveying him and the diplomatic gifts he bore for the Dey.<sup>19</sup> Relations between Britain and Algiers were amicable at this time, but they could be easily soured by diplomatic oversights, which had occurred during the previous Consul's tenure.<sup>20</sup> Mace was forced to remain at Gibraltar for six months until Lord Hood's fleet arrived. Hood then refused him once more, as the plague at Algiers 'now raged to such a pitch as to render a communication with them impossible'. Mace's main complaint with Gibraltar was the high cost of living. He estimated that his stay had already cost him

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<sup>16</sup> Sawchuk, *Deadly Visitations in Dark Times*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Cooper Seaton, *Napoleon's captivity in relation to Sir Hudson Lowe* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1903), 34-5.

<sup>18</sup> Delavoye, *Life of Thomas Graham*, 35.

<sup>19</sup> TNA FO 95/1/3, 'Charles Mace to William Wilberforce. Gibraltar, 11 July 1793'.

<sup>20</sup> Meeks, *Struggle for the Revolutionary Western Mediterranean*, 137-8.

‘above £160 more than my salary’ and remarked that he ‘could get no house but one like a pigeon coup’. But he was also extremely frustrated at not being able to take up his posting at Algiers. He contended that ‘had I been at Algiers at first I could have succeeded in stopping the supplies of corn from Bona to Marseilles’, and as a result ‘the south of France might have been without provisions before this’. Mace had received intelligence that a twenty-six vessel convoy had arrived at Marseille from Bona ‘not above two months ago’, and that a regular stream of vessels were now making the journey unmolested. Mace’s confidence in his own diplomatic abilities notwithstanding, installing him at Algiers may have been beneficial for British interests. But the management of risk was a key factor in the navy’s role at Gibraltar, situated as it was within one of the world’s most contested maritime spaces. In this instance the risk was deemed too great, and Mace was forced to remain at the Rock.

### Naval Engagements: Gunboats and Battles

Despite being an important disembarkation post for travelling soldiers, Gibraltar has not featured prominently in the historiography of written accounts produced in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period.<sup>21</sup> Despite being represented as a highly fortified outpost dominated by the military, even soldiers were drawn to use maritime language when describing the Rock. Benjamin Miller’s passage to Gibraltar in 1796 with the Royal Artillery was a fraught one.<sup>22</sup> The convoy had been warned of a French fleet operating off Cadiz, but to their ‘great joy’ encountered

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<sup>21</sup> For example, Gavin Daly lists three contemporary accounts linked to Gibraltar, but his study does not focus on the British soldier’s experience of serving at the Rock in any detail. Gavin Daly, *The British Soldier in the Peninsular War: Encounters with Spain and Portugal, 1808-1814* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 41.

<sup>22</sup> Miller later served with Sir John Moore in the Coruna Campaign. His reminiscences, copied from a diary he kept whilst on service, were produced sometime between 1813 and his death in 1865. M. R. Dacombe, B. J. H. Rowe and J. Harding, ‘The Adventures of Serjeant Benjamin Miller’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* Vol. 7, no. 27 (1928): 9-10.

Admiral Mann with nine British vessels instead.<sup>23</sup> Arriving at Gibraltar on the evening of 29 April, Miller expected to 'find a town and country'. He found, however, 'nothing but a tremendous rock reaching its craggy somitt above the clouds and surrounded by the ocean'. As Miller described from his shipboard perspective, 'the town is not to be seen from the Harbour', intimating that his immediate impression was not that of a military citadel. Going ashore, he found the army barracks to be 'more like sheds they build in the fields in england for cattle in stormy weather', but that fruit was plentiful: 'I nearly thought I was got into some enchanted land to see wagon loads of oranges, and all other kinds of fruit laying in heaps on the ground'. Miller described the Moors that were trading this produce in stereotypically derogatory language, 'more like wild beasts than human beings sitting cross legged on the ground'. Yet conversely, he went on to state that

I had enough to do to gaze at the inhabitants which are from all nations under the sun, a greater contrast in features and manners is nowhere to be found, and any person that wishes to see the dress and customs of all the world let them go to Gibraltar.

Gibraltar's diverse trading community collectively inspired racialised revulsion and worldly curiosity in equal measure. Both reactions served to open up the 'fortress' concept and connect Gibraltar to wider Mediterranean cultures. Miller did turn his gaze towards the fortifications, but even the '700 pieces of heavy artillery mounted on the rock' were characterised in maritime terms. Describing the portion of the Rock that faced the Spanish lines, Miller told how the guns pointed 'through portalls like the side of a ship'. His positioning of Gibraltar as being geographically 'Surrounded by water except a narrow esthmus from it to Spain' further accentuates how any isolation experienced by Miller at Gibraltar was specifically in relation to the sea that encompassed it. Spanish gunboat activity in the bay forms a key part of Miller's account, particularly from 1796 to his first departure from the Rock in 1798. In November 1796 he describes being camped 'about the cliffs to avoid the fire from the Spanish Gun boats and batterys as we expected a siege'. It was common for camps to be made at Europa Point to the south during such times

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<sup>23</sup> DHC, D-268/1, 'Narrative of the life of Benjamin Miller', 6-12.

as Miller describes here.<sup>24</sup> In 1804 Ann Fyers, wife of the Commanding Officer of the Royal Engineers, relocated there to escape the worst effects of the yellow fever epidemic. Although in isolation, her party was kept informed and supplied by small naval vessels that 'contributed to our comfort by calling continually... with a speaking trumpet we could hold a conversation.' Fear of the town's infectiousness meant that the livestock supplied to them by Sir John Gore was 'a great comfort to us'. Fyers deeply appreciated the benefits of such proximity, stating that 'our being so near to the sea is a great comfort.'<sup>25</sup>

Miller's isolation at Europa Point, however, was designed to avoid a different type of enemy. The day after he made camp there in 1796 a convoy arrived from England. He described how it was 'engaged by the Spanish boats which damaged them much and killed several men on shore.' In December he became ill with a fever and spent fourteen weeks in the naval hospital 'in a very mangled state', during which time he noted the wreck of *Courageux*, and what was surely an exaggerated '500 sail of enemy's vessels' that passed the Rock. Miller recorded that 'Admiral Jervis fell in with them and beat them off St Vincents'. He reported 'fighting with the Spanish Gun boats all day and night to protect a convoy' from England on 7 April 1797, and a prolonged three-day gunboat attack on 21, 22 and 23 April that 'threw a number of shots into the Garrison killed several men, and drove the 42<sup>nd</sup> Regiment off the parade where they were at exercise, and knocked down several trees.' Just four days later on 27 April the *Andromal* frigate arrived at midnight, with 'all hands to their allarm post' due to it 'being engaged by 30 Spanish Gun boats'. The nervous anticipation felt by those viewing from the shore was evidently extreme. Miller's account describes how one of the frigate's guns 'burst and killed some of her men', and how it was known that the wife of General Thomas Trigge was on board the vessel. However, the most noteworthy of Miller's naval experiences at Gibraltar was reserved for his departure from the

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<sup>24</sup> This had been done during the Great Siege, and although Miller's description of 'cliffs' could suggest higher ground, it also applies to Europa – which was a rocky area and had no natural landing places.

<sup>25</sup> GGL, 'Charlotte & Sarah Mann – Journal of their Family History', 24.



Rock. He embarked on board a vessel bound for the recapture of Minorca on 19 October 1798. Before they could sail, however:

Lord Nelson's Prizes from the Nile came into the bay and anchored alongside of us in a shocking battered state, the British ships equal in as bad a state as the prizes, and the blood of the brave men who had fought in them still to be seen on some of the ships. We gave each ship three cheers as they past us, and all the bands onboard the fleet for the expedition struck up rule Britannia. The Tars manned their rigging and returned our cheers, and seemed to say go my brave soldiers and imitate your brave countrymen on the watry element.

Miller's awe at witnessing the fruits of Nelson's Egyptian triumph is palpable and illustrates the propensity Gibraltar had for thrusting the naval sphere into the consciousnesses of military men. Thomas Graham, destined for the same expedition as Miller, also witnessed Saumarez's arrival and wrote to his brother-in-law describing it as a 'most glorious and interesting sight'. Like Miller, he noted the 'astonishing' state of the British vessels alongside their captured foes, but he also 'in a great hurry' copied for his recipient the French orders distributed to their sailors pre-battle, 'just in time to prepare them for their *victory*.'<sup>26</sup>

Also noteworthy is Miller's pre-existing knowledge of the battle. This may seem unsurprising, but the rhetorical framing of Gibraltar as an insulated fortress has sequestered the study of its community away from historiographies that could highlight how its populace was galvanised by the appreciation and celebration of British successes. News of the victory reached Gibraltar on 25 September, and army bands played 'Rule Britannia' in celebration. When Saumarez arrived a month later, he and his officers were feted at balls and dinners.<sup>27</sup> Miller's experience at Gibraltar was very clearly impacted by Jervis's defeat of the Spanish at St Vincent, and then by Nelson's victory at the Nile – alongside the frequent and very visible skirmishes taking place against Spanish gunboats in the bay. In 1805 the fleet was welcomed back to Gibraltar after Trafalgar by celebratory firing of salutes from the garrison

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<sup>26</sup> Delavoye, *Life of Thomas Graham*, 156-7.

<sup>27</sup> Musteen, *Nelson's Refuge*, 21.

and cheers from sailors that manned the yardarms of vessels in the bay. Paul Harris Nicolas, serving as a marine on *Bellesisle*, wrote that 'our entrance into the mole was very gratifying: crowds of every class came to greet and congratulate us'.<sup>28</sup> Naval victories occurring outside of the European theatre also had a positive impact at Gibraltar, as demonstrated above when news of Rodney's victory in 1782 reached the besieged garrison. Duckworth's victory at San Domingo in 1806 was another example – William Hoste wrote on 11 April that 'We have been uncommonly splendid at Gibraltar on account' of the 6 February victory in the Caribbean.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, celebrations of naval success at Gibraltar mirrored those felt in other imperial locations. McAleer has written of how the battles of Camperdown and the Nile were warmly received at the Cape of Good Hope, demonstrating that displays of naval supremacy 'extended beyond British shores, and helped to form a crucial part of British identity not just in the British Isles, but throughout the British empire'.<sup>30</sup>

Further observations of naval warfare in the bay came from the naval chaplain Cooper Willyams, who visited Gibraltar in 1800. He later recorded his observations in *A Voyage Up the Mediterranean in His Majesty's Ship the Swiftsure* (1802), which included his account of the Battle of the Nile, where he had served as chaplain of *Swiftsure*.<sup>31</sup> Touring many of the Rock's famous sights, he remarked upon the 'strong line of fortifications' that adorned Gibraltar's western waterfront, extending

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<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Mary McGrigor, *Defiant and Dismasted at Trafalgar: The Life & Times of Admiral Sir William Hargood* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2004), 125.

<sup>29</sup> The *Gibraltar Chronicle* published its account of Duckworth's victory the next day. *Memoirs and Letters of Capt. Sir William Hoste*, 269; *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 12 April 1805.

<sup>30</sup> John McAleer, 'Atlantic Periphery, Asian Gateway: The Royal Navy at the Cape of Good Hope, 1785-1815', in *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World c. 1750-1820*. Edited by John McAleer and Christer Petley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 188.

<sup>31</sup> Willyams had earlier published *An Account of the Campaign in the West Indies in the Year 1794*, and from 1797 had served as St Vincent's personal domestic chaplain. W. P. Courtney, rev. Chloe Johnson, 'Cooper Willyams', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 59. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: oxford university Press, 2004), 451.

from the Water port to the New Mole. He particularly praised the King's Bastion, an installation 'of prodigious strength', which according to Willyams

the proof of which I need only state, that it resisted the main attack of the floating batteries and men of war on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1782, that celebrated day on which General Elliot and his brave garrison gained such immortal honour in repelling the severest attack ever made on a place of equal size.<sup>32</sup>

Willyams clearly took great pride in juxtaposing the relatively small size of the bastion against the significant role it had played during the Great Siege. This was reinforced by his quoting of Major-General Boyd's (Gibraltar's then Governor) supposed words at the bastion's commencement in 1773: 'may I live to see it resist the united efforts of France and Spain'.<sup>33</sup> The batteries built higher above the town similarly impressed him, especially those excavated from the solid rock, which he deemed 'the most extraordinary work of art'.<sup>34</sup> He also had cause to comment upon the enemy activity in the bay, giving a general account of how British maritime activity around Gibraltar was disrupted. According to Willyams, the Spanish were able to observe approaching merchant vessels from a signal tower at Cabreta Point. Often becalmed and driven towards the Spanish coast by the current after rounding the point, those same vessels could then be attacked by gunboats sailing out from Algeciras. Willyams asserted that despite their small size, the gunboats 'have frequently done much mischief, even to our line of battle ships when becalmed'. Being small yet equipped with 'very heavy guns', they were, in Willyams' words, 'enabled to batter the ships from a distance, which renders them so small a mark that they seldom receive any damage in return'. These observations likely derived from conversations with his friend and naval Captain Jahleel Brenton, who had accompanied Willyams on an excursion to St Michael's Cave.<sup>35</sup> After describing in general terms the activity of the Spanish gunboats,

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<sup>32</sup> Cooper Willyams, *A Voyage up the Mediterranean in His Majesty's Ship the Swiftsure* (London: T. Bensley, 1802), 285-286.

<sup>33</sup> Willyams, *A Voyage up the Mediterranean*, 286.

<sup>34</sup> Willyams, *A Voyage up the Mediterranean*, 286.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

Willyams' account then launched into an effusive narration of Brenton's recent victory in the bay when outnumbered ten to one by the enemy vessels as commander of the sloop *Speedy* in October 1799. *Speedy* was escorting two merchant vessels into Gibraltar when the Spanish vessels attacked. Brenton immediately counter-attacked by sailing directly for the Spanish flotilla, thus covering the merchant vessel's approach into the bay. The British ship took heavy damage in the resulting action, but it had in Willyams' words 'terminated most unfavourably for the Spaniards', who 'lost several men in this action, and were otherwise much damaged'. Perhaps most significant however, is Willyams' observation that 'The gallantry of this action was beheld by the garrison at Gibraltar with the greatest admiration'.<sup>36</sup> In fact, the proximity of Brenton's action was particularly extreme – according to Henry Raikes, who later edited his memoirs, Brenton was able to conduct a conversation from *Speedy* with Captain Mottley, on shore as Gibraltar's agent of transports, immediately prior to the Spanish surrounding the vessel. As a mark of respect for Brenton's naval bravery, the words 'Speedy' and 'Brenton' were used that evening by the Garrison for its curfew password and countersign.<sup>37</sup> During the remainder of his time in the Mediterranean (Willyams did not return to England until September 1800) Gibraltar provided a convenient port for the *Swiftsure* during the frequent cruises against enemy action that characterised active service on the station.

Lieutenant Aeneas Anderson of the 40<sup>th</sup> regiment was present on Sir Ralph Abercromby's Mediterranean expedition in 1800. His account of his time at Gibraltar is yet another demonstration of how it was entirely feasible for visitors to appreciate its status as a garrison town and fortress whilst simultaneously experiencing the patriotic ramifications of successful naval conflicts with Britain's enemies in the adjacent waters that surrounded it. After passing the straits in May, the expedition returned there from Minorca, and Anderson eventually landed at Gibraltar on 15 September. He found the town to be 'crowded with officers both of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>37</sup> *Memoir of the Life and Services of Vice-Admiral Sir Jahleel Brenton, Baronet, K. C. B.* Edited by Henry Raikes (London: Hatchard and Son, 1846), 43.

the navy and army', and commented sardonically upon the cost of provisions – as he termed it, 'the plenty of money will appear to have been equal to the scarcity of provisions, for whatever was offered to sale found ready customers'.<sup>38</sup> In that specific observation Anderson's account resonates with several others written during open hostilities with Spain, but parallels can also be found in the ways that naval actions caused immediate anxiety to those on shore. When the *Thalia* frigate sailed with a convoy for England on 16 September, 'several gun-boats came out from Algezira, in order to cut them off as they entered the Gut.' The threat was seen off by Admiral Keith, who ordered the fleet's smaller boats and launches to assist the convoy, 'which operation had such an effect upon the Spaniards, that they sought an immediate shelter under their own batteries.'<sup>39</sup> The next day Anderson recorded that the gun-boats 'were continually hovering about the Gut; but sheered off with the greatest expedition whenever any of our vessels attempted to approach them'. The slights upon Spanish bravery implicit in Anderson's writings were reinforced on 19 September, when a British brig was captured. Keith ordered a rescue operation, which caused the Spanish shore batteries and nine of their gunboats to fire upon the British vessels stationed in the bay. But, as Anderson recalled, 'they had not the power to restrain the ardour and damp the intrepidity of our sailors, who boarded and retook the vessel.'<sup>40</sup> After a brief period in which the Spanish fired upon the British craft, the more heavily equipped *Lion* and *Mondovi* were brought to bear, along with the heavy guns of the larger British vessels at anchor in the bay. Anderson observed that the Spanish 'thought it best, as usual, to decline the contest', and later reported that 'The brig, in whose service so much British bravery was displayed, was got safe off at noon.'<sup>41</sup> Upon entering the straits on 9 October Anderson noted that a 'considerable number of gun-boats were stationed along the shore, some of which fired on such

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<sup>38</sup> Aeneas Anderson, *A Journal of the forces which sailed from the Downs, in April 1800, On a Secret Expedition under the Command of Lieut-Gen Pigot, till their arrival in Minorca, and continued through all the subsequent transactions of the Army under the command of the Right Hon. General Sir Ralph Abercromby, K. B.* (London: J. Debrett, 1802), 62-3.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

of the convoy as they thought within their reach'. Alongside the sporadic gunboat fire, the convoy was seriously threatened by seasonal storms that prevented it from securing a safe anchorage and caused some transports to separate from the main force for several days. When not fighting off gunboats the naval vessels put into Tetuan on several occasions for water. During an evolving campaign in which orders regularly changed, along with the intended target of the expedition, Anderson's time at Gibraltar was clearly transitory. But as mentioned above, he did go on shore, including on 18 September when he viewed 'the works of this celebrated fortress', and found himself 'highly gratified with the examination of them.'<sup>42</sup> Anderson's account is yet another demonstration of how it was entirely feasible for visitors to Gibraltar to appreciate its status as a garrison town and fortress whilst simultaneously experiencing the patriotic ramifications of successful naval conflicts with Britain's enemies in the adjacent waters that surrounded it.

In 1801, the threat of a large naval action in close proximity to Gibraltar became very real when Admiral James Saumarez was sent from the squadron blockading Brest to intercept three French vessels that had anchored in Algeciras, just across the bay from Gibraltar. In the space of a week, beginning on 7 July, there were two battles, the first of which resulted in a French victory. But being near to Gibraltar allowed Saumarez to refit his vessels there, and he duly attacked nine Allied ships in the Straits with only four of his own. Under cover of darkness, the British managed to confuse two 112-gun Spanish vessels causing them to fire on each other, resulting in both of them exploding, and a further French vessel being captured.<sup>43</sup> It was a remarkable turnaround, and although Saumarez was bitterly disappointed not to receive a peerage for his efforts, the emoluments afforded to him were nevertheless significant.<sup>44</sup> He was perhaps entitled to feel disappointed when in the campaign's aftermath he became subordinate to Vice-Admiral Charles Pole, whose

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>43</sup> John D. Grainger, *The Amiens Truce: Britain and Bonaparte, 1801-1803* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 42.

<sup>44</sup> Anthony Sullivan, *Man of War: the Fighting Life of Admiral James Saumarez, from the American Revolution to the defeat of Napoleon* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2017), 129.

reinforcement squadron was too large to be commanded by a Rear Admiral such as Saumarez.<sup>45</sup> The second action (often referred to as the Battle of the Gut) was smaller in scale than Cape St Vincent or the Nile, but it acted as a corrective to the defeat suffered in the first battle (often called the Battle of Algeciras). The celebratory civic mood that followed Saumarez's victory and enlivened Gibraltar's community was no doubt inspired by the general anxiety and fear of maritime attack that had festered since the opening salvoes of the French Revolutionary War. Sarah Fyers (daughter of Colonel William Fyers, Commanding Officer of the Royal Engineers at Gibraltar) recalled viewing the Battle of Algesiras initially through the downstairs window of the family home: 'a beautiful sight it was to see those magnificent ships, their white sails shining in the sun'. When the family decamped outside to gain a better view Sarah observed that

Every soul in the garrison seemed to have congregated on the line wall, or on the heights, and the murmur of the voices sounded like the sound of the waves of the sea. By the aid of telescopes, we could distinguish, the poor peasant women and children climbing up the steep mountain at the back of Algeziras, that they might get out of reach of the shot.<sup>46</sup>

The defeat and loss of *Hannibal* caused 'no little grief' but, armed with the benefit of hindsight Fyers resolutely declared that 'Englishmen are not the people to be dispirited by the first untoward circumstance.' The *Gibraltar Chronicle* published four days later found solace in the aggressiveness shown by the British fleet, concluding that 'no dangers can appal or discourage our intrepid Tars when the enemy appears to be within their reach'.<sup>47</sup> Repairs to Saumarez's remaining vessels

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<sup>45</sup> Tim Voelcker, *Admiral Saumarez versus Napoleon: The Baltic, 1807-12* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 30.

<sup>46</sup> 'Charlotte & Sarah Mann', 14.

<sup>47</sup> The *Chronicle* further reassured its readers that 'The circumstances of an English ship having fallen into the Enemy's hands, is no doubt an uncommon event at present; but tho' it may be, from that consideration, a matter of exultation to them, we must beg leave to observe that the loss of the *Hannibal* is not to be attributed to any superior skill or courage, in her opponents;- but solely to the disaster of her being becalmed an running on shore upon a strange coast.' *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Friday 10 July 1801.

‘were commenced without delay’, and such was the haste to sail after the escaping Allied fleet that according to Fyers the *Caeser* ‘was taking in ammunition to the very last moment’.<sup>48</sup> The Captain of *Caeser*, Jahleel Brenton, recorded his view of Gibraltar when Saumarez’s refitted fleet sailed out of Gibraltar on the 12<sup>th</sup>, as ‘every battery, or pinnacle of rock, which overhung the bay, was crowded with spectators, all cheering and waving hats and handkerchiefs’.<sup>49</sup> From the shore, Fyers described the line wall as being ‘so densely crowded, that nothing but humanheads could be seen’. As *Caeser* got away from her moorings ‘on her brave and perilous undertaking’, she later recalled that:

a shout arose from the assembled multitude, such as I never heard before or since, and I shall perhaps be scarcely credited when I say, that I felt the rock against which I was leaning, absolutely shake with the reverberation, never was a more animated scene. The English Ships were watched until they had fairly got into the Straits, and were hidden by Cabrita Point. But, nobody settled to anything.<sup>50</sup>

The Rock’s community then spent several days in nervous anticipation, with constant speculation circulating for several days afterwards. Ultimately, ‘to the joy of the Garrison’ Saumarez’s squadron returned in triumph. Fyers describes the crowd ‘again collected on the line wall, and the cheering almost deafening.’ In Brenton’s terms the community ‘now sincerely rejoiced in the change’, and ‘considered that defeat had never existed’.<sup>51</sup> It must be said that Sarah Fyers’ account does contain inconsistencies, mainly relating to the dates of the battles and the length of time that Saumarez’s fleet was at sea.<sup>52</sup> But it also displays a patriotic fervour in retelling these events. Fyers implied cowardly conduct in writing that ‘The French Admiral, early in the engagement, had made his escape to a small vessel’.

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<sup>48</sup> ‘Charlotte & Sarah Mann’, 15.

<sup>49</sup> *Life and Services of Vice-Admiral Sir Jahleel Brenton*, 119-120.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Charlotte & Sarah Mann’, 15.

<sup>51</sup> *Life and Services of Vice-Admiral Sir Jahleel Brenton*, 119-120.

<sup>52</sup> Sarah described Saumarez’s ships as being in the straights for ‘several days’, and then, after describing a tremendous explosion coming from that direction, the fleet did not return until ‘some more days’ after that. In truth, Saumarez left Gibraltar on 12 July 1801 and returned there on the evening of 14 July. ‘Charlotte & Sarah Mann’, 15.



More intriguing, however, is her assertion that the 'English had exerted their utmost to save' Spanish sailors that had escaped the two burning vessels, and who afterwards 'spoke loudly, in praise of the humane attention they had received from their enemies.'<sup>53</sup> Saumarez's own despatches flatly contradict this, as it mentioned no sailors in the water and emphasised that 'No possibility existing of offering the least Assistance in so distressing a Situation'.<sup>54</sup> But Fyers' account correlated strongly with the celebrated rescue of Spanish sailors effected by Roger Curtis during the Great Siege. Another false rumour connected the action to events from 1782, as the *Gibraltar Chronicle* refuted what it termed 'falsehoods propagated to incense the Spanish against the English Nation' - that is, rumours that the English had used red-hot shot to set the Spanish vessels ablaze.<sup>55</sup>

The Rock's role as an observation post for naval action in the bay was meaningful in reinforcing collective pride in British efforts to defend it amongst its garrison and community. But this ran concurrently with an appreciation of the strategic advantage it gave. Furthermore, Brenton's actions at Gibraltar reinforced the impactful visibility of these events and the immediacy felt by observers on the shore. The Spanish signal towers along the coast, particularly at Cabretta Point, afforded Gibraltar's garrison advance information of ship movements in the straits. In February of 1799 immediately after receiving command of *Speedy*, Brenton successfully escorted an important convoy into Gibraltar from Lisbon, in the face of an attack from twenty-three gunboats and aided by his own knowledge of the Spanish signals. The garrison 'felt great uneasiness at the imminent danger to which the supplies for the fleet were exposed' from viewing the signals, and thus expecting an attack upon the convoy.<sup>56</sup> St Vincent also watched from the shore, apparently uneasy at his own inability to protect the convoy but then 'relieved and gratified by its safe arrival.'<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> 'Charlotte & Sarah Mann', 16.

<sup>54</sup> *The London Gazette*, Monday 3 August 1801.

<sup>55</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Friday 7 August 1801.

<sup>56</sup> *Memoir of Jahleel Brenton*, 30-1.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

Colonel William Dyott called at Gibraltar in 1801, on his way to reinforce Abercromby's Egyptian campaign. With only time for 'an hour and half on shore' his observations were brief, but he found time to speculate in a letter to his brother Richard on the whereabouts of the French Admiral Ganthaume, who he thought 'had eight sail of vessels with him in the Mediterranean', but that '[Admiral] Sir John Warren is close at his heels'.<sup>58</sup> Upon returning to Gibraltar in November that same year Dyott wrote to his mother, painting a rosy picture of life at the Rock. Provisions were 'plenty and tolerably good', with fish 'in abundance as also fruit and vegetables brought from Barbary'. The bay was said to be 'full of ships for some time wanting for a fair wind to proceed home'.<sup>59</sup> Whilst in Egypt in early August 1801 he heard news of Saumarez's defeat off Algeciras – news of the resulting victory in the 'Gut' reached him barely two weeks later.<sup>60</sup> Dyott did not appear to have been particularly inspired by Gibraltar. His observation in one letter that 'this solitary Rock does not afford any events that could entertain you in the relation' speaks to the lack of military action experienced there. Yet in the same letter he told the recipient 'You would be entertained with seeing the variety of persons that frequent this place from Barbary and up the Straits for the purpose of purchasing English manufactures', noting particularly the presence of North African Jews present there for that reason.<sup>61</sup> As ever, soldiers entering Gibraltar had plenty of cause to turn their gaze towards the sea whilst residing there. Maritime traffic markedly informed the observations and recorded experiences of visitors, and the influence of seaborne trade upon the formation of its evolving community was clear to Britons conditioned to think of foreign outposts as key receptacles for British exports. As such, even high-ranking military officers conceptualised the 'fortress' of Gibraltar within the multitude of external contexts that overlapped and coalesced within the territory itself.

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<sup>58</sup> SRO, D3388/37/14, 'William Dyott, Gibraltar Bay, to Richard Dyott, 19 June 1801'.

<sup>59</sup> SRO, D3388/37/25, 'William Dyott, Gibraltar to his mother, 6 November 1801'.

<sup>60</sup> *Dyott's Diary, 1781-1845; a selection from the journal of William Dyott, sometime general in the British army and aide-de-camp to His Majesty King George III*, Vol I. Edited by Reginald W. Jeffery (London: Archibald Constable and Company, 1907), 160; 162.

<sup>61</sup> SRO, D3388/38/3, 'William Dyott, Gibraltar, to William Herrick, 21 March 1802'.

It was surprisingly common for Gibraltar itself to be experienced as a mundane place where little military action took place, but for its surrounding waters to be traversed/observed in constant expectation of conflict. Henry Bankes's arrival in 1806 fortunately coincided with a 'great festival in Spain and the crews of their boats were otherwise employed', thus allowing his convoy to avoid harassment. The next day, however, he observed Spanish gunboats 'take several little merchant brigs, and tow them under their batteries, assistance from hence coming too late to save them.' Contrasting 'the constant warfare carried on between the Spanish Gun boats and our trade' with his experience on shore, he found that 'there is the most perfect understanding between the Spanish and British troops', even to the extent that bullocks were allowed to graze on the Spanish side of the neutral lines. Alongside this, Bankes was struck by 'the multitude of different habits and costumes' discernible among Gibraltar's visibly diverse population and postulated that 'every quarter of the globe sends a speculating portion of its inhabitants to this little spot.'<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, Gibraltar's military activity heightened and relaxed depending on the circumstances of the war. The atmosphere at Gibraltar was not always comprehensively characterised by a heightened state of military preparedness for a land-based attack. George Landmann, a Captain in the Royal Engineers at the Rock from 1805-1808, provides the most instructive illustration of how this played out:

notwithstanding our being at war with Spain, the most friendly intercourse was maintained, with this very strange anomaly, - that whilst we frequently visited the towns of San Roque, Algeziras, Ronda, and even sometimes leave might be obtained to go to Malaga and Cadiz... yet, on the water, our hostility was in full vigour.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> DHC, D-BKL/H/Q/48, 'From Henry Bankes III in Gibraltar to his father, Henry Bankes II, 15 October 1806'.

<sup>63</sup> George Landmann, *Recollections of my Military Life Vol. 1* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1854), 78.

Landmann undoubtedly witnessed a great deal of gunboat activity in the bay during his time in Gibraltar. His very arrival had nearly been denied by 'a privateer and five gun-boats come out of Tarrifa, making the utmost efforts to attack us', but the appearance of the frigate *Apollo* persuaded the enemy to desist. He also recalled there being 'several gun-boats in constant readiness to assist and protect our shipping'. One officer employed on 'this important and valuable service' was Lieutenant Blaquier, who 'frequently distinguished himself in a very conspicuous manner'. As well as bolstering British pride, Blaquier's actions boosted morale for another reason; as Landmann notes, the gunboats ensured a smooth flow of livestock to the garrison from North Africa.<sup>64</sup> The disparity that Landmann described between relations on land and on the water is demonstrated starkly in his retelling of a visit to the neutral ground. Allowed through with no passport other 'than a civil word and a cigar to the sentinel' he made his way to a Spanish battery, where he drank wine with an officer he 'happened to be acquainted, for he had several times before this dined at our mess'. Landmann's sojourn was interrupted, however, when another Spaniard informed his compatriot that an English gunboat was in difficulty, and in range of the battery's guns. With extreme politeness, the officer requested that Landmann exit the battery. Outside, he recognised Blaquier on the boat through his telescope and nervously watched the Spanish guns miss their target: 'I must confess that I felt my blood run cold through my veins and hastily directing my glass on the boat, in expectation of seeing her sinking.'<sup>65</sup> Blaquier escaped by cleverly anchoring alongside a Portuguese vessel, as by hitting her the Spanish would have violated neutrality. Afterwards, Landmann and the Spanish officer reconvened to finish their bottle, and the Spaniard drank to the health of Blaquier, telling the engineer that he felt glad at not 'having to condole with you on the loss of your gallant friend.'<sup>66</sup>

The presence of naval warfare occurring within Gibraltar's immediate vicinity reinforced the interdependent relationship that existed between the Rock and the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>66</sup> Landmann, *Recollections*, 85.

Royal Navy. This often faded during long periods of peace, but the legacy of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era lived on regardless. The geographical nomenclature of the straits and the Atlantic approaches to it primed British travellers to think in patriotic terms as they journeyed through the area. The large fleet actions of these wars added further meaning to a landscape which visitors then inserted themselves into. Prior to his first voyage through the straits in May 1800, Aeneas Anderson recorded the following:

We this day discovered Cape St. Vincent, a memorable spot, which we regarded with peculiar exultation, on the recollection of the brilliant victory obtained off it, over the Spanish, by Earl St. Vincent.<sup>67</sup>

Anderson's thoughts as he passed the famous Cape were accompanied by Spanish cannonades warning of the British fleet's arrival. Upon entering the gut two days later, and observing the 'lofty and majestic rock', his patriotic observations continued. Though 'barren in itself', Gibraltar had, according to Anderson

by the efforts of British prowess, been made to produce a plenteous growth of laurels for the decoration of British glory... the patriotic feelings of Englishmen were roused in the bosoms of us all, but particularly of those, who, for the first time, beheld this animating and tremendous object.<sup>68</sup>

The mariner William Birch, who voyaged to the Mediterranean in 1810, described being 'gratified with a near view of the famous Cape St. Vincent' on the outward leg, as the calm sea allowed him to glimpse 'this celebrated Cape to great advantage.'<sup>69</sup> Birch stopped only briefly at Gibraltar before rendezvousing with Admiral Collingwood's fleet off Cape St Sebastian on Spain's north-east coast. On their passage back to England some two years later, Birch noted in his journal 'a

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *A Journal of the forces*, 8-9.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>69</sup> William Birch, *A Journal of a Voyage Up the Mediterranean: Including Brief descriptive Accounts of various Places on the coasts of Spain, Italy, Sicily, Malta, Egypt, &c. in the years 1810, 11, and 12, kept on board H. M. S. Thames* (Liverpool: T. Kaye, and Wright and Cruikshank, 1818), 2.

good view of Cape Trafalgar this morning, which we passed within a few miles'.<sup>70</sup> These geographical observances were not impassively recorded. Rather, they reinforced a sense of superiority that seemingly revealed itself to Birch in his experiences on shore. At Cadiz, visited immediately after his initial glimpse of Cape St Vincent, Birch describes going aboard two Spanish vessels. He found the *Principe d'Asturias* and *Santa Anna* ('both of which vessels were engaged in the late memorable action off Trafalgar') to be highly unimpressive ships, as 'nothing like the discipline and cleanliness of an English man of war could be distinguished'.<sup>71</sup> Inevitably, famous events off Gibraltar's shoreline formed part of Birch's patriotic landscape; during his second brief visit there on the return journey to England, he remarked upon the nearby 'Algeziras, off which place lay the Spanish flotilla during the renowned firing this fortress sustained about thirty years ago, when it was defended by the immortal Elliot'.<sup>72</sup> The Tuscan poet and exile Filippo Pananti attempted to return to Italy by sea in 1813.<sup>73</sup> His voyage was tedious, but his spirits were 'enlivened with the recollections inspired by several memorable spots' en route. He specifically named 'La Hogue, Cape St. Vincent, and Trafalgar', as locations that 'could not fail to revive the names of Rooke, Jervis and Nelson'. These sites, described by Pananti as 'so often renowned by British valour' allowed even a non-British individual to 'still fancy himself on the territory of Albion'.<sup>74</sup> Pananti's vessel touched at Gibraltar during the voyage, but the yellow fever epidemic then ranging prevented him from landing. He had time, however, to consider 'the surrounding objects, all commemorated either in classic lore, or the historic page'. These included 'the inaccessible rock' with its 'stupendous fortifications', but he was also reminded of 'the victory of Rodney over the Spanish admiral Langara' (which he misattributed to having taken place in the bay of Algeziras). Tellingly, he felt able to place his vessel 'on the very spot... where,

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<sup>70</sup> Birch, *Journal of a Voyage*, 284.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>72</sup> Birch, *Journal of a Voyage*, 283.

<sup>73</sup> Ann Thomson, 'Filippo Pananti's Algeria', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* Vol 26, no. 2 (2021): 117.

<sup>74</sup> Filippo Pananti, *Narrative of a Residence in Algiers* (London: Henry Colburn, 1818), 11.

through the gallantry of General Elliot, the floating batteries were destroyed.’ Alongside these recollections of British valour, Pananti’s observation of Gibraltar turned towards its bay, where ‘commercial activity, and immense diversity of ships bearing the flag of different nations collected in the bay, also afforded a very interesting spectacle.’<sup>75</sup> Here was a demonstration of how Gibraltar’s history pre- and post-Trafalgar connected it to perceptions of the British experience of empire.

### Naval Engagements: Dances and Dinners

After arriving in the straits in 1809, William Jacob commented on Gibraltar’s bay, which was ‘filled with commercial and warlike ships’.<sup>76</sup> Upon landing he soon met with ‘two highly valued friends’ - the lieutenant-governor General John Fraser, and Captain Ross Donnelly ‘who has command of the ships of war’. In contrast to Spain, where Jacob had previously travelled, these connections evoked memories of England: ‘to fall again into English society and English comforts is an indescribable luxury’. Despite declaring that ‘To a person coming direct from England, Gibraltar will not appear a very pleasing place of residence’, Jacob was much impressed with the accommodation used by the garrison’s officers.<sup>77</sup> However, he gave particular credit to the naval commissioner, who ‘especially has a charming residence, and a good garden, stocked with every species of tropical fruit’.<sup>78</sup> This was Mount Pleasant, a residence built by the engineer Colonel Green prior to the Great Siege. Due to the ruined state of the town the Admiralty afterwards leased it from him and bought it outright in 1797.<sup>79</sup> The property, situated on the road that ran from Southport (near the dockyard) to Europa further south was at this time separated from Gibraltar’s main town. Visitors to Mount Pleasant, and to Gibraltar’s southern region in

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<sup>75</sup> Pananti, *Narrative*, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Jacob, *Travels*, 207. Jacob was the MP for Rye, and later authored several treatises on the European corn trade. Gordon Goodwin, *rev.* M.J Mercer, ‘William Jacob’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 562.

<sup>77</sup> Jacob, *Travels*, 207.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>79</sup> Marjorie Hoare, ‘The Mount’, *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol. 12 (2005): 19.

general regularly commented upon its garden and view of the bay. Betsey Wynne was impressed by the property's 'prospect', which in 1797 she described as 'beautiful... it is the prettiest spot in the place'.<sup>80</sup> Cooper Willyams expressed a favourable opinion in 1800, stressing how the house 'commands an extensive view of the bay and of the town of Algeziras'.<sup>81</sup> In 1813 George Bridgeman (later 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Bradford) was hosted there by Commissioner Fraser. Bridgeman called it 'one of the prettiest country houses you ever saw, and enjoying all the luxuries of England with the southern climate.' The view caused him to be 'much pleased with Gibraltar Bay'.<sup>82</sup> An anonymous 1816 journal recorded by a woman returning to Britain from Leghorn described the view as 'one of the finest I have seen since leaving England.'<sup>83</sup> The traveller regularly breakfasted with Mrs Woolley, wife of Commissioner Isaac, who 'kindly undertook the charge' of looking after a little girl who had travelled on the same naval vessel (the *Euphrates*) as the journal's author. Mount Pleasant became something of a refuge for her fellow travellers as their Captain, Robert Preston was suffering from a severe mental health episode on board.<sup>84</sup>

The places largely occupied by the navy were not always contiguous with the military installations that typically conjure images of 'fortress' Gibraltar. Even with no sizeable hinterland Gibraltar could still be experienced as something of a disjointed society; as late as 1825, and after Governor Don's improvements to the south, the soldier James Anton described the areas of New Mole Parade, Rosia and Bonavista as 'separate villages' disconnected from each other. Anton was quartered in a converted hospital on 'Europa flats', an area just north of Europa Point 'a mile

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<sup>80</sup> *The Wynne Diaries Volume II*. Edited by Anne Fremantle (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 179.

<sup>81</sup> Willyams, *A Voyage up the Mediterranean*, 295.

<sup>82</sup> George Augustus Frederick Henry Bridgeman, *Letters from Portugal, Spain, Sicily, and Malta: In 1812, 1813, and 1814* (London: Chiswick Press, 1875), 78.

<sup>83</sup> SRO, D3259/17, 'Journal of travel by sea from Leghorn to Malta and Gibraltar'.

<sup>84</sup> Shortly before leaving Gibraltar, the journal's author wrote that the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant of *Euphrates* had been authorised to take control of the vessel, and Captain Preston was subdued: 'A straight waistcoat had afterwards been put on this unfortunate man.'



from the soldier's barracks, two from the town, and about three from the market.'<sup>85</sup> Back in 1809 Jacob observed a clear distinction between the luxury enjoyed by Gibraltar's 'first-rate society', and the 'miserable' appearance of its wider population, 'whether Moors, Jews, or Christians' who lived 'crouded together, in habitations resembling barracks rather than houses, which are as filthy as their persons.' The naval commissioner living at Mount Pleasant was, of course, a naval Captain socially and financially capable of upholding such a 'first-rate' lifestyle. But Jacob's observation highlights how Gibraltar's differing societal experiences could be experienced at a distance removed from the town and military installations.

Naval vessels were often used by officers to entertain other naval personnel as well as a varying degree of distinguished guests. Nelson deplored Sir John Orde's proclivity for 'giving fetes' at Gibraltar when writing to his wife in 1798.<sup>86</sup> But as Kennedy has observed, hosting these events served to 'narrow the gap' between the community ashore and the navy at sea.<sup>87</sup> Gillian Russel also noted how vessels commonly served as venues for celebrations that connected naval officers to local establishment figures.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, these shipboard occasions formed a key part of Gibraltar's social scene, even if they were technically outside of the garrison's confines. In 1801, General William Dyott enjoyed a Christmas dinner of 'Beef, Plumb pudding, and Mince Pies' with Captain Charles Paget on board *Hydra*. Just before disembarking, however, 'it came on to blow a

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<sup>85</sup> James Anton, *Retrospect of a military life, during the most eventful periods of the last war* (Edinburgh: W. H. Lizars, 1841), 332; 334.

<sup>86</sup> Nelson's negative view may be attributed to his alacrity – earlier in 1796 he had displayed great impatience when his departure from Gibraltar was delayed as he waited for Sir Gilbert Elliot (a passenger on board his ship) to dine with Gibraltar's governor. Noel Mostert, *The Line upon a Wind: An intimate history of the last and greatest war fought at sea under sail* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), 190; passage regarding Sir John Orde quoted in Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory*, 270.

<sup>87</sup> Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 52

<sup>88</sup> Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 142.

gale of wind, and continued so violent' that Dyott was forced to remain on board until the next morning. The rest of the party – 'all naval characters but myself' – were able to return to their vessels, 'with some difficulty'.<sup>89</sup> Captain Thomas Fremantle anchored at Gibraltar in April 1804, and in a letter to his wife detailed three weeks of social engagements - one of which was his own ball given on board his vessel, *Ganges*. Fremantle's brief description of the event as 'gay enough; the weather not at all congenial' may explain why it was his only shipboard engagement.<sup>90</sup> When not entertaining on their vessels, naval officers regularly dined on shore with their military counterparts. Returning to Gibraltar in 1805 after Trafalgar, where he had commanded *Neptune*, Fremantle wrote again that he 'made it my business to get acquainted with all the fashion of the place and in consequence dined on shore every day'.<sup>91</sup> Fremantle had previously visited the Rock in 1797 with his wife Betsey, who recorded in her diary that she dined with 'Old General O'hara' at the Convent.<sup>92</sup>

Two additional examples highlight how naval spaces interfaced with the idiosyncratic demands of life in the garrison town. In 1806, George Landmann was invited to dine on *Orion* by his naval friend Lieutenant Elers. Landmann spent the meal in an agitated state, however, as the *Orion* was scheduled to sail for the West Indies 'with the first change of the wind', and he did not wish to be stuck on board. His fears appeared to be confirmed when after dinner the vessel's boats were suddenly hoisted in. All his attempts at getting off were refused, and it was not until morning that he escaped by recklessly leaping into a launch conveying water from Rosia. He successfully convinced the launch's young midshipman and 'jolly tars' to set him ashore with the promise of rum and tobacco.<sup>93</sup> On a separate occasion, after dining with his friend Captain Donnelly

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<sup>89</sup> SRO, D3388/37/27, 'William Dyott, Gibraltar to Richard Dyott, 30 December 1801'.

<sup>90</sup> *The Wynne Diaries Volume III 1798-1820*. Edited by Anne Fremantle (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 109-111.

<sup>91</sup> *Wynne Diaries Volume III*, 234.

<sup>92</sup> *Wynne Diaries Volume II*, 178.

<sup>93</sup> Landmann, *Recollections*, 111-133.

and an unspecified number of guests on *Invincible*, William Jacob returned to shore through the dockyard, where he discovered that ‘we could not pass the gates’, which had been locked due to the strict night-time curfew imposed upon inhabitants by the garrison. Jacob’s party found themselves ‘under the necessity of climbing over the wall by a rope ladder to get to our lodgings.’<sup>94</sup> Such occurrences were likely commonplace, as social relationships with naval personnel necessitated crossing the army-navy divide.

The fifty-five letters written by Susanna Middleton to her sister between 1805-1808 provide a key insight into Gibraltar’s social scene and the life of a naval wife during this period. She arrived with her husband Captain Robert Middleton who had been appointed the new naval commissioner of the dockyard.<sup>95</sup> Susanna’s opinion of their residence at Mount Pleasant was positive. In her opinion, it was ‘the only pretty place on the rock, that is the only place with any trees about it’, and the view was ‘reckoned the most beautiful upon the Rock’.<sup>96</sup> Their voyage to Gibraltar had not been without danger, as the captain waited for a westerly wind so as not to be bothered by gunboats on their approach. After waiting at anchor at the mouth of the Mediterranean for several days, the Middletons feared they would be ‘taken by the Spaniards, for we saw no other finishing to it’.<sup>97</sup> They eventually arrived safely, but the manner of doing so was comparable to many other travellers to the Rock during this period.

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<sup>94</sup> Jacob, *Travels*, 212.

<sup>95</sup> The role of dockyard Commissioner was not well defined during this period. Nominally, they were representatives of the Navy Board, and their function can be seen as forming a bridge between the elite naval hierarchy (they were always drawn from commissioned officers) and the more practical jobs performed by the yard’s other officers, who were promoted from the ranks of warrant officers on naval vessels. Brian Lavery, *Nelson’s Navy: The Ships, Men and Organisation 1793-1815* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1989), 226-7.

<sup>96</sup> GGL, *Letters from Mrs. S. M Middleton to her sister from Gibraltar 1805-1808*, 15; 33.

<sup>97</sup> *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 13.

Susanna did not record much of note regarding the Battle of Trafalgar, which occurred just weeks after their arrival.<sup>98</sup> As mentioned above, Mount Pleasant was located at a distance from the town, something that characterised Susanna's experience. She recognised the advantage of 'being better off than most people' during an expected siege, as the house was 'quite out of the way', and their relative isolation increased during the winter months as many people resided in the town, 'which I should think must be a mile from us'.<sup>99</sup> She also pointedly referred to their situation as living 'in the country'.<sup>100</sup> Middleton's gaze was however regularly drawn towards the bay. This is shown in her many comments regarding what she described as 'long look'd for' convoys. In an early letter of February 1806, she wrote 'No convoy yet we are looking for it every day but to no purpose', and in September that year she described 'anxiously looking for the packet'.<sup>101</sup> Later in November the anxiety surrounding expected arrivals at the Rock was conveyed, as she recalled counting 'sixty different ships' in a convoy that five minutes later 'were cover'd again with a haze' and blown past by a westerly wind.<sup>102</sup> Yet convoys were also galvanizing when they entered successfully. On one occasion Middleton wrote that she 'had the pleasure yesterday of seeing a large convoy come in from England, it was a very pretty sight and employ'd my whole morning'.<sup>103</sup>

Middleton's letters contain significant material relating to Gibraltar's social scene, which despite her isolation at Mount Pleasant saw her partake in various engagements amongst the wider military community. As we have seen, the Middletons' house functioned as an important social focal point. When detailing her typical daily schedule to her sister, Susanna remarked that they were often

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<sup>98</sup> One of the only direct references made to the battle in her letters is when in April 1806 'Capt Bullen takes home the three prizes that have been here ever since the Action in October, Capt M. is quite happy to get rid of them.' *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 164.

<sup>99</sup> *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 311; 43.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 57; 174.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

joined by 'one or two Navy Officers' at their evening meal, and later wrote that 'before we leave this place, I shall know all the Captain's in the Navy, for there is a constant succession here and they all dine with us'.<sup>104</sup> Dinners at Mount Pleasant were not strictly naval affairs however, as the Middletons were regularly joined by their neighbour General Francis Grose and his wife, as well as other army personnel. They also attended many balls, including ones given fortnightly by subscription at the Garrison Library and masquerades – which in February 1806 were 'quite the fashion... there are sometimes two or three a night'.<sup>105</sup> These occasions clearly served to uphold British social norms in a potentially jarring foreign setting. Furthermore, the community had a voracious appetite for such events. In December 1806 she proclaimed that 'The people here are just now dancing mad'<sup>106</sup>. In a letter written shortly after arriving Susanna told her sister 'I hear of their being very gay in the town, the Governor is giving balls every week, Plays acted by the officers, & card Parties every night', and the Middleton's were two of 'a hundred & ten people ask'd' to a party given by Mrs Drummond (General James Drummond's wife).<sup>107</sup> When the new Governor Hew Dalrymple arrived in 1806 he was honoured with a library ball, and Middleton quipped that she hoped 'he likes going out, for he won't have any rest till he has dined with every family and at every mess upon the Rock.'<sup>108</sup> Later, Middleton wrote that Mrs Drummond 'heard somebody of consequence at Bath, gave a ball in a new stile which she imitated here to astonish the people'. She described it as 'a very grand thing' with interludes for card playing, after which 'we danced till 2' before going home.<sup>109</sup>

These grand social events clearly allowed for a mixing of the naval and military communities at the Rock, as other contemporaneous accounts testify. George Landmann remembered a dinner party given by Mrs Fyers sometime in 1806 on

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 33; 91.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 61-2.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 247-8.

account of there being ‘several distinguished personages at Gibraltar’ – including Admiral Lord Northesk, who had been third in command at Trafalgar. Landmann seized the opportunity to personally petition Northesk in the hope of getting a midshipman friend of his promoted to Lieutenant.<sup>110</sup> The nature of naval service meant that visits by naval officers were more fleeting than their army counterparts. But this could lead to naval personalities taking on a certain celebrity status within the Rock’s society. Middleton’s description of Captain Henry Blackwood’s appearance at the Rock in 1807 adroitly demonstrates this. Described as ‘a very dashing man’, Blackwood used his vessel *Ajax* to give ‘a very elegant dance’ and ‘several smart dinners’ whilst it was moored at the new mole. As noted above, this was not uncommon; on a later occasion the Middleton’s went to see a play given on board *Glory* by ‘the common sailors of the ship’, with supper afterwards lasting late into the evening.<sup>111</sup> Blackwood’s *Ajax* was, according to Middleton ‘a large fine ship & his cabins were very elegantly furnish’d’. Blackwood’s vessel was seen as a stylish outfit, as whilst at Gibraltar ‘he had a great many very nice little midshipmen, every body took notice of them, they were such fine boys and they were dancing at all the balls’.<sup>112</sup> A ship itself could serve as a major attraction to the Rock’s populace. When Thomas Fremantle returned to the Rock in 1806 (‘making us very gay since he has been here’) Captain Middleton arranged for Susanna to go on board *Neptune*, as she ‘wish’d much to see a large ship’. Fremantle ‘thought if it was known which it must be here, many people would be offended if they were not

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<sup>110</sup> According to Landmann’s account, the midshipman had served on *Victory* at Trafalgar – a fact that he successfully leveraged when speaking to Lord Northesk in person. Landmann, *Recollections*, 46-7.

<sup>111</sup> *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 274-5.

<sup>112</sup> This made the subsequent loss of *Ajax* by burning in the Aegean Sea even more impactful. Middleton recorded that the first Lieutenant had made it back to Gibraltar, but ‘could not mention it without tears in his eyes’ and that of the aforementioned midshipmen ‘ten of them poor little fellows were either burn’d or drown’d’. Blackwood was cleared of any fault, as the fire was caused by the ‘drunken carelessness of the purser’s steward’. *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 236; J. K. Laughton, rev. Andrew Lambert, ‘Sir Henry Blackwood’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 6. Edited By H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50.

asked', so invited 'a party of near twenty people' that included the Grose's and Mrs Fox, wife of the then Governor. What followed was effectively a guided tour of the vessel that suitably impressed the visitors. The guests were taken inside Fremantle's cabin, with Middleton 'quite surprised to see so large a place'. Inside there were 'three large library tables of different sorts and two sofas, with round hanging boards with books on them in every corner', giving it the impression of being 'really more like a suite of apartments in a house in Portland Place, than a ship'.<sup>113</sup> Naval vessels could impress Gibraltar's inhabitants through their feats of arms, but they could inspire wonder and reinforce fashionable societal norms as living spaces as well.

Admiral Duckworth did not go on shore during his passage home from the ill-fated Dardanelles expedition in 1807, but Landmann was fortunate enough to be invited on board the *Royal George* via a family connection of a fellow officer in the Royal Engineers. Although he found Duckworth 'rigged out as if he were going to attend a drawing-room, with silk stockings, shoes and buckles, and star and ribbon of the Bath', the Admiral 'with the utmost urbanity' showed the party the full extent of the damage suffered by the vessel in the Dardanelles, including two shot 'of coarse white marble' that were still lodged within the ship.<sup>114</sup> The vibrant social environment of Gibraltar reinforced British societal norms within the Rock's community. But the mixing of military personnel with visiting naval officers also connected Gibraltar with more geographically distant events in personal ways. Sian Williams has demonstrated that through dances, dinners and social celebrations naval personnel engaged in a 'cult of hospitality' with the planter class and colonial society in the Caribbean.<sup>115</sup> These social events therefore link Gibraltar to imperial spaces whose connections to the navy are more readily appreciated. However, it must be noted that the events described by Middleton appear to have been attended largely by naval and

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<sup>113</sup> *Letters from Mrs S. M. Middleton*, 78.

<sup>114</sup> Landmann, *Recollections*, 161-2.

<sup>115</sup> Sian Williams, 'The Royal Navy and Caribbean Colonial Society', in *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c.1750-1820* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 33.

military families. This contrasts with the Caribbean where a confident, civilian planter class of British colonists eagerly offered hospitality to the navy in order to demonstrate their loyalty and perform idealised notions of Britishness.<sup>116</sup> In Gibraltar, outward demonstrations of civic identity that incorporated non-military individuals became more common as the nineteenth-century progressed.

Middleton's observations also point to a thus far under-appreciated but regular communal celebration that took place in Gibraltar. As several witness accounts attest, the anniversary of the destruction of the floating batteries during the Great Siege - 13 September - became a significant date in the Rock's annual calendar. George Landmann noted that it 'was a day much celebrated at this period'. The destruction of the floating batteries was such a 'great event', he reasoned, that 'it is not, therefore, very extraordinary that the anniversary of that day should be celebrated and regarded as one of general rejoicing there'.<sup>117</sup> The 1806 commemorations were recorded by Middleton, as the day prior she had written that

Tomorrow is a grand day here, the 13 Sept being the anniversary of the last day of the siege. St Michaels Cave is to be lighted up, which it is every year on that day & a public breakfast given<sup>118</sup>

On the day itself she went with 'a party of I believe near 20 people' up to the cave, where the group 'were sometimes obliged to scramble over great pieces of Rock & at others to creep through wet muddy places' to reach the 'place that was illuminated'. Inside the largest cave of the complex, she described it as having

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<sup>116</sup> Williams, 'The Royal Navy and Caribbean Colonial Society', 33-4.

<sup>117</sup> Landmann, *Recollections*, 134; 136.

<sup>118</sup> Susanna's initial description was somewhat stunted, as she also wrote that 'Capt Joyce in the Camel, sails tomorrow morning' and she wished to send the letter with him. *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 171.



‘exactly the appearance of a cathedral, with lights put upon all the pillars’.<sup>119</sup>

Lieutenant Granville Waldegrave was in the same company as Middleton and related to his father that ‘being of a ladies party’ he felt ‘great fear of falling into the mud’ that covered the cave floor. However, he ‘was in high luck to escape a tumble as many officers were finely embroidered’ with the substance.’<sup>120</sup>

Descending as far down the cave as possible was evidently seen as an honourable endeavour. Landmann, also describing the 1806 celebrations, had resolved to do so but was dissuaded by ‘a short conversation’ with an officer who had attempted it.<sup>121</sup> Masculine pride was one explanation for these attempts, but Waldegrave’s observation that ‘punch bowls candlesticks etc’ were crafted out of the ‘marbles’ found inside is another.<sup>122</sup> A piece of the Rock was in itself a desirable souvenir - in a letter of 1805 John Martindale Powell had written of his desire to procure one for his collection.<sup>123</sup> Aside from the endeavours at St Michael’s Cave, Landmann noted that dinner parties and balls were given across the Rock, ‘in order to keep alive the happy recollections of the memorable 13<sup>th</sup> of September, 1782.’<sup>124</sup> Tellingly, however, he also documented that the celebrations at the cave ‘attracted a vast concourse of persons of all ranks and of all nations’, meaning that a broad spectrum of Gibraltar’s population were involved in commemorating the event.<sup>125</sup> These three accounts all concern the year 1806, but the ceremony was also being performed in 1810 when Henry Wickham, travelling with Sir George Cockburn wrote to his father of the ‘grand dinner here on the 13<sup>th</sup> the day of the destruction

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<sup>119</sup> Kennedy has written of how military successes in the Napoleonic period were commonly celebrated through ‘illuminations’ back in Britain. *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 174-5; Kennedy, *Narratives*, 182-183.

<sup>120</sup> NMM, ‘Letter to Admiral William Waldegrave, Lord Radstock, from his son Lieutenant Granville Waldegrave, MINERVA off Cadiz, 26 September 1806’.

<sup>121</sup> Landmann, *Recollections*, 137.

<sup>122</sup> NMM, ‘Letter to Admiral William Waldegrave’, 26 September 1806’.

<sup>123</sup> Helen Watt and Anne Hawkins, *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France 1793-1815* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 221.

<sup>124</sup> Landmann, *Recollections*, 138.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

of the Floating Batteries', and of the 'very brilliant effect' given by the illuminations in St. Michael's Cave.<sup>126</sup>

The anniversary celebrations reinforced the significant events in Gibraltar's history as a British possession within its community. Linda Colley's argument that wars fused together diverse communities under a more general ideology of 'Britishness', is disputed by some historians.<sup>127</sup> Certainly, in this case the illuminations appear to have functioned more as a curiosity and descending the cave a rite of passage, rather than acting as one, unified coming together of the community. Nevertheless, it is significant that the date chosen reflected Gibraltar's most precarious occasion as a British possession, and the events of 13 September undoubtedly carried a great deal of gravitas within the colony. Middleton had some prior knowledge of the siege, as she describes being 'much entertain'd' by reading Drinkwater's account of it.<sup>128</sup> A copy belonging to the Garrison Library was lent to her by a Major Finucane, after her neighbour Mrs Grose had 'had it a great while to read'.<sup>129</sup> But there were other aspects of Gibraltar's history that Middleton became acutely aware of. Her husband liaised closely with his fellow yard officer Edward Pownall, whom Susanna described as 'a very good sort of man' that had been 'so unfortunate in the time of the fever here that carried off so many people, to lose his wife & one child'.<sup>130</sup> Pownall sent his remaining daughter 'who he is doatingly fond of' to England whilst he remained at the Rock. Captain Middleton had visited Gibraltar as a young midshipman, and according to Susanna knew 'one lady here who was a young girl' at that time. She had 'lost her mother, two sisters, besides other relations and friends' to the fever, and knowing the true cause the Captain 'never asks her after any of the people that he remembers then'.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> HRO, 38M49/B1/1, 'letters from Henry Lewis Wickham to his parents from Cadiz and Gibraltar Jul 1810 to Feb 1811'.

<sup>127</sup> Stephen Conway, 'War and National Identity in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century British Isles', *English Historical Review* Vol CXVI no. 468 (2001): 863.

<sup>128</sup> *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 136.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-9.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-9.

The various social engagements to be found in Middleton's letters are undoubtedly representative of those enjoyed by the upper echelons of Gibraltar's society. But she also interacted with people of a lower social class, primarily through her husband's employment in the dockyard. According to his wife, Captain Middleton 'never felt comfortable unless he went to the Dock Yard once in the course of the day'.<sup>132</sup> His work ethic paid off, however, as after visiting she judged that he had 'got his yard in very high order'.<sup>133</sup> In September 1806 the Middletons visited Spain, with the Captain using a horse 'borrow'd from a man in the Dock Yard', and the next year one of their servants was engaged to marry a man employed at the yard.<sup>134</sup> In the last year of their residence at Gibraltar, Captain Middleton procured some domestic assistance for Susanna in the form of the seven-year-old daughter 'of some very good and poor people in the dock-yard, who as they have a large family, Capt Middleton wished to do something for'. Despite judging that the girl could do little housework, Susanna personally gave the girl reading lessons and one of the family's servants taught her to write.<sup>135</sup> Further indication of Gibraltar's social makeup can be ascertained in Middleton's desire to learn the Spanish language. This was partly due to their intermittent visits to Spain, where she found it 'very inconvenient not to know the words for common things'. But she wrote that this was also the case when shopping – an activity almost certainly done in Gibraltar itself. To that end she purchased a Spanish grammar book, and later proclaimed that she found 'great amusement in it' and was proficient enough to attempt reading a Spanish copy of Bernadin de St. Pierre's *Paul and Virginia*.<sup>136</sup>

Relations with Spain worsened prior to Middleton's leaving Gibraltar in May 1808.<sup>137</sup> In October 1807 Susanna informed her sister that 'We are all war here, the communication with Spain was put a stop to yesterday & report says the French are

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 161; 323.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 210; 230.

<sup>137</sup> Her husband remained in Gibraltar until September 1808.

coming to bombard us very soon'.<sup>138</sup> Later the same month she wrote that 'The siege now affords a fine subject for conversation', with 'some new reports about it every day' seemingly moving it from speculation to inevitability.<sup>139</sup> The threat was clearly felt to be pervasive amongst Gibraltar's inhabitants. Regarding a potential siege, Middleton had this to say in August 1807:

They talk much here just now of a siege... but it appears to be rather doubtful whether it is not only talk, one day they say, that the Spaniards have collected three hundred pieces of Ordnance, and perhaps the next, the report is that there is no truth in it, so that it is impossible to put much confidence in what we hear

For Susanna, Captain Middleton's witnessing of 'several very deep laden gun boats go into Algeiras' gave more credence to the rumours.<sup>140</sup> But her previous letters had also mentioned the Rock's propensity for producing salacious gossip, and in responding to rumours about other female inhabitants she had written 'this is such a scandalous place that I did not for a long time listen to it at all'.<sup>141</sup> The rumours that surrounded a potential siege, then, draw attention to other aspects of Middleton's letters and what they reveal about Gibraltar's society during this period. Yes, it was geographically small, highly populated with soldiers and at times hemmed in by military fortifications and etiquette, but it could also be a socially vibrant place, where relationships were forged and maintained across institutional lines. As we have seen, Susanna was an active participant in many formal dinners and balls, but her husband's perceptive comment that she could always 'find out somebody that I have had some knowledge of before' points to Gibraltar's ability to connect British residents on a more informal basis.<sup>142</sup> Betsey Wynne's diary from 1797 further demonstrates Gibraltar's active society and replicates similar scenes to those found in Middleton's letters a decade later. In her six-week residence she attended numerous dinners and balls, visited the siege galleries and had lessons in

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<sup>138</sup> *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 304.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

the Spanish 'Bolero' dance. Her diary is replete with terse, occasionally acerbic observations on her various engagements. She found Governor O'Hara to be 'very civil and attentive to me' and enjoyed playing with the Fyers family children, 'as they put me in mind of my sisters.'<sup>143</sup> Conversely, she found Captain Montresor to be 'a conceited Coxcomb' and a Major Twysdon 'good humoured... but not very interesting for ladies.'<sup>144</sup> She also dined with Mr and Mrs Woodin, whose departure from Gibraltar in 1804 began this chapter, but she was not enamoured of the pair, calling Mrs Woodin 'the stupidest of all women' and Mr Woodin as having drunk 'too much and talked nonsense the whole evening'.<sup>145</sup>

The Royal Navy was a crucial component in these processes that enabled Gibraltar's residents to partake in British cultural norms and to integrate as a community through displays of patriotism. In that sense, Gibraltar was not truly remote from Britain. It was barely a month after Charles Dibdin's production of *The Battle of Trafalgar* opened at the Sadlers Wells theatre in London in April 1806 that Susanna wrote to her sister 'I hope you will go and see the battle of Trafalgar upon real water at Sadlers Wells, I think it must be curious'.<sup>146</sup> As we have seen, residents at Gibraltar were not sequestered away from wider events. Wragg's conclusion that news was prolonged in reaching the Rock is misplaced.<sup>147</sup> The relative proximity to Britain could also inspire fears of societal disintegration. Betsey Wynne's entry for

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<sup>143</sup> Wynne *Diaries Volume II*, 179; 182.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 180; 182.

<sup>145</sup> It is likely that this comment had a class component to it, as Master Attendants such as Woodin were warrant officers who were usually from more lowly social origins than their commissioned counterparts. Perhaps the best summation of this comes from David Miller, who described warrant officers as 'officers but not quite gentlemen'. On a separate occasion Wynne described Mrs Woodin as 'a terrible bore.' David Miller, 'A Life on the Ocean Wave', in *Patrick O'Brien's Navy*. Edited by Richard O'Neill (London: Salamander Books, 2003), 79. Wynne *Diaries Volume II*, 180; 181.

<sup>146</sup> Dibdin's production was not well received, having at his own admittance been put on in haste. Curiously, it had re-used props from his earlier, more successful production, *The Siege of Gibraltar*. *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 120; Oskar Cox Jensen, *Napoleon and British Song, 1797-1822* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 58-9.

<sup>147</sup> Wragg, 'A Naval Wife', 122.

23 May 1797 described her husband Thomas Fremantle as 'low spirited and unhappy' at hearing of the Spithead mutiny that had occurred just a month previously.<sup>148</sup> Upon hearing the 'terrible news' of Pitt the Younger's death in February 1806, Middleton wrote that it was also rumoured 'that the King was deranged, that there was a Regency & a revolution'.<sup>149</sup> Gibraltar's isolation has often been emphasised by historians, but on the evidence of the sources consulted here it was a place that could generate intense levels of gossip and its inhabitants often exhibited a sense of knowledge regarding events that was perhaps not as distant as many have claimed.

### Non-naval perspectives on Gibraltar

Gibraltar often formed an important stepping-stone in the itinerary of the 'Grand Tour', the traditional European excursion undertaken by many British elites during this time.<sup>150</sup> Aristocratic travellers could usually rely upon passage in naval vessels gained through beneficial social contacts to convey them part of the way.<sup>151</sup> Lord Byron was offered passage to Gibraltar from Cadiz in a naval frigate in 1809 after dining with Admiral Purvis. After staying a fortnight at the Rock he took a packet direct to Malta.<sup>152</sup> George Bridgeman's journey took him to Italy via Spain, Sicily and Malta; as noted above, he became closely acquainted with Commissioner Fraser whilst at Gibraltar. Fraser assisted Bridgeman by

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<sup>148</sup> Elizabeth 'Betsey' Wynne was the daughter of Richard Wynne, a British expat residing at Leghorn. Wynne and Fremantle married at Naples on 12 January 1797. Fremantle was wounded along with Nelson in the attack on Tenerife later that year, and Betsey tended to both on their journey home to England. Ann Parry, *The Admirals Fremantle 1788-1820* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), 40; J. K. Laughton, rev. Roger Morriss, 'Sir Thomas Francis Fremantle', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 20. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 956.

<sup>149</sup> *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 63-4.

<sup>150</sup> Jane Stabler, 'Byron's digressive journey', in *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel, 1775-1844*. Edited by Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 225.

<sup>151</sup> Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour* (London: Routledge, 1985), 34.

<sup>152</sup> *Byron's Letters and Journals: A New Selection*. Edited by Richard Lansdown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 56.

facilitating the forwarding of letters in both directions during his travels, as well as arranging the postage of books to England.<sup>153</sup>

The observations made by the American loyalist Robert Semple during a visit to Gibraltar in 1805 stressed the impression that the Rock's physical geography made upon the traveller. Semple had sailed into Lisbon, and then travelled overland to Gibraltar via Madrid and Cadiz. Glimpsing the Rock from the west on raised ground above Algeciras, Semple recorded that it 'immediately and chiefly attracted my notice'.<sup>154</sup> Gibraltar's isolating physical geography is highly discernible in Semple's account – he twice described the Rock as 'singular' and declared that 'we can well observe its insulated situation, surrounded on all sides by deep water, except where joined to the Continent by a low Isthmus of sand'.<sup>155</sup> He judged Gibraltar's political importance to be 'too obvious to need a long discussion', and like many other observers did not deny its capabilities as an 'impregnable' fortress.<sup>156</sup> Nor did he disavow the influence of the garrison upon the civic atmosphere in which its populace lived. However, Semple's interpretation was framed through a clear appreciation for Gibraltar's importance as a commercial centre, as he lamented that 'as in most garrison towns' the military officers drew 'invidious distinctions' between 'themselves and the mercantile class, which so materially contributes to their support'.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, Semple's examination of Gibraltar as a strategic location is consistent with how many observers and visitors subsequently came to view it. That is, with its military and maritime aspects being two complementary parts of one strategic whole. Semple's statement that Gibraltar was 'impregnable as a fortress' was immediately followed by the following assertion:

placed just within the entrance of the Mediterranean, it enables Great Britain, with a few frigates, to command the whole of the Straits, and

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<sup>153</sup> Bridgeman, *Letters*, 65; 88; 148.

<sup>154</sup> Robert Semple, *Observations on a Journey Through Spain and Italy to Naples: And thence to Smyrna and Constantinople, Vol. 1* (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1807), 167.

<sup>155</sup> Semple, *Observations*, 167.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

it depends only on her will to intercept every vessel passing either up or down.<sup>158</sup>

For Semple, Gibraltar was 'singular', 'insulated' and 'impregnable', but its strength was also deeply connected to its ability to afford Britain an operational command of the waters that surrounded it. It was perfectly possible, then, for visitors to Gibraltar not to be simply overawed by its fortifications, but to appreciate its ability to withstand a siege alongside its very real capacity to command the key maritime space of the straits. An understanding of the geo-political importance of the straits did not always foster positive assessments of Gibraltar itself.

Accounts of Gibraltar were usually interspersed with commentaries on the Spanish character observed in close proximity, and typically employed as proof of British superiority. In times of war, such descriptions were usually patriotic – as we have seen, they were frequently inspired by naval skirmishes that took place in the bay or the straits. Even during war the local Spanish population could cross easily into British-held territory, and British personnel could go in the other direction. In 1828, the mariner George Casse described how on a voyage to Gibraltar undertaken in 1807 the market close to the Old Mole was 'much resorted to by the Spaniards from the main, when the communication is open.'<sup>159</sup> He then described how they 'exhibit themselves, stretched on the ground beside their wares, smoking segars from morning till evening, in all their native indolence.'<sup>160</sup> Having just arrived at the Rock, Casse was certainly predisposed to think of the Spanish as lazy and ineffectual. In commenting upon 'this bulwark of nature', he expressed surprise at how it could have ever been successfully assaulted, a feeling that dissipated when he recalled that it had been captured by the English in 1704.<sup>161</sup> Casse followed this assertion with a comment on the failure of the Spanish to retake Gibraltar during the Great Siege. However, by framing this through a specific date - the 13

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. 196.

<sup>159</sup> George Richard Casse, *Authentic Narrative of the sufferings of George Richard Casse, as a prisoner in France during the late war, and of his escape to the Allied Army near Clermont* (London: J. Mason, 1828), 22.

<sup>160</sup> Casse, *Authentic Narrative*, 22.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 20.



September 1782, when the Allied floating batteries were destroyed - Casse drew upon popular ideas relating to Spanish inferiority at sea.

Between 1809-1811 the Scottish writer John Galt embarked on a tour of the Mediterranean, visiting various locations including Sardinia, Sicily, Malta and Turkey. Naturally, his first port of call was Gibraltar, where he became acquainted with Byron, and the pair travelled together to Malta before going their separate ways. Galt's time in the Mediterranean has been called a 'prolonged holiday', but he was undeniably motivated by commercial concerns, as he had developed an interest in circumventing Napoleon's blockade of British goods into Europe by importing them via Turkey.<sup>162</sup> Galt was convinced that the large populations of Mediterranean countries afforded 'the prospect of a great market to our manufactures', and that British goods were now at 'such a degree of excellence as to enable us to rival those of the chief Mediterranean nations.'<sup>163</sup> Galt's experience at Gibraltar transformed his opinion of the place in two distinct ways. Firstly, he was not as enamoured with the 'fortress' as its reputation had led him to expect. Whilst recognising that it 'undoubtedly, may be called stupendous, and may be regarded as impregnable' he went on to state that 'it has not that degree of visible grandeur which its fame and the circumstances of its resistance in the last siege led one to expect.' Secondly, Galt's assessment of Gibraltar's value as a British possession, which he 'had hitherto been rather disposed to doubt' was transformed into one of strategic appreciation. His former opinion, clearly informed by the recurring arguments about the supposed high cost of maintaining a garrison there, so prevalent in British political debates in the preceding century, gave way to an acute appreciation for its ability to act as a maritime shield for British commercial interests in the region. As Galt wrote: 'a view of the place, and a better knowledge of local circumstances, have altered my opinion.' Like Semple, Galt did not consider

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<sup>162</sup> Paul Henderson Scott, 'John Galt', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 21. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 341.

<sup>163</sup> John Galt, *Voyages and travels in the years 1809, 1810 and 1811, containing statistical, commercial, and miscellaneous observations on Gibraltar, Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, Serigo, and Turkey* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1812), 2.

Gibraltar to be perfect in this aspect and argued that Britain could only truly be deemed 'masters of the Straits' when they also possessed Ceuta. He also considered Gibraltar to have been seriously neglected from a naval perspective for many years. Notably, Galt viewed Gibraltar's potential in distinctly maritime terms:

Gibraltar may in many points be compared to a great guard-ship, the utility of which, without a supplementary fleet of small vessels, may be justly questioned; but, with such a fleet, no boat from Algesiras should be able to do any mischief to our trade, while no ship of the enemy could escape. The neglect of rendering the fortress in this way a point of offence, has perhaps tended to lower its value in the estimation of mercantile men.

Regarding the supposed cost of maintaining the British presence at Gibraltar, Galt now reckoned that 'it is not a very expensive establishment. There are several noble families which perhaps cost the public as much.' He estimated its annual cost to be 'not more than fifty thousand pounds', whereas in the same twelve-month period 'the value of British goods sold here has been estimated at a million sterling.' Galt also made mention of the 'motley multitude of Jews, Moors, Spaniards, &c. at the Mole, where the trading vessels lie'.<sup>164</sup> For Galt, this 'new scene', as he termed his first impression of Gibraltar's diverse populace that was characteristic of a Mediterranean trading entrepôt, evoked strongly stereotypical racial depictions. He compared the foreign peoples he encountered to 'the odious race of the Orang Outang' and derided the Jewish women he encountered as 'superlatively ugly'. Galt had formed a new appreciation for Gibraltar's strategic importance as a British possession during his time there. It cannot have been coincidental that whilst justifying continued British possession of Gibraltar in the same publication Galt remarked that 'the possession of such a place adds to the reputation of our power with the neighbouring nations'. By the early stages of the nineteenth century, Gibraltar's ability to frame British perceptions of national character and racial stereotypes was enabled by its maritime character.

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<sup>164</sup> Galt, *Voyages and travels*, 5.

William Turner's impressions of Gibraltar formed only a small part of his *Journal of a Tour in the Levant* (1820), which detailed his experiences travelling to Constantinople to serve in the embassy of Sir Robert Liston. Arriving at the Rock en route to the east in 1812, Turner was not overly impressed, writing: 'I cannot conceive a more disagreeable residence in Europe than Gibraltar'.<sup>165</sup> The high cost of living ('The inns are extravagant in their bills') and the uncomfortable heat ('it has no shelter from a burning sun') contributed to his disappointment, but he also found that 'military society, even if abundant and varied, is ever obstructed by the indispensable etiquette of a garrison.'<sup>166</sup> Turner was also not overawed by the fortifications:

It would be presumptuous in me to express any opinion on the strength of a fort so generally allowed to be impregnable as Gibraltar. Towards the land the rock is perpendicular and inaccessible, and the fortifications towards the sea have defied Europe: but I should certainly be disposed to contradict the assertion which General O'Hara is said to have made, - "that Gibraltar might be taken with the sacrifice of ten thousand men, if, after incurring that loss, the besieger could persuade troops to advance."<sup>167</sup>

His dislike of Gibraltar, however, did not prevent Turner from stating that 'the incalculable advantages which the possession of it would confer upon us, are so evident to the most unpractised observer'.<sup>168</sup> His reasoning for such an advantage lay in a combination of an appreciation for its strategic location and the shame that British possession of it caused to Spain. Turner argued that Ceuta, situated across the straits from Gibraltar, 'while held by the Spaniards, must ever be an eyesore to an Englishman.'<sup>169</sup> The only other redeeming feature that he ascertained of 'this "military hot-house"', was it 'being generally the first spot at which the English voyager through the Mediterranean lands'. Turner's dislike of Gibraltar certainly revealed the existence of an insular, military society, but it also demonstrates how

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<sup>165</sup> William Turner, *Journal of a Tour in the Levant, Volume 1* (London: John Murray, 1820), 14.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

visitors to Gibraltar regularly appreciated the significance of the maritime seascape that surrounded it. The sea also provided an escape from the practical difficulties experienced on the Rock. Turner wrote that to avoid the expensive accommodation, 'most of us preferred returning at night to the frigate to sleep'.<sup>170</sup>

Contemporary descriptions of Gibraltar by visitors to the Rock, published in travelogues and journals invariably emphasised the great number of visible fortifications and military establishments. As William Jacob noted in his travelogue published in 1811, these were 'so often described, that I have few observations to make which have any pretensions to novelty'.<sup>171</sup> Descriptions were not always positive, particularly when made by those with military knowledge and personal experience of Gibraltar. Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore recording the following in his diary in July 1806:

I was sorry to see the very bad state of the garrison. It looked more like a place where the inhabitants did occasional military duty than a military station... Gibraltar, when I was quartered in it formerly, was a cheerful place; everything about it was military... everything about it was alive, and the parade in the morning was a fine military display. Now there is no general parade; the detachments are marched from the regimental parades to their posts. The soldiers off duty are all dirty, and the regiments in the worst state of discipline. The duty is of course done in a slovenly way, and everything seems neglected and going to decay.<sup>172</sup>

Clearly, opinions regarding military discipline and the state of the garrison could be subjective. Lieutenant-General George Cockburn was not impressed with the 'military organization' when he visited in 1811, judging it to be in 'complete contrast to that of Malta, and our fine army in Sicily'. Cockburn, who had been an aide-de-camp to Eliott during the Great Siege, was not enamoured with the

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>171</sup> William Jacob, *Travels in the South of Spain, in letters written A. D. 1809 and 1810* (London: J. Johnson and Co., 1811), 207.

<sup>172</sup> *The Diary of Sir John Moore*, Vol II. Edited by J. F. Maurice (London: Edward Arnold, 1904), 121.

improvements to the fortifications that had been carried out in the intervening years:

From every appearance, our engineers will never be satisfied here; after thirty years, one would imagine, nothing in the art of fortification could be wanting, particularly in a place so strong by nature; yet several new works are going on. Many officers of experience think the place has been weakened by the extension of the works. As the old ones stood the test of a long and famous siege, I think we might have been satisfied.<sup>173</sup>

Notably, Cockburn's own formulation for improving Gibraltar's security lay in strengthening an infamously poor aspect of its maritime waterfront: the Old Mole. He had witnessed the destruction visited upon the area, which had 'suffered most during the siege'. Accordingly Cockburn wrote, 'If suggestions are not treason against the engineer department, I think all that was (and is still) required at Gibraltar, is a strong martello tower at the Old Mole head'. For Cockburn, memories of the siege evoked Gibraltar's dependency upon the security of its maritime waterfront. It is surely noteworthy that the mind of a serving soldier was turned toward the sea when contemplating the state of the Rock's fortifications.

Visitors to the Rock were of course often prevented from even setting foot on land. On a journey to Greece in 1804, the diplomat William Gell was prevented from visiting Gibraltar (his 'first resting place') by the yellow fever epidemic raging on the Rock. This was further exacerbated by a strong gale 'which forced some of the convoy on shore into the hands of the Spaniards'.<sup>174</sup> In 1824 Charles Swan, the chaplain of HMS *Cambrian* reported that the crew had 'no opportunity to gratify our curiosity by an examination of this celebrated fortress' – the reason being that touching at Gibraltar could force the vessel to quarantine at Malta later in its

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<sup>173</sup> George Cockburn, *A voyage to Cadiz and Gibraltar, up the Mediterranean to Sicily and Malta, in 1810, & 1811 Vol. 2* (London: J. Harding, 1815), 131.

<sup>174</sup> William Gell, *Narrative of a Journey in the Morea* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823), 2.

voyage.<sup>175</sup> Anti-disease measures affected a large proportion of visitors to the Rock, even when entry was successfully secured. The American naval chaplain Charles Rockwell visited in 1834. He was briefly delayed by a health officer, whose purpose was to establish whether the vessel was free of disease. They were granted 'pratique' – permission to interact with the port, and Rockwell's party landed at the Ragged Staff, the wharf to the south of town 'where naval and other military officers land'.<sup>176</sup> Quarantine procedures, and the fear of disease in general heavily influenced the passage of visitors between the sea and the land at Gibraltar.

### The navy and Gibraltar's civic community

Looking towards the sea was not significant only because Gibraltar's residents oriented their views in that direction. It also formed a significant part of the Garrison's daily routine. A copy of Governor O'Hara's standing orders for 1802 shows that Admirals were to be saluted according to rank upon arriving at Gibraltar (seventeen guns for an Admiral, fifteen for a vice-Admiral, and thirteen for a rear-Admiral); on leaving their vessels were to salute the Garrison first.<sup>177</sup> Naval officers of Captain rank and above were also to be saluted by sentries and soldiers in general, in accordance to that required of the equivalent military rank.<sup>178</sup> After O'Hara's death in 1802 Rear-Admiral Saumarez acted as a Chief Mourner (supported by naval Captains Richard Keates and Sir Robert Barlow). The remainder of the funeral procession was largely made up of military regiments and bands, but it also included the Captains of all British, Portuguese and American 'ships of war in the Bay', the Officers of the Naval Yard, and the barge crews of 'the Men of War in

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<sup>175</sup> Charles Swan, *Journal of a voyage up the Mediterranean principally among the islands of the archipelago, and in Asia Minor, Volume 1* (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1826), 26.

<sup>176</sup> Charles Rockwell, *Sketches of Foreign Travel and Life at Sea* (London: Wiley & Putnam, 1842), 19.

<sup>177</sup> *Standing orders and regulations, required to be observed in the garrison of Gibraltar* (Gibraltar: Garrison Library, 1802), 62-3.

<sup>178</sup> *Standing orders and regulations*, 80-1.

the Bay'.<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, naval funerals also united Gibraltar's population; in the interlude between Saumarez's two actions of 1801, two deceased masters and a midshipman were buried in what would later be called the Trafalgar Cemetery. For Jahleel Brenton, Captain of *Caeser* during the first battle, the funeral 'formed a most imposing and affecting spectacle, from the great number of troops drawn out upon the occasion, and from the whole population of the rock being spectators.'<sup>180</sup>

Five months after his successful 1801 campaign, James Saumarez was invested with the Order of the Bath. The investiture took place on Gibraltar and O'Hara's daily garrison orders proclaimed an Order of Procession in which the Royal Navy took great prominence. 'One hundred seamen, with warrant-officers' marched near the head of the procession.<sup>181</sup> Behind them, amongst significant representations from the military establishment were separate 'divisions' of naval officers (the 'Officers of the squadron' and 'Captains in the Royal Navy' formed two each) and shore-based naval administrators including the Naval Officer Edward Pownall, James Cutforth the Agent Victualler and 'Mr Wooden', that is, the dockyard Master Attendant John Woodin.<sup>182</sup> The march started at the Governor's residence, before moving down to Southport and back in a loop to finish at the Grand Parade (afterwards known as Commercial Square), where the ceremony itself took place. The felicitousness of awarding Saumarez his honour in view of Algeciras and the Gut, where the battles had taken place was central to how the event was performed and received. O'Hara declared in a speech that it was 'most gratifying' for him to 'perform this highly honourable duty so near the scene of your heroic achievements, and before troops who were witnesses of your distinguished conduct and eminent valour'. It was not merely a military occasion either, as one report was keen to establish:

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<sup>179</sup> SRO, D661/9/6/2/2, 'Order of procession to be observed at the funeral of Lieutenant General O'Hara'.

<sup>180</sup> *Memoir of Jahleel Brenton*, 66.

<sup>181</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Friday 20 November 1801.

<sup>182</sup> John Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Admiral Lord De Saumarez*, Vol II (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), 37-9.

the multitude of spectators of both sexes, and of all nations and countries, who crowded the surrounding heights, and the lower part of the mountain... the roar of the cannon from our batteries, and from the shipping in the bay; the presence of those brave seamen and marines, so worthy of the gallant chief under whose command they fought; but, above all, the proximity of Algezira and the Straits, and the train of ideas awakened by the sight of those places where the new knight, but a few months before, had entitled himself to the honourable tokens of gratitude now bestowed by his King and country; every circumstance contributed to render this scene one of the most solemn and affecting that it may be the lot of men to behold.<sup>183</sup>

Such communal civic displays were not necessarily unique to Gibraltar within the British empire, as most colonial possessions contained a mixed naval and military presence within their resident communities. Gibraltar's geographical characteristics nevertheless rendered it a unique location. The reaction to Saumarez's investiture demonstrates that the memory of naval actions occurring within sight of Gibraltar was highly significant. Most residents were first-hand witnesses to such events and could not easily escape the navy's presence inside its confined territory. This was particularly the case during war with Spain or an epidemic of yellow fever, as the hinterland of leisure pursuits became unavoidably restricted. The gun salutes given to naval vessels entering or leaving Gibraltar would have been registered by all who resided within its modest geographical footprint. When the Duke of Kent was appointed governor in 1802, the Mediterranean Commander in Chief Lord Keith issued a memorandum, stipulating that all flag officers present at Gibraltar were to attend the Duke's arrival in the bay with hoisted pendants and twenty-one gun salutes fired by all vessels.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, naval vessels contributed to formal celebrations given for civic and military events in the Iberian Peninsula and beyond. The *Gibraltar Chronicle* noted the 'demonstrations of Joy' performed for the King's birthday in 1801, with vessels giving a salute and naval officers joining their military counterparts in dining with the Governor.<sup>185</sup> Susanna Middleton described how

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<sup>183</sup> Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence*, 41.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-4.

<sup>185</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Friday 5 June 1801.



Queen Charlotte's official birthday was celebrated in 1806, as 'all the garrison were drawn out to fire a feu de joie', and how

at twelve oclock the artillery fired seven guns, then there was a running fire thro' the whole of the Regiments, both which were repeated three times, to make the one & twenty, it had a very pretty effect indeed, we then went down to the Parade & got behind General Fox, saw them march by & salute him, we then came up the hill again into our own grounds where we saw at one oclock all the ships in the bay, fire.<sup>186</sup>

In 1812 the ships in the harbour accompanied the garrison in saluting Wellington's victory at Salamanca, and again to celebrate the peace in 1814.<sup>187</sup> The Royal Navy's continued presence in the bay extended the performance of military traditions outwards in that direction, often drawing the attention of its residents away from the confined space of the territory itself. Furthermore, the Rock itself forced views towards the bay as its steep and rugged terrain focused vantage points from Gibraltar's settlements in the opposite direction. The Royal Navy was not alone in acting in concert with the garrison - the Duke of Kent's acrimonious departure in 1803 aboard *Amazon* occasioned three successive gun salutes from Gibraltar's batteries, joined by those from British and Portuguese squadrons in the bay, as well as one from the Spanish forts on the opposite coast.<sup>188</sup> The experience of residing in a British possession where the territory of a rival continental power could be easily glimpsed a mere five miles across the bay was assuredly a singular one. Indeed, the 1802 standing orders twice referred to action to be undertaken 'On the approach of the Enemy's Gun-Boats', meaning that the experiential realities described above by visitors to the Rock such as Andersen and Mark were also contained within the Garrison's formal duties and obligations.<sup>189</sup> The naval presence *on* Gibraltar and the traffic of naval vessels in the bay formed an integral

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<sup>186</sup> *Letters from Mrs. S. M. Middleton*, 52.

<sup>187</sup> Dorothy Ellicot, *Bastion against Aggression – How Gibraltar helped Spain during the Peninsular War* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Society, 1968), 37; 43.

<sup>188</sup> Dorothy Ellicot, *Gibraltar's Royal Governor – the story of Duke of Kent in Gibraltar* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Museum Committee, 1975), 46.

<sup>189</sup> *Standing orders and regulations*, 65; 74.

part of the daily routine of the compact colony. Daily life for Gibraltar's community could hardly have progressed without at least taking it into consideration.

The formation of the Garrison Library in 1793 expanded the space available for Gibraltar's civic community, overwhelmingly made up of military officers, to socialise and educate themselves in a respectable setting. Previously, the Governor's residence (informally known as 'the Convent') had formed Gibraltar's social epicentre.<sup>190</sup> Founded by John Drinkwater, the library was very much seen as an improving establishment to help the Garrison's officers maintain their training by reading seminal military works.<sup>191</sup> George Landmann claimed that his mornings could be 'profitably passed at the splendid garrison library reading-room' during his time at Gibraltar.<sup>192</sup> From the beginning, however, the needs of visiting royal navy officers were deeply appreciated by the library's managing committee. A statement provided by the committee in 1799 emphasised its educational role as being 'truly beneficial to His Majesty's service'. But it went on to state:

it is not merely the Officers of the Garrison who reap the benefit of the Establishment, as Officers of the Navy, in their casual visits to this Fortress, must also derive great satisfaction from having it in their power to consult so excellent a collection of books. It may also be presumed that travellers, drawn by curiosity to this famous Rock, the celebrated monument of British valour, will look upon the Garrison Library as no trivial testimony of the liberal spirit of the nation.<sup>193</sup>

Clearly, the civic expression of a 'Fortress' community could also accommodate the navy and external visitors whilst promoting its place in the wider empire. The 1799 statement proposed a new building to replace 'the old and inconvenient apartment now occupied'. This was paid for through the patronage of the Garrison's officers and contributions from Governors past and present, but the committee also

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<sup>190</sup> Tito Benady, 'The Convent at Gibraltar', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* Vol. 77, no. 311 (1999): 203.

<sup>191</sup> Muriel M. Green, 'Gibraltar Garrison Library', *Library Review* Vol 27 no. 1 (1978): 19; Lorna Swift, 'The Garrison Library', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol. 9 (2002): 62.

<sup>192</sup> Landmann, *Recollections*, 77.

<sup>193</sup> G. H. Teall, *A Short History of the Garrison Library* (Gibraltar: Garrison Library, 1934), 3.

recognised the 'generosity of the Admiral Earl St. Vincent' (then Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean fleet) in funding the construction.<sup>194</sup> Gibraltar's military community acknowledged the importance of the naval presence on shore, and naval officers participated in the development of civic institutions that would prove crucial in forming Gibraltar's character in the post-war period. The new library building became a focal point of activity for Gibraltar's social scene, providing a genteel location for assemblies and dances accompanied by the playing of military bands.<sup>195</sup> The library collection later came to include copious books relating to maritime affairs, including several biographies of Nelson, Godfrey Mundy's *Life of Rodney*, but also the printed Navy Lists and all forty volumes of the *Naval Chronicle*.<sup>196</sup>

An event from 1817 flags up the role that the navy played in the development of Gibraltar's community, through the figure of Giovanni Maria Boschetti, a man of Genoese descent who came to assume great prominence in the Rock's society. An important and thus far underappreciated factor in Boschetti's rise was his connection to the Royal Navy. An alternative to the exclusive Garrison Library, the Gibraltar Commercial Library, was formed in 1806. A catalogue published in 1823 listed one hundred and fifty subscribers, among whom were James Cutforth, a naval agent victualler, and the King's Auctioneer Alexander Ross, whose bankruptcy had so affected William Mark in 1813.<sup>197</sup> By 1817 the collection had outgrown its modest lodgings and a new building, known as the Exchange and Commercial

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<sup>194</sup> *A Catalogue of the Books in the Gibraltar Garrison Library, established in the year 1793* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Garrison Library, 1837), vii.

<sup>195</sup> Teall, *Garrison Library*, 12.

<sup>196</sup> The biographies of Nelson included those by Robert Southey, James Stanier Clarke and John Macarthur, and T. O. Churchill. *A Catalogue of the Books in the Gibraltar Garrison Library, established in the year 1793*, 248; 298; 377; 255; 332.

<sup>197</sup> *A Catalogue of Books in the Gibraltar Commercial Library, Established in the Year 1806* (Gibraltar: Garrison Library, 1823), iii-v; James Cutforth is mentioned regularly in Nelson's correspondence as an agent victualler, and also in *The British Imperial Calendar for 1811: or, General Register of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and its Colonies* (London: B. P. Capper, 1811), 157.

Library was erected on Main Street.<sup>198</sup> At the ceremony marking the laying of the foundation stone, attended by Lieutenant-Governor Don, three members of Gibraltar's merchant community (which had funded the construction through subscriptions) stood as representatives of three separate religious faiths: Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism. Representing the Catholic community was the builder and architect Giovanni Maria Boschetti. In 1816 he had supervised the conversion of a ruined barracks into a new civil hospital, the first non-military institution of its kind on Gibraltar.<sup>199</sup> He was a key member of Gibraltar's Catholic community; in 1814 he served as head of the so-called Junta of Elders, a board established by the Governor in 1727 to assist the priest-in-charge (often not a native of Gibraltar) on issues relating to the organisation of the church.<sup>200</sup> Upon his death in 1833 several British newspapers reported that his estate amounted to £150,000. He had also served as Papal Consul to Gibraltar and been made a Knight of the Golden Spur – the second highest papal honour.<sup>201</sup> This award was, according to an 1839 text concerning knighthoods, conferred on individuals 'whom the Holy Father selected for such distinction'.<sup>202</sup>

Stephen Constantine included the library's foundation ceremony in his book *Community and Identity: The making of modern Gibraltar since 1704* (2009), and also recognised Lieutenant-Governor Don's appreciation of the need for Gibraltar's merchant community to have 'a place of meeting for the purposes of transmitting

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<sup>198</sup> The building now houses Gibraltar's Parliament. Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 88.

<sup>199</sup> Charles Caruana, *The Rock under a Cloud* (Swavesy: Silent Books, 1989), 45; Robert Montgomery Martin, *History of the British Possessions in the Mediterranean: Comprising Gibraltar, Malta, Gozo, and the Ionian Islands* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1837), 94-5.

<sup>200</sup> Caruana, *Rock under a Cloud*, 41; Archer, *Gibraltar, Identity, and Empire*, 96.

<sup>201</sup> *Albion and the Star*, Friday 30 August 1833; *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail*, Saturday 7 September 1833; *Perthshire Courier*, Thursday 12 September 1833; *Belfast News-Letter*, Friday 13 September 1833; *Patriot*, Wednesday 18 September 1833.

<sup>202</sup> Nicholas Carlisle, *A Concise Account of the Several Foreign Orders of Knighthood* (London: John Hearne, 1839), 292.

their business'.<sup>203</sup> Don's speech reflected how the previous decades had influenced contemporary opinion towards Gibraltar, but also how the post-Napoleonic era might herald a new era for the community. He spoke of 'this Rock' being 'destined, as it would seem, by nature to unproductiveness' and existing as 'a proud monument of the heroic actions of an Elliot, and his brave companions in arms'. But alongside this he argued that Gibraltar represented 'an example of the commercial activity and resources of our country, and of the wisdom of her laws, policy, and institutions.' Looking to the future, he hoped that

the prospect of a direct intercourse with the more distant parts of the extended dominions of our Sovereign, shall, if realised, contribute to the support of your future commerce... the difficulties of the times will only operate as a fresh stimulus to your exertions, and be the means of striking out new paths of industry.<sup>204</sup>

This clearly represented a significant moment in Gibraltar's progression into a full-fledged commercial colony. The mercantile association that formed to erect the building would, Constantine argued, eventually 'speak as Gibraltar's representative political body'.<sup>205</sup> But Boschetti's presence as representative of the Catholic community was far more instructive than Constantine recognised, and his involvement in the Exchange and Commercial Library draws several distinct historiographical strands together to further elucidate how the community developed. By the 1810s Boschetti was an extremely affluent and respected member of Gibraltar's community.<sup>206</sup> A measure of his wealth is located in his contribution of one hundred Spanish dollars to a relief fund established for families bereaved in the 1804 yellow fever epidemic.<sup>207</sup> According to one newspaper report, Boschetti, 'a native of Italy... came to Gibraltar soon after the siege, to seek

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<sup>203</sup> Quoted in Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 89.

<sup>204</sup> *National Register*, Monday 19 May 1817.

<sup>205</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 89.

<sup>206</sup> His name lives on in modern Gibraltar – one of the many narrow stepped alleyways that connects Gibraltar's main thoroughfares is named 'Boschetti's Steps'. Tito Benady, *The Streets of Gibraltar: A Short History* (Grendon: Gibraltar Books, 1996), 34.

<sup>207</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 10 August 1805

employment in rebuilding the town, which had been nearly destroyed.<sup>208</sup> His efforts drew the attention of the naval establishment, whose shore facilities required constant repairing and indeed expansion to fulfil the operational demands of the navy at sea. In 1790 he was awarded a £508 contract for repairing the hospital roof and a boundary wall – in it he was described simply as a ‘master mason and bricklayer’.<sup>209</sup> Another contract for £504 was won in 1793 for extensive work to create facilities near the neutral ground, ‘so that Boats may water alongside of reservoir at low water’. A year later he was paid £250 for repairing a wharf in the yard.<sup>210</sup> As mentioned above, Boschetti also won the contract to construct the new water tanks at Rosia bay. Begun in 1799, this large-scale project, alongside his later construction of the new victualling yard, catapulted him into the realm of substantial wealth.<sup>211</sup> The scale and costs of those two endeavours dwarfed the smaller-scale contracts described above. His increased status is indicated by his enhanced role as a surveyor to the yard in the early 1800s. After ‘a violent gale of wind’ in January 1805, Boschetti, approved by the Lieutenant-Governor, worked in conjunction with the yard officers and officers of the Engineers to ‘survey the damages done to the Wharf walls’. In June 1805 the construction of quarters for ‘30 Artificers at 2 rooms for each most of them being married men with families’ on Scud Hill (adjacent to Rosia bay) was estimated at £6900. Separate plans for the rebuilding of a house in the same area, ‘inhabited by the assistant foreman and foreman of Blacksmiths’ costing £1696 were drawn up by Boschetti in August 1805.<sup>212</sup> Boschetti’s proficiency as a builder had elevated him from being a bidder for yard contracts to the yard’s unofficial architect. His name regularly appears amongst the signatures of senior yard officers in official correspondence to the Navy Board detailing the various repairs and works of construction that took place during this period. He also dabbled in property; Luisa

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<sup>208</sup> *Albion and the Star*, Friday 30 August 1833.

<sup>209</sup> TNA ADM 106/2020, ‘Navy Board in-letters, Gibraltar 1790-97’.

<sup>210</sup> TNA ADM 106/2020, ‘Navy Board in-letters, Gibraltar 1790-97’.

<sup>211</sup> A memorandum attached to the census of 1814 recorded the following opinion of the Genoese residents of Gibraltar: ‘Many of the people of this Country possess opulent Fortunes’. Sawchuk, *Dark Visitations*, 79.

<sup>212</sup> TNA ADM 106/2022, ‘Navy Board in-letters, 1804-5.’

Fyers (granddaughter of Anne Fyers, mentioned above) tells of how her father Thomas 'brought a nice wooden shed' on the neutral ground from Boschetti, at an unspecified date during their 1816-1822 residence.<sup>213</sup>

The *Gibraltar Chronicle* emerged out of the social and military milieu created by the Garrison Library, as information posted on a notice board inside was eventually coordinated and made publicly available in May 1801. Despite its military beginnings and ties to the garrison, it was not parochial in style; for a good portion of its early history the lead stories printed in the *Chronicle* were overwhelmingly concerned with events that occurred on a European, and indeed global scale.<sup>214</sup> Its content also betrayed an eagerness to cater to the classical educations of military officers, with liberal usage of Latin quotations and references to classical and contemporary literature.<sup>215</sup> Today its notoriety rests largely on it being the first English-language publication to report the victory at Trafalgar in 1805.<sup>216</sup> From its beginning, however, naval events were integral to its copy and outlook. Its third edition celebrated 'the late Signal Victory, in the Baltic Sea' off Copenhagen that occurred a month prior, whilst the fifth carried extracts from the parliamentary proceedings giving thanks to Admirals Hyde Parker, Nelson and Graves for obtaining it.<sup>217</sup> The latter edition also contained specific details on the worldwide distribution of British naval forces. Saumarez's twin actions of July 1801 allowed Gibraltar's new publication to express itself specifically through the medium of the Royal Navy. According to Dorothy Ellicot it 'went on for weeks publishing accounts

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<sup>213</sup> This likely had the character of a beach house, as Luisa describes 'the great fun we children had in making sand houses, close to our gate'. However, it was also large enough for the family to live in when an epidemic of scarlet fever was raging on the Rock. GGL, 'Correspondence by Fyers Family: Luisa Fyers Journals', 24-5.

<sup>214</sup> Ellicot, *Bastion against Aggression*, 8.

<sup>215</sup> Diane Sloma, 'Character and Style of the early Gibraltar Chronicle', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol. 2 (1994): 31.

<sup>216</sup> The victory was announced in a special edition of the *Chronicle* published on Thursday 24 October. The *Chronicle* was ordinarily published weekly, initially on a Friday but by the time of Trafalgar this had been moved to a Saturday. *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Thursday 24 October 1805.

<sup>217</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Friday 15 May 1801; *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Friday 29 May 1801.

of the battle from various sources' in its aftermath.<sup>218</sup> In the interlude between the two battles, whilst Saumarez's battered squadron was rapidly repaired, the *Chronicle* was apparently not dissuaded by the initial defeat and the entry of a Spanish fleet into the bay as it commented that 'their trusting themselves out of port is generally the prelude to a British victory'.<sup>219</sup> This proved to be prophetic, as the twelfth edition, published four days after the protracted action concluded on July 13<sup>th</sup>, printed an extract from the poet Edward Young's *Reflexions on the public situation of the Kingdom, addressed to the Duke of Newcastle* (1745) which included the lines 'Embattled around me, blaze the pomp of war, By sea, by land at home in foreign climes'.<sup>220</sup> These lines would have resonated with Gibraltar's community as a realistic outward expression of the experience of residing there during this period. The victory had not totally dampened fears of attack, as the *Chronicle* reported on 7 August that French troops were massing for 'a sudden onset with a very great force'. However, its expectations of a failed siege were framed squarely through recent naval successes, as unlike the siege of 1779-83, 'when France and Spain were masters of these seas', in 1801 'the first shot fired into this Place would probably draw the British Thunder upon Cadiz, Malaga, and all the great Sea-port Towns on the Spanish Coast'.<sup>221</sup> Saumarez's success was clear even a year later, when a poem sent into the *Chronicle* included the verses:

Full in my view th' Herculean form appears,  
The Monarch stern of Andalusia's coast;  
O'er seas surrounding, and o'er land he rears  
His rugged head, Britannia's proudest boast.

Lo! Where he frowns upon the surly West,  
Sulphureous Engines point in grim array

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<sup>218</sup> Dorothy Ellicot, *Our Gibraltar* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Museum Committee, 1975), 56.

<sup>219</sup> Dorothy Ellicot, *From Rooke to Nelson: 101 eventful years in Gibraltar* (Gibraltar: Gibraltar Garrison Library, 1965), 44.

<sup>220</sup> Sloma, 'Character and Style', 33.

<sup>221</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Friday 7 August 1801.



There England's foes have sunk to endless rest,  
There SAUM'REZ bore the victor's palm away.<sup>222</sup>

The eight-stanza composition also drew attention to British achievements further east, 'To where brave NELSON's band of heroes bled, To where Immortal ABERCROMBY lies'. But it finished by connecting Gibraltar to these events via invocation of its history:

Thus too, through times unbounded space shall stand  
The Monument of Elliot's well won fame,  
And from admiring Nations shall command  
Respect for his, and for Britannia's name.

In its early years the *Chronicle* resembled a bulletin, international in scope but short in length. By the end of the period discussed here, it had more of the appearance of a provincial British newspaper, with detailed discussions of British and European affairs alongside copious references to 'Nautical Intelligence'. In this way the *Chronicle* provided functional uses for the navy, with regular advertisements pertaining to the sale of prizes and the awarding of lucrative naval contracts. Such notices suggest that it was not simply an elite publication for officers – as contracts were awarded to inhabitants outside of the officer class, it may be assumed that they were expected to read them. It also contained hints of Gibraltar's military hierarchy straining to control its burgeoning commercial character. In December 1806, during a period of heightened tensions a proclamation issued by the Governor's secretary warned against exporting valuable grain to Spain, but simultaneously professed an unwillingness 'to interfere with the freedom of the port, by any restrictive measure'.<sup>223</sup> A warning issued ten months later that any

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<sup>222</sup> The poem's anonymous author had instructed the editor to 'put the following *Sketch of Gibraltar*, into the next chronicle, or into the fire, as you may think fit.' *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 25 June 1802.

<sup>223</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 26 December 1806.

non-approved communication with Spain would be considered an act of espionage was accompanied by a Spanish translation of the order.<sup>224</sup>

The Rock's resident Spanish population, observed by many of the written accounts detailed above, might explain why the *Chronicle's* commentary on the Spanish character was occasionally favourable in tone. In 1797, between reports of fierce gunboat battles in the bay Benjamin Miller simply recorded 'I went to a Spanish play.'<sup>225</sup> The *Chronicle* had praised 'the bravery of the Spanish Nation', that apparently was 'unwillingly dragged into this contest' by the French in Trafalgar's immediate aftermath.<sup>226</sup> Reports from 'the Algeciras paper' were often commented on in the *Chronicle*. In the aftermath of Trafalgar, one claimed (amongst many other falsehoods) that *Britannia* had been 'sunk in the action' – the *Chronicle* corrected it, stating she was 'now at anchor in Gibraltar Bay, very little damaged'.<sup>227</sup> A report from the *Gibraltar Chronicle* dated 9 November commented on the activities of the various damaged and dispersed vessels and was reproduced in *The Naval Chronicle* before the year's end. It made particularly scathing observations on the behaviour of the French, including an instance when three vessels uninvolved in the battle had fired upon Spanish prizes in British possession, 'a bloody deed, so worthy the days of Robespierre, by which several hundreds of the Spaniards were killed and wounded'. It also described the wreck of the captured French vessel *Bucentaure* near Cadiz, when the British sailors who crewed the prize, 'exhausted with fatigue', were treated 'with the utmost cruelty' by the crews of French frigates stationed in the port. The apparent unfairness of the situation was made clear to readers, as with some justification the *Chronicle* declared that this French success was undeserved: 'the fury of the elements, and not the fate of the battle, had thus subjugated to their power [the British sailors]'.<sup>228</sup> The report was, however, surprisingly positive towards the conduct of the Spanish after the battle. It observed that Nelson's death was received at Cadiz 'with extreme sorrow and

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<sup>224</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 10 October 1807.

<sup>225</sup> DHC, D-268/1, 'Narrative of the life of Benjamin Miller'.

<sup>226</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 26 October 1805.

<sup>227</sup> Teall, *Short History*, 17.

<sup>228</sup> *The Naval Chronicle*, Volume XIV (London: I. Gold, 1805), 458-9.

regret by the Spaniards, and that some of them were even observed to shed tears on the occasion'.<sup>229</sup> The post-battle dynamic of having defeated not one but two enemies allowed for each to be conveniently cast in opposing terms. With many inhabitants of Gibraltar having direct and indirect ties to Spain, and military personnel partaking in Spanish excursions during peacetime, British successes at sea were often reported in a fashion that reflected the nuances of Gibraltar's geographic location.

In the post-Trafalgar world the *Chronicle* continued to comment on naval matters. They were inevitably concerned with smaller scale engagements, such as the capture of a 32-gun French frigate off New York by the 18-gun sloop *Atalante* – a feat described as an 'additional instance of British Naval heroism and invincibility' by the *Chronicle*.<sup>230</sup> But it also provided residents of Gibraltar with details of imperial victories, such as the capture of Banda Neira in 1810 and the successful invasion of Isle de France later the same year.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, its reporting brought awareness of naval events in other European theatres to its readership. In a lengthy extract 'from the English Papers' titled 'Bonaparte's Naval Preparations', the success of the *Naiad* against French gunboats off Boulogne in September 1811 assuaged British fears of invasion from that location.<sup>232</sup> It cannot have been coincidence that the *Chronicle* focused upon a report of British success against gunboats, as to many inhabitants the memory of their impact would still be present.

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<sup>229</sup> The report concluded by recording some Spaniards as having said 'that though he had been the ruin of their Navy, yet they could not help lamenting his fall, as being the most *generous enemy*, and the *greatest Commander* of the age!' *The Naval Chronicle*, Volume XIV, 461.

<sup>230</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 21 September 1811.

<sup>231</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 27 April 1811; *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 13 April 1811.

<sup>232</sup> This was the same *Naiad* that had towed *Belleisle* into Gibraltar after the battle of Trafalgar. *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 30 November 1811.

The Governorship of General Don is usually seen as a turning point in Gibraltar's progression towards a colony with its own civic identity.<sup>233</sup> As demonstrated by the Exchange and Commercial Library, he oversaw definite improvements that reflected a desire for the population to have civilised spaces for recreation and improvement. The Alameda gardens, funded in 1816 by public lotteries were integral to this agenda.<sup>234</sup> Two notable statues were displayed there. A bust of the Duke of Wellington was erected in 1820, financed by the garrison through the deduction of a day's pay. At the Alameda's opening though, Don desired a statue of General Elliot to be placed in Gibraltar's newest public space, designed as a location where residents could relax and contemplate the colony's recent past. The statue embodied the fusing of military and naval consciousnesses in its very composition; the material chosen to craft a likeness of the Great Siege's greatest hero was wood – more specifically, the bowsprit of *San Juan de Nepomuceno*, a Spanish vessel captured at Trafalgar.<sup>235</sup> The vessel had experienced a chequered history post-capture, being used as accommodation for gunboat crews, and then as a harbour hulk.<sup>236</sup> With its bowsprit refashioned into Elliot and placed overlooking the bay, the physical material used for the statue consciously crafted the legacy of Trafalgar and the subjugation of Spanish sea power into the memorialisation of Gibraltar's deliverance from siege.<sup>237</sup> That the civic community of Gibraltar, confidently emerging into the post-Napoleonic world would choose to do so illustrates the

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<sup>233</sup> Archer, *Gibraltar*, 76.

<sup>234</sup> Benady, *Streets of Gibraltar*, 51; Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 85.

<sup>235</sup> David Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List: All the Ships of the Royal Navy – Built, Purchased and Captured – 1688-1860* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1993), 268; Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail 1793-1817: Design, Careers and Fates* (London: Chatham, 2005), 90.

<sup>236</sup> Whilst at Gibraltar, the Captain's cabin was apparently kept locked as a mark of respect for Cosme Damian de Churruca, who was killed at Trafalgar. Roy Adkins, *Trafalgar: The Biography of a Battle* (London: Abacus, 2004), 298.

<sup>237</sup> The original was replaced with a metal bust due to weathering in 1858. However, the original is still on display in the cloister of the Convent – the Governor's official residence. Also on display there are two cannons retrieved from Spanish vessels sunk during the siege. Finlayson, *Military Fortress or Commercial Colony*, 90-1; Ellicot, *From Rooke to Nelson*, 51; Benady 'The Convent at Gibraltar', 208; Ian Balestrino, 'Bronze Howitzers at the Alameda Gardens', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal*, Vol. 22 (2016): 90.

importance of naval culture within the territory. When viewed in the context of the numerous first-hand accounts detailed above however, it is entirely understandable – the recent history of Gibraltar had been characterised by naval conflict far more than by military combat on land. The need to incorporate the physical memory of Trafalgar has not subsided in recent times, as evidenced by the Gibraltar memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum. But another, modern example exists in Gibraltar itself. A statue of Nelson, erected in 2005 outside of South Bastion and facing the Trafalgar Cemetery incorporated copper from HMS *Victory* in its casting.<sup>238</sup>

### Post-Napoleonic Gibraltar: the ‘wide world of waters’

William Mark returned to Gibraltar in 1808 as purser of *San Juan*. Accompanied by his wife, he initially enjoyed leisure pursuits such as ‘fishing in the neighbourhood of the ship... walking up the rock and in going sometimes to Spain’.<sup>239</sup> The couple were also invited to dine onshore regularly, but their financial situation limited their attendance at such engagements. It was not long however before Mark received superior employment as secretary to Commodore Charles Penrose, the Gibraltar station’s new commanding officer. This promotion coincided with an increase in tensions, caused by the presence of a significant number of French troops in Southern Spain – a situation that according to Mark ‘gave rise to labours and disgusts every day’.<sup>240</sup> As the Peninsular War accelerated, Mark’s department of naval clerks under Penrose found themselves ‘very much mixed up with the military proceedings, for nothing could be moved without our concurrence and assistance’.<sup>241</sup> He took enormous pride in having managed the relationship between the Army and the Navy successfully, remarking that ‘the connection between us and the Army was never damaged by any act of ours’. As mentioned

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<sup>238</sup> “South Bastion, Gibraltar”, *Maritime Memorials*, accessed 9 April 2020, <https://memorials.rmg.co.uk/m5508/>; ‘John Doubleday and Nelson’, *Friends of Gibraltar Heritage Society Newsletter* No. 73 (2005): 9.

<sup>239</sup> Mark, *At Sea with Nelson*, 204.

<sup>240</sup> Mark, *At Sea with Nelson*, 206.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

above, Gibraltar was crucial in financing the British war effort on the Peninsula.

Mark noted that

We generally had a ship of war in Gibraltar Bay, taking on board money for Lisbon, and every month we sent from a million to a million and a half of hard dollars to carry on the war while, for this purpose, not a dollar was to be procured anywhere else; there was no coin in England that would answer the purpose.<sup>242</sup>

Gibraltar's status as a freeport was, according to Mark crucial in facilitating this ease of exchange, as he declared: 'Hark Legislators! Let Gibraltar alone, beware of destroying a free Port which has hitherto rendered such important services!'<sup>243</sup> It was in the realm of prizes, however, that Mark was financially to succeed at Gibraltar. Soon after being directly employed by Penrose, he was 'spontaneously' appointed Prize Agent in 1810. Gibraltar's propensity for drawing in naval prizes has already been noted, and they were a visible presence to Gibraltar's residents. In 1806 George Landmann had journeyed to the Ragged Staff, where he saw several 'vessels captured from the enemy... they were so numerous, that they occupied a considerable length of the beach.'<sup>244</sup> Mark recognised the lucrative nature of his appointment: 'Here was a fortune looking me in the face; I had but to put my shoulder to the wheel'.<sup>245</sup> Previous to Mark becoming Agent, their sale had been undertaken by merchants in Gibraltar. Naval Captains, and those that stood to financially benefit, had however grown dissatisfied with the arrangement. Mark noted that the merchants had a reputation for what he termed 'tardiness of distribution'. Within the first eighteen months of his appointment, he had sold twenty-three prizes. He duly ensured that he rapidly fulfilled payment to the crews and even advanced sums to clients whose cases were awaiting administrative approval in the Vice-Admiralty Court.<sup>246</sup> The War of 1812 delivered more prizes into Mark's hands at Gibraltar, not least because his remit also extended to the Lisbon station, whose prizes were subsequently sent to him. He wrote that in 1813 'The

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>244</sup> Landmann, *Recollections*, 68.

<sup>245</sup> Mark, *At Sea with Nelson*, 210.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 211.

Mole was full of my prize vessels, which I had secured there for their greater safety during the winter'.<sup>247</sup> It is likely that Mark moved house during this time; the 14 November 1812 edition of the *Gibraltar Chronicle* carried an advertisement for a house let by him at Rosia.<sup>248</sup>

William Mark became a key link in a chain of credit that stretched from the crews of naval vessels to shore-based officials such as Alexander Ross, the King's auctioneer. The risk present in Mark's policy of advancing credit became a reality when Ross went bankrupt in 1813, owing Mark just shy of £10,000. Nevertheless, Mark appears to have benefited hugely from his stint at Gibraltar. With the war seemingly winding down in 1815 he made plans to return to Britain with his family, but after Napoleon's escape from Elba he wrote to Penrose (now commanding the Mediterranean station) informing him that he would stay on in the event of war. He subsequently served as prize agent to the squadron commanded by Admiral Edward Pellew (later Lord Exmouth), that sailed up the Mediterranean that same year, although this enterprise ultimately provided nothing in the way of prizes for the financially ambitious Mark.<sup>249</sup> His eagerness to serve as a prize agent was not diminished however, and when Pellew sailed to Gibraltar in August 1816 prior to the bombardment of Algiers, Mark deferred his return to Britain once again. After that operation, and with hostilities in the Mediterranean seemingly over, Mark entered the diplomatic service as a Vice-Consul at Malaga.<sup>250</sup> His good relationship with Penrose and Governor Don had provided him with this opportunity. However, the prospect of serving as a prize agent yet again was a central factor in Mark choosing Malaga, as he thought that 'if the peace should be broken again I should not be far from Gibraltar in case it were necessary to resume my agency'.<sup>251</sup> Mark's

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>248</sup> *Gibraltar Chronicle*, Saturday 14 November 1812.

<sup>249</sup> This voyage was ultimately a loss making one for Mark – he ended it £350 out of pocket as the outbreak of naval war never fully materialised and falling exchange rates devalued his cash holdings. Mark, *At Sea with Nelson*, 231.

<sup>250</sup> He initially believed that the Consul at Malaga, William Laird, was on the verge of retirement. However, that position did not become vacant until Laird's death in 1823. Mark, *At Sea with Nelson*, 236.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 234.

experience of Gibraltar, then, correlated strongly with the aforementioned naval officers who appreciated its capacity for financial enrichment through the attainment of prize money.

As has been noted, Mark took substantial pride in the operational collaboration between army and navy, but his writings also reveal how individuals from both institutions interacted with each other on a more personal basis at Gibraltar. He became an intimate friend of Lieutenant-Governor George Don, who arrived at the Rock in 1814.<sup>252</sup> Mark wrote that 'Nothing could be more agreeable, or more fortunate, than the appointment of this amiable, generous and well-bred officer' and that 'Little poems were almost daily appearing in the *Chronicle* in celebration' of Don's arrival. Upon the General's death in 1832 Mark was gifted a view of Gibraltar painted exclusively for Don by the Italian artist Bermicci.<sup>253</sup> Prior to Lord Exmouth's expedition against Algiers in 1816 the Rock was once again a hive of activity, in a manner reminiscent of scenes described earlier in the 1800s: 'Every preparation was making in the dockyard to fit explosion vessels, etc, to aid the operations'.<sup>254</sup> Gibraltar's military defences were even used by Exmouth to demonstrate the effect of a concentrated bombardment by shore batteries. He arranged for several of the batteries to fire simultaneously upon the neutral ground, where barrels of sand and flags had been placed. The effect was that, according to Mark, 'The neutral ground was ploughed up. The causeway was cleared of casks and sand, and it appeared as if a cat could not have lived on any part exposed to so tremendous a fire'.<sup>255</sup> The navy had so often safeguarded the garrison through force of arms and supply of provisions, but interactions between

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<sup>252</sup> Don has become something of a legendary figure in Gibraltar's history. His considered handling of the 1814 yellow fever epidemic saved lives, and his governorship saw the erection of many civic buildings and the creation of new institutions that became integral to the Rock's emerging society. S. G. Benady, 'Sir George Don', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 16. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 492.

<sup>253</sup> Mark, *At Sea with Nelson*, 218-9.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.



both institutions, regularly thrust together within the confined maritime space of Gibraltar, often resulted in mutually beneficial outcomes.<sup>256</sup>

Gibraltar's geo-strategic status and its capacity as a maritime entrepot in the post-Napoleonic war era was also commented upon by non-British individuals. British visitors may have been culturally predisposed to reflect upon the Rock's maritime character, but its presence in many international accounts may point to a larger empirical truth of the Rock as a location. The German biologist Johann Baptist von Spix visited Gibraltar en route to Brazil in 1817 and described the bay as 'covered with innumerable vessels'.<sup>257</sup> From the Rock's summit, Spix observed that 'the sight of two quarters of the globe, and the ocean which separates them, affords to the traveller ample matter for reflection'.<sup>258</sup> He then wrote of the different nationalities to be found amongst the Rock's community 'in the mixture of Spanish and English inhabitants', including the Genoese, Calabrese and Jews, but also what he termed 'Asiatics' and North Africans, who sold 'fruit and fine leather manufactures in the streets'. Spix's experience of Gibraltar reflected its diverse post-Napoleonic population, but it also formed an eerily prescient prediction of the Rock's future as a British possession. He concluded that

the possession of this place by the English has not yet been able to banish the Spanish manners and language; but the abode of numerous strangers, and the great trade, give a general and comprehensive character to this staple place for the commerce of the Mediterranean.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> The successful bombardment of Algiers, carried out in response to an Algerine massacre of Christian fisherman, led to great praise and rewards being bestowed on Pellew. For Christopher D. Hall, the operation demonstrated his 'attention to detail', something that the preparations at Gibraltar undoubtedly assisted with. e

<sup>257</sup> Johann Baptist von Spix, *Travels in Brazil, in the years 1817-1820, undertaken by command of His Majesty the King of Bavaria* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1824), 67.

<sup>258</sup> Baptist von Spix, 55.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

Spix's exploration of the surrounding area during the remainder of his stay included trips to Tarifa and Algeciras, where he was summoned back to Gibraltar by way of a signal flag and a gun fired by his expedition's vessel. A small craft conveyed them across the bay not long after. Even in peacetime, the maritime space between Gibraltar and its surrounding environs was integral to a traveller's experience of the area. Spix's party left Gibraltar for Madeira in the company of 'fifty vessels of various sizes'.<sup>260</sup> Like most travellers to the Rock, Spix was not unaffected by the noticeable military installations at Gibraltar, describing them as 'excellent in every point' and as having afforded it 'the reputation of being invincible'. The Great Siege's legacy was still crucial in this regard, as evidenced by the presence of furniture 'made out of the fragments of the floating batteries of the besiegers' in the Governor's house, which Spix noted was shown to him with 'patriotic pride'.<sup>261</sup> The wreckage of enemy vessels, constructed with the aim of pounding the garrison into submission, had quite literally been incorporated into the domestic setting where British authority primarily resided on the Rock. Drinkwater recorded Elliot's incorporation of the Spanish flotsam into furniture in his account of the siege.<sup>262</sup> Forty years later, the floating batteries continued to dominate the historical memory of the siege.

In 1827 the American naval officer and author Alexander Slidell Mackenzie spent a year in Spain, during which he documented his experiences of the Rock. He viewed Gibraltar as a financial drain upon British finances.<sup>263</sup> For Mackenzie, the 'enormous expenditure for the support of four thousand men, and for the repairs of the works' could never be recompensed by its post-Napoleonic commercial success, as its status as a free port meant that 'other nations enjoy all the benefit of the

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>262</sup> Tito Benady, 'The Convent at Gibraltar', 203.

<sup>263</sup> This experience was not unique to Gibraltar, as several of Britain's Atlantic possessions, such as the Cape Colony, St Helena and Tristan de Cunha were also occasionally viewed in a negative light because of a high cost of living. John McAleer, *Britain's Maritime Empire: Southern Africa, the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, 1763-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 73-9.

establishment without paying any portion of the expense.’<sup>264</sup> He was thus able to conclude that Britain would in fact benefit from losing the Rock, for ‘it would perhaps be difficult to point to a single instance in which its possession has yielded any commensurate advantage.’<sup>265</sup> The veracity of this statement notwithstanding, Mackenzie’s opinion was based upon the belief that British naval supremacy was responsible for making her master of the straits, rather than possession of Gibraltar. According to Mackenzie, ‘the command of the Mediterranean belongs to the strongest fleet’, as the width of the straits meant that only by possessing strongholds on both the European and African sides could ships be prevented from passing.<sup>266</sup> Mackenzie certainly encountered Gibraltar as a military town, and his time there was heavily informed by the activities of the garrison. As he commented, ‘The din of war, the bustle, marching, and display, connected with the garrison, are among the greatest resources of the stranger in Gibraltar.’<sup>267</sup> The performative nature of military display had an undeniably patriotic feel, even for an American observer. Mackenzie commented that parades took place ‘twice a day’, but ‘frequently between them the trumpets sound “The Roast Beef of Old England”, proclaiming dinner’.<sup>268</sup> But his inquisitive eye was also drawn towards its ‘mixed society’ of ‘about twenty thousand, consisting of people of all nations, brought together by the facilities which the place possesses for trade.’ Visiting in peacetime had perhaps allowed Mackenzie to differentiate between an obviously thriving maritime trade and the need for a strong naval force with which to defend it in time of war. Nevertheless, he was fascinated by Gibraltar’s diverse make-up, spending many ‘a lazy hour in gazing from a window of the library upon the assembled multitude below.’<sup>269</sup> Perhaps the most interesting of Mackenzie’s observations, however, came when he visited the batteries that had been hollowed out of the Rock’s summit during the Great Siege. Despite recording that the

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<sup>264</sup> Alexander Sliddle Mackenzie, *A Year in Spain: By a Young American Vol. 1* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), 247-8.

<sup>265</sup> Mackenzie, *A Year in Spain*, 248.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 253-4.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

batteries were 'more formidable in appearance than reality', the sense of power he felt caused him to contemplate Gibraltar's place within the wider world:

There is, indeed, much at Gibraltar to convey an exalted idea of British power. Here is a nation which occupies a mere point upon the map of the world, raised, by a concurrence of causes, to the rank of a first-rate power, and occupying all the strongholds of the ocean; by the multiplied industry of an inconsiderable population, buying the alliance of greater nations, making war and peace at pleasure, and sitting at the helm of European policy. Nor is her greatness only physical; her Newton, Bacon, Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, and Byron, stand alone and unrivalled in the world, at the head of whatever is excellent.<sup>270</sup>

The activities of its garrison then, which clearly impacted greatly on daily life, did not cocoon Mackenzie or his gaze within a narrow, insulated view from inside the fortress walls. His experience of Gibraltar's diverse population and commercial success alerted him to its outside connections and visiting the Rock's summit led him to link Gibraltar both strategically and culturally to Britain's extended global supremacy. Mackenzie may have been sceptical of Gibraltar's naval importance in a strategic sense, but his further explorations upon the Rock's summit led to fresh pronouncements of its place in Mediterranean history. Beginning with the mythical figures of Hercules and Jason, in what he termed 'exalted recollections' he retraced the journeys of various historical legends who had traversed the very straits he looked down upon from his vantage point atop the Rock. What he glimpsed was 'the same Mediterranean which wafted Hannibal to Spain, Scipio to Africa ... Mark Anthony to the arms of Cleopatra' and bringing his recollections closer to the contemporary period, 'Bonaparte to Aboukir, and Nelson to the Nile.'<sup>271</sup> Even if visitors disagreed with its importance, the commercial prosperity of Gibraltar that resulted from British maritime success was undeniably present in most accounts and required commenting upon.

In 1832, the American merchant captain James Riley observed:

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 257-8.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 260.

As Gibraltar is a free port, lying at the entrance of the Mediterranean sea, before which all our commerce to and from that important part of the world, as well as our navy, must pass; and where considerable commerce is consequently centred, hundreds of our vessels call there annually, either to trade – for information with regard to other markets – for repairs of damages sustained at sea – for supplies of provisions and stores – on account of stress of weather and adverse winds ... Many shipwrecked officers and seamen, also, in distress from the adjacent coasts and ports of Spain and Barbary, are annually carried or find their way to Gibraltar.<sup>272</sup>

A year later Riley wrote to the American secretary of the Navy arguing for the creation of an American naval station at Gibraltar. Riley's observations were based upon a multitude of interactions both within the straits and on Gibraltar itself. Accordingly, his argument stressed the opportunity for American vessels to 'watch over the movements of the adjacent nations, both in Europe and Africa – convey the earliest intelligence of all breaches of treaties, and hostile or piratical operations', and for 'our merchantmen bound to ports in Turkey and the Black Sea, to procure convoy through the Archipelago'<sup>273</sup>. But Riley also successfully conveyed Gibraltar's ability to act as a secure repository for people, goods and information in his letter, effectively re-affirming his comments from a year previously. The characteristics of Gibraltar, described by the American Riley in peacetime, were nonetheless remarkably similar to those it had displayed for the British during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Riley was of course a life-long mariner, who operated out of Gibraltar on numerous occasions. Accordingly, it is surely noteworthy that his observations of Gibraltar centred around its maritime character, with little recourse made to military descriptions of fortifications or garrisoned soldiers.

The Irish surgeon William Wilde visited Gibraltar in 1837 during a larger tour of the Mediterranean and Madeira, Tenerife and several North African settlements. He

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<sup>272</sup> W. Wilshire Riley, *Sequel to Riley's Narrative: Being a sketch of interesting incidents in the life, voyage and travels of Captain James Riley* (Columbus: George Brewster, 1851), 43.

<sup>273</sup> Riley, *Sequel*, 53.

was struck by the Rock's imposing combination of grandiose physical geography and conspicuous military hardware. Viewing Gibraltar from the west after sailing into the bay, he described it as 'resembling a lion *couchant*, connected tail-ward to the main land... Tier after tier of guns point from endless batteries along the water's edge'. He simultaneously observed that numerous 'Spanish latteen boats crowded into the small harbour, having English papers and hoisting the British flag. Steamers and vessels of every nation occupy the deeper water outside.' Moving closer to the shore Wilde found that 'wherever the eye rests, a gun frowns upon it, peeping like so many chained bull-dogs from behind the grating of the embrasures'. Upon landing he immediately encountered Gibraltar's commercial aspect, arriving at 'a scene of great variety and interest... namely, the market, which for arrangement and supply, is not to be surpassed anywhere.' The spectacle described by Wilde typifies how visitors to Gibraltar in the nineteenth century experienced its global interconnectedness to other locations increasingly through the vibrant trading scene enabled by its commercial success. Amidst the traders selling poultry from the Barbary Coast, produce from Tangier and Spain and fish from all over the Mediterranean was the 'squeeling of apes and monkeys – the harsh music of Brazilian parrots – the noise of sailors', a setting Wilde found to be 'not a little astounding'. Exiting the market, he then entered into 'one of the strongest forts in the world', where he encountered 'stiff, erect' soldiers 'buttoned to the throat', forced to continually salute because of the sheer amount of officers present in the town. Yet amongst this highly militarised scene Wilde was conscious of the numerous shops to be found there, and the presence of large quantities of British manufactured goods. As he commented, 'The trade of this small place is very great, and consists principally in the wares of Sheffield, Birmingham, and Manchester'. Wilde's progress through Gibraltar, then, admits of a wider truth of how exactly the 'fortress' colony had come to be experienced in the post-Napoleonic period. Whilst the vibrantly commercial aspect of Gibraltar and its oppressively militaristic character might appear to have been segregated by military infrastructure, as the town grew both more prosperous and populous the reality was that these facets permeated each other to an increasing degree.

Indeed, even sources that lauded the Rock as a fortress and applauded the military presence were likewise forced to recognise its commercial success and diverse populace that resulted from the British dominance of the seas. When the naval dockyard officer William Pitt returned to the Rock in 1827 after first visiting twenty-five years earlier, he observed the following:

The Dock Yard (if it be not a burlesque to call it so) is beneath contempt, and a disgrace to such a nation as England – whereas every thing military, bespoke a liberality, and magnificence of supplies to an unbounded degree, with a splendid garrison of five thousand men, which in some measure redeemed it from the imputation of poverty and meanness so conspicuous in every undertaking relating to the security, comfort, and respectability of the “Lords of the ocean.”<sup>274</sup>

Pitt’s judgement of the naval establishment was indeed damning – he ended his description of Gibraltar by stating ‘I left it with disgust at every thing naval, but much delighted with the garrison.’<sup>275</sup> Pitt’s observations were, however, those of an experienced dockyard officer distinctly unimpressed with the present shore establishment. His time at Gibraltar coincided with a long period of decline for the Navy Board, which was to be abolished five years later. Pitt’s comments were also borne out of a disgust for what he saw as the current status of the navy in Gibraltar’s social hierarchy. He lamented that ‘poor Jack wasty face is boxed about here like a bag of old boots, and considered a cypher by the red coats until they were wanted’.<sup>276</sup> Despite everything, however, Gibraltar’s commercial success formed part of Pitt’s positive experience. He observed that ‘the town is crowded with shops of every description, trade flourishing in all directions, and is the key to the Mediterranean.’<sup>277</sup> Pitt had judged the garrison to be politically ascendant over the navy during his stay, and his account leaves the reader in no doubt that Gibraltar’s military character was very clearly on display. But this did not prevent

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<sup>274</sup> William Pitt, *The Cabin Boy: Being the memoirs of an Officer in the Civil Department of H. M. Navy, well known by the name of ‘Billy Pitt’* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1840), 252.

<sup>275</sup> Pitt, *The Cabin Boy*, 253.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 252-3.

<sup>277</sup> Pitt, *The Cabin Boy*, 252.

him from acknowledging the Rock's outward-facing nature as a key marketplace for Mediterranean trade. He found Gibraltar to be 'very extensive and diversified', with markets 'well supplied from Spain and Tetuan' ensuring an abundance of goods for sale.

## Conclusions

With the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, it might be assumed that conflict disappeared from Gibraltar's maritime sphere. However, one observation from the 1820s provides an insight into how disputes in the bay continued to draw the views of observers toward that direction. James Anton, a Waterloo veteran serving with one of the Highland regiments, arrived at the Rock for a six-year stint in 1825.<sup>278</sup> He was suitably impressed by Governor Don's improvements, describing the Alameda and its 'beautiful gardens', as a location where 'persons may sit and enjoy the view of the bay and the coast of Spain on the opposite side.'<sup>279</sup> His arrival coincided with an epidemic 'raging on the coast of Barbary' that severely impacted Gibraltar's food supply, 'as the principal food imports are usually from that quarter.'<sup>280</sup> Further emphasising Gibraltar's reliance on the sea was the visible practice of smuggling (mainly of tobacco), caused in Anton's opinion by the product's high cost in Spain, 'where almost every man is a smoker'. After the Napoleonic period, Spain had instituted a protectionist trading policy to promote domestic industrialisation.<sup>281</sup> Consequently, smuggling in Gibraltar's vicinity became rife.<sup>282</sup> As a free port, tobacco and other contraband could be favourably exported to Gibraltar, which in Anton's estimation had been 'for many years a great emporium for British goods.'<sup>283</sup> In 1827, the situation came to a head:

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<sup>278</sup> James Anton, 'Description of Gibraltar in the 1820's', *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol. 5 (1998): 77.

<sup>279</sup> Anton, *Retrospect of a military life*, 332.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>281</sup> Jacob Lundborg, 'Spain, Gibraltar and Territorial Waters: A New Battleground for an Old Conflict', *Minnesota Journal of International Law* Vol. 23, no. 3 (2014): 148.

<sup>282</sup> Melissa R. Jordine, *The Dispute over Gibraltar* (New York: Chelsea House, 2009), 59-60.

<sup>283</sup> Anton, *Retrospect of a military life*, 337.



a felucca belonging to this port was captured by the Spaniards under the pretence of its being a smuggler. This capture was made at noon-day, within the range of our batteries. Whether this was a breach of neutrality on the part of Spain or not may be questionable; be that as it may, it was certainly an insult, and intended as such; and it struck a considerable blow at the trade of this port; for several of the merchants had carried on a very advantageous trade in smuggling contraband articles into Spain.

The 'insult' felt and described by Anton was prevalent across Gibraltar. The incident was 'not only looked upon with the greatest indignation by the garrison, in whose face it was made', but it was also met with 'the utmost astonishment and consternation by the merchants and traders of Gibraltar'.<sup>284</sup> The reaction to the episode had clear echoes with those that occurred during the periods of war between Britain and Spain; the merchants according to Anton 'seemed as if left without protection, their fortune on the waves and their enemies in pursuit', and the 'insult' felt by the garrison at the inability of the British to prevent the seizure of the vessel at the hands of 'cowardly captors' was directly expressed by Anton. The use of the term 'cowardly', he explained, was 'in consequence of the gun-boat which made the capture firing round shot, grape, and musketry into the prize when within pistol-shot distance'. The lack of a reaction from the British batteries in response to such tactics seemed to demonstrate to Anton 'imbecility or imprudence on our part, it was certainly not that of dignity, self-respect, or good judgment.'<sup>285</sup> The association with 'self-respect' is key here. As demonstrated above, many observers had previously described maritime skirmishes in similar terms, and a plethora of activities in the bay had afforded Gibraltar's population the opportunity to articulate stereotypical forms of national character through the outcome of naval actions. Gibraltar's experience of conflict had been concentrated upon its bay and the wider maritime sphere to a greater extent than has been recognised in the historiography. This was the case even prior to the many instances discussed above. In 1748, Thomas

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 338.

Dunckerley's account had recorded this key aspect of the British experience at Gibraltar during the War of Austrian Succession – the performance of naval power in full sight of the Spanish mainland:

Opposite to this hill [Gibraltar] lies the town of Old Gibraltar, in the possession of the Spaniards, who are frequently spectators of their own ships made prizes, and brought in by us under their inspection.<sup>286</sup>

The incident from 1827 involved the reverse outcome, and Anton abhorred the public nature of 'the insult to the British flag'.<sup>287</sup> It nevertheless had a similar effect to prior naval encounters in uniting the mixed military and merchant community against a common external enemy. Observers on shore continually inserted their own personal biases into their documentation of maritime events. In 1797 when Betsey Wynne witnessed all the British vessels leaving the bay to chase a Spanish convoy, her diary recorded with pride that the *Inconstant*, commanded by her husband 'was the first ship out and the first in'.<sup>288</sup> Personal relationships, national pride and pre-existing ideologies coalesced on the line wall, infusing observations with patriotic meaning, and allowing Gibraltar's importance often to lie outside the confines of its fortifications. For Anton, it was the affront to British pride he felt that underlined Gibraltar's importance. Although the decline in trade that resulted from the capture of the felucca ('The merchants, disgusted at so debasing an apathy in protecting what they considered a fair trade, gradually relinquished the traffic') led him to describe Gibraltar as 'a burthen upon England than of any compensating advantage' during peacetime, he added that 'as it is the key of the Mediterranean, it is of the first importance, in time of war, to her commerce and her navy'.<sup>289</sup> Similarly, Dunckerley's above observation from 1748 ran in parallel to his estimation that

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<sup>286</sup> Henry Sadler, *Thomas Dunckerley, His Life, Labours, and Letters, including some Masonic and Naval Memorials of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Diprose & Bateman, 1891), 289.

<sup>287</sup> Anton, *Retrospect of a military life*, 338.

<sup>288</sup> *Wynne Diaries Volume II*, 179.

<sup>289</sup> Anton, *Retrospect of a military life*, 339.

‘Gibraltar is a place of very great trade for cloths, silks, &c’.<sup>290</sup> The 1827 incident was distinctly naval, and Anton’s experience accentuated the importance of the connection between the Rock and Britain’s naval capabilities.

In 1830, the poet Henry Sewell Stokes commented on Gibraltar in the explanatory notes to his poem *The lay of the Desert*. Born in Gibraltar in 1808, twenty-two years later Stokes described the sensation of ‘Looking down from the peak’ of the Rock, past the ‘battlements after battlements’ of the Moorish castle, to glimpse the commercial activity on Gibraltar’s western shore below:

The peaceful, but bustling sons of commerce, may be seen pursuing their avocations in the midst of soldiery and warlike manifestation. On the ample and generally tranquil bosom of the bay a thousand barks float gracefully, and display their many-coloured flags... Some ships are unloading, some loading, the treasures of many soils. Barges and boats innumerable move in all directions; the bay seems instinct with artificial life. Turn to the East – all traces of humanity are vanished – a wide world of waters is before you, profound, majestic, awful.<sup>291</sup>

His experience of Gibraltar, then, was fundamentally based around the ebb and flow of its maritime trade, the ‘sons of commerce’, and their vessels adorned with ‘many-coloured flags’ that placed Gibraltar firmly as an entrepôt of exchange. Notably, Stokes’s observations were formed out of an authentic lived experience, and not simply based on a single fleeting visit. As he goes on to describe, he ‘was much in the habit of contemplating’ the view from the Rock’s summit, where his ‘musings there were subject to no mortal interruption’.<sup>292</sup> For Stokes, experiencing Gibraltar meant viewing its military characteristics alongside its status as a staging post for trade and human interactions. The ‘sons of commerce’ did, after all, conduct their activities ‘in the midst of soldiery and warlike manifestation’. In this

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<sup>290</sup> Sadler, *Thomas Dunckerley*, 289.

<sup>291</sup> Having been born on the Rock, Stokes was not completely oblivious to his own potential bias towards Gibraltar. He wrote: ‘The Author may, perhaps, be inclined to regard it with an eye of partiality as the place of his birth; but he cannot avoid, for the sake, not merely of pleasing reminiscence, but of intrinsic attractions, dwelling a moment upon it.’ Henry Sewell Stokes, *The lay of the Desert: A poem in two cantos* (London: Hurst, Chance, and Co., 1830), 79; 81.

<sup>292</sup> Stokes, *The lay of the Desert*, 81-2.

instance, these human interactions shatter the concept of an insular 'garrison' state, as Stokes's musings are inexorably drawn to the 'wide world of waters' that lay beyond the Rock. Stokes's views from Gibraltar also contrast rather drastically from those expressed immediately after the Great Siege. James Molyneux's association of Gibraltar with 'Dullness' in 1783 seems diametrically opposed to those expressed from the early nineteenth century onwards. As we have seen, its strategic importance as a British possession could still be questioned, but the experience of those that resided there was invariably framed through the bountifulness of its maritime character, which was now much harder to deny. The overwhelming sense to be derived from most of these accounts is that visitors to Gibraltar were highly cognisant of the global scale of Britain's maritime prowess, and their views of Gibraltar were heavily coloured by viewing it through that prism. Moreover, whether they formed positive or negative opinions of Gibraltar is extraneous to a more noteworthy truth; that is, Gibraltar's maritime and outward-looking character was undeniable in the post-Napoleonic era.

### **Chapter 3: ‘Looked for by the whole nation’: Gibraltar and the Royal Navy in British culture**

In May 1782, a satirical print produced by William Wells accurately echoed the hopes and fears of British society, in the midst of an American war that many contemporaries agreed was not proceeding well.<sup>1</sup> *Anticipation, or, the contrast to the royal hunt* [see Appendix 1] depicted the British government endeavouring to restore the 'temple of Fame', which now rested on just two pillars. One, 'Jamaica Barbadoes', would be secured by Admiral Rodney's victory at the Saintes (news of which came after this print was produced), but the other, 'Gibraltar', was still besieged, and conspicuously under threat. In the background, as in many other contemporary prints, the Royal Navy can be seen in the throes of a fierce engagement with enemy vessels. The decaying temple, and its broken pillars, labelled 'Charles Town', 'St Vincent' and 'America', reflect an anxious imperial mind-set that interpreted military defeats as portending the disintegration of the entire empire, and admonished administrators for their political carelessness. In 1779 the freed slave and abolitionist Ignatius Sancho had written of

Admirals quarrelling in the West Indies – and at home admirals that do not chuse to fight. The British empire mouldering away in the West – annihilated in the North – Gibraltar going – and England fast asleep.<sup>2</sup>

This outlook can be readily found in political debates, correspondence and newspapers of the time. In the House of Commons in December 1781, Sir James Lowther was reported to have described the country as being 'in a wretched and distracted state; the empire was rent, torn, dissevered, dismembered, and nearly undone'.<sup>3</sup> Yet this tide began to turn, firstly with Rodney's aforementioned victory,

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<sup>1</sup> Little is known about Wells and his output, but another satirical print attributable to him does exist from the previous year. Titled *Tria juncta in uno. Or The Three enemies of Brittain*, it displayed caricatures of A Frenchman, a Dutchman and a Spaniard accompanied by text that described them as 'Three Bullies in three distant Countries' (British Museum, 1896,1118.101).

<sup>2</sup> Sancho wrote in the same letter (to an anonymous recipient): 'for my part it's nothing to me – as I am only a lodger – and hardly that.' Ignatius Sancho, *Letters of the late Ignatius Sancho, an African Vol. II* (London: J. Nichols, 1782), 92.

<sup>3</sup> *Newcastle Chronicle*, Saturday 22 December 1781.

and then with the resistance at Gibraltar which eventually allowed even those critical of the government to rejoice in British national pride rebounding.<sup>4</sup>

Gibraltar's place in national and naval culture immediately prior to the American Revolutionary War can be glimpsed in a 1772 poem entitled 'Humorous Description of Gibraltar', authored by an anonymous 'Sea Officer'.<sup>5</sup> The work itself indulges in the typical stereotypes of life on the Rock by referencing its poor agriculture, unwelcoming climate, the drunkenness and bawdiness of the garrison, and the gender-imbalance of its population ('of women, ye Gods! there's so small a proportion, That the ladies, God bless em! are always in motion'). Naval symbolism is indeed present – in fact, the main positive aspect derived from the poem, Gibraltar's impregnable nature, was relayed through the nautical imagery of a ship 'moor'd with two anchors a-head and a-stern, Which the giants of yore in their rage couldn't move'. However, the Rock's unfavourable image is ultimately reinforced by the poem's conclusion: 'Gibraltar, adieu! Come to England, damn'd rock! – for I'll not come to you'. Whatever its strategic benefits, it was clearly undesirable as a destination for British endeavours, even for a 'Sea Officer'. But Gibraltar's place in the British Empire was to undergo a cultural sea change in the period after the Great Siege, and in ways that historians have thus far failed to fully comprehend. The process was not instantaneous – rather, the events of the siege set in motion cultural forces that enriched Gibraltar's status as a British possession, as well as establishing a symbolically symbiotic relationship between the Rock and the British metropole. This chapter analyses how this change took place, beginning with an assessment of the British reaction to the navy's role in the Great Siege. The negative sentiments expressed by the anonymous author of 'Humorous Description of Gibraltar' gave way to more idealistic and patriotic interpretations of the Rock's status within the British Empire. As this chapter will show, the cultural iconography and celebrated personalities of the Royal Navy were integral to this process.

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<sup>4</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 179.

<sup>5</sup> *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, Thursday 22 April 1773; *Reading Mercury*, Monday 26 April 1773.

Captured in 1704 during the war of the Spanish Succession, Gibraltar was not initially considered to be a prize territorial possession.<sup>6</sup> In 1749, an anonymous writer cautioned that as long as the Rock remained British, war with Spain was inevitable. The author was not motivated by uncritical negativity ('I think Gibraltar exceeded all the Harbours I was ever acquainted with'), but rather by the effect that possessing it supposedly had upon trade between the two countries.<sup>7</sup> The propriety of maintaining colonies with regard to emerging ideologies of 'free trade' became a heavily debated topic in the eighteenth century. As the smallest of overseas territories, Gibraltar inevitably found itself cast as a financial sinkhole, with observers keenly contrasting its size against a perceived lack of overall value. As the anonymous author put it in 1749:

I can demonstrate that the use of Gibraltar is only to support and enrich, this or that particular Man; is a great Expence to the Nation; that the Nation is thereby singularly *dishonour'd*, and our Trade rather injured than protected.<sup>8</sup>

However, a report that appeared in the *Newcastle Courant* a year earlier provides a more nuanced picture of how Gibraltar was viewed. Titled 'A Compendious account of Gibraltar', the piece itself did not do Gibraltar any favours – particularly regarding the price of goods and trading difficulties. But the author clearly attributed these failings to a deliberate policy of mismanagement by the government. Arguing that Gibraltar was 'so finely situated for Trade, that the Expences of the Garrison might be easily paid by it, and everything might be cheap and plenty', the piece also decried that

All Trading is discountenanced, or absolutely annulled, unless those whose Business it is to make their Fortunes, and to put the worst Face imaginable on the Nature and Situation of the Place, share largely in the Profits; so that even a Chicken cant find its Way into the Land-Port Gate under half a Crown;

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<sup>6</sup> Ben Wilson, *Empire of the Deep: The Rise and Fall of the British Navy* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013), 279.

<sup>7</sup> *Reasons for giving up Gibraltar* (London: W. Webb, 1749), 13.

<sup>8</sup> *Reasons for giving up Gibraltar*, 19-20.



and the Difficulty of getting in more cumbrous Commodities insurmountable.<sup>9</sup>

The apparently inescapable conclusion that Gibraltar was being deliberately neglected because the government was secretly motivated to trade it away shaped public opinion in a way that few modern historians have truly appreciated. The *Ipswich Journal* responded to this apparent government 'design' in 1749, arguing that Spanish positivity towards the restitution of the Rock had been driven by British diplomatic overtures, but that politicians subsequently balked at 'the declared Sense of the *People*' favouring its retention. The *Journal* concluded that 'those at the Helm' had decided to 'run the Risk of a little *Foreign Reproach*' instead of 'a great deal of *Domestick Resentment*'.<sup>10</sup> Providing further evidence of public opinion in 1749 is a ballad titled *England's Alarum Bell: or, Give not up Gibraltar*. Its fourth verse neatly demonstrated how Gibraltar was linked to Britain's global trading prospects:

Yielded this important Harbour,  
All our *Turky* Trade, Adieu!  
*Port-Mahon* must change Its Master;  
Gone th' *Italian* Traffick too!  
Then will *French* and *Spanish* Vessels,  
Safely either *India* dare,  
The *Streights-Mouth* by Us unguarded,  
Fool'd away our GIBALTAR.<sup>11</sup>

*The Gentleman's Magazine* of the same year noted that Gibraltar saw little action during the War of the Austrian Succession, but nevertheless warned against trading it away, arguing that 'havock would then have been made of our *Levant* trade,

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<sup>9</sup> *Newcastle Courant*, Saturday 5 March 1748.

<sup>10</sup> *Ipswich Journal*, Saturday 4 March 1749.

<sup>11</sup> *England's Alarum Bell: or, Give not up Gibraltar. A new Ballad* (London: A. Price, 1749), 5.

which even the superiority of our men of war could not have prevented!’<sup>12</sup> The 1749 pamphlet then, which has been seen as a bellwether of the public opinion concerning Gibraltar, cannot be said to be truly representative of the national mood.

Arguing that the ‘Great Siege’ of 1779-1783 represented a turning point in Britain’s view of Gibraltar, Geoffrey Plank has pointed to the role that the well-publicised siege conditions played in forging a more positive colony/metropole relationship. However, by neglecting the Royal Navy in his analysis, Plank fails to offer a truly rounded and nuanced reading of exactly how this positive affinity was formed. The navy was crucial not only in practical terms to the garrison, but also in political and public debates regarding the siege’s conduct within Britain. Furthermore, Plank’s citing of negative assessments of Gibraltar earlier in the eighteenth century should not be taken as representative of a national consensus. Indeed, such opinions were vociferously expressed – as glimpsed in the anonymous 1749 pamphlet discussed above. But as Steve Pincus has demonstrated, long-standing political motivations and ideologies usually motivated such critiques. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713), which saw Gibraltar officially ceded to Britain, is often viewed as a key event in Britain’s accession to the role of a global power.<sup>13</sup> Whig politicians who had favoured a continuation of the War of the Spanish Succession, however, despised the treaty, viewing it as a disastrous settlement negotiated by the incumbent Tories.<sup>14</sup> Gibraltar and Minorca were viewed as inadequate gains from a war that had seen

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<sup>12</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine, Volume 19* (London: Edward Cave, 1749), 83.

<sup>13</sup> M. S. Anderson, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century 1713-1789* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1961), 270; David Scott, *Leviathan: The Rise of Britain as a World Power* (London: Harper Press, 2013), 258; Samia Al-Shayban, ‘The Treaty of Utrecht and Addison’s *Cato*: Britain’s War of the Spanish Succession, Peace and the Imperial Road Map’, in *Performances of Peace: Utrecht 1713*. Edited by Renger E. de Bruin, Cornelis van der Haven, Lotte Jensen and David Onnekink (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 141.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Kleber Monod, *Imperial Island: A History of Britain and Its Empire, 1660-1837* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 120; Renger E. de Bruin, Cornelis van der Haven, Lotte Jensen and David Onnekink, ‘Introduction’, in *Performances of Peace: Utrecht 1713*. Edited by Renger E. de Bruin, Cornelis van der Haven, Lotte Jensen and David Onnekink (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 17. (1-21)

spectacular battlefield successes.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Gibraltar became indelibly linked to the treaty during the long period known as the 'Whig Supremacy' that followed.<sup>16</sup> George III's apparent indifference towards losing Gibraltar is well known - in 1782 he described its potential exchange for a Caribbean island as both 'highly advantageous to this Kingdom' and as a necessary condition for peace ('Peace is not compleat unless Gibraltar be exchange'd with Spain').<sup>17</sup> Such thinking originated from the idea that Gibraltar would always serve to instigate war between Britain and her traditional Mediterranean enemies, and was present in entrenched political ideologies – the very same concept had motivated the anonymous author of *Reasons for giving up Gibraltar* in 1749. This attitude had its roots in the Treaty of Utrecht, but it was still very much present in 1783. Adam Smith had argued that Britain's possession of Gibraltar ensured the alliance of France and Spain in a letter of October 1782.<sup>18</sup> The monarch's opinions are therefore not especially surprising given the context in which Gibraltar's status had been politically contested and argued over throughout the previous century. The ambivalence of Lord Shelburne (Prime Minister during the peace negotiations) towards trading the Rock must also be viewed alongside his ideological commitment to free trade, which according to Nigel Aston and Clarissa Campbell Orr was one of his most 'consistently held' tenets.<sup>19</sup> He was also well acquainted with the economist Josiah Tucker, who had advised the government after the Seven Years War and was outspoken in his desire

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<sup>15</sup> Steve Pincus, 'Addison's Empire: Whig conceptions of Empire in the Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century', *Parliamentary History* 31, no. 1 (2012): 99. (99-117)

<sup>16</sup> Linda Colley's history of the eighteenth-century Tory Party demonstrated how Gibraltar was used as a political rallying point. In 1729 the Tories organised a highly visible protest in the House of Lords, 'with the safety of Gibraltar as its ostensible concern', suggesting that the attitude of the Whigs towards the Rock could be leveraged for political capital. Linda Colley, *In Defiance of Oligarchy: The Tory Party 1714-60* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 64.

<sup>17</sup> *The Correspondence of King George the Third: From 1760 to December 1783: Volume VI*. Edited by John Fortescue (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 159, 182-3.

<sup>18</sup> Smith said that Gibraltar was 'the possession of which we owe the union of France and Spain, and the futile and expensive friendship of Portugal'. *The Correspondence of Adam Smith*. Edited by Ernest Campbell Mossner and Ian Simpson Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 262.

<sup>19</sup> Nigel Aston and Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'Introduction', in *An Enlightenment Statesman in Whig Britain: Lord Shelburne in Context, 1737-1805*. Edited by Nigel Aston and Clarissa Campbell Orr (The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2011), 22.

to see Gibraltar traded away.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the strain of thought that promoted free trade did not disavow the need for a strong navy, but rather that colonial outposts were expensive and not needed to promote commerce.<sup>21</sup> However, historians have failed to reach a consensus regarding Shelburne's true motivations during the negotiations, with some arguing that his ideological predispositions were countermanded by the pragmatic desire to avoid a peace treaty injurious to Britain's interests.<sup>22</sup>

The long-lasting memory of the Treaty of Utrecht and Gibraltar's connection to it is also demonstrated by a speech made by the Whig MP Sir Phillip Francis in 1792. Francis did not directly call for Gibraltar's exchange, instead questioning its strategic value by arguing that 'no man, I think, will affirm... that our island would not be safe, that it would be open to invasion, if we lost possession of that place.' But this went hand-in-hand with a typical condemnation of the treaty of Utrecht, a 'transaction reprobated by the Whigs', and still, seventy-nine years later inextricably linked to the Tory failure in 'not insisting on terms proportioned to the successes of the war'.<sup>23</sup> Even in the opinions of non-politicians, such as a letter forwarded to Sandwich in 1781 from 'a retired seaman', oft-repeated tropes regarding Gibraltar's situation were nearly always to be found. The cost of maintaining the garrison, the 'fact' that other nations traded in the area without it and the prospect of continual war with Spain – ideas propagated by Whig politicians earlier in the century – were all present in the seaman's report.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, derisory opinions of Gibraltar in the eighteenth century were inextricably linked to pre-existing ideological debates, rather than revealing any broader strategic 'truth' about the Rock's intrinsic value.

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<sup>20</sup> Nancy F. Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 116.

<sup>21</sup> McAleer, *Britain's Maritime Empire*, 39.

<sup>22</sup> P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c.1750-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 361.

<sup>23</sup> *The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the year 1803*, Vol. XXIX (London: T. C. Hansard, 1817), 957.

<sup>24</sup> *The Sandwich Papers Vol. IV*. Edited by G. R. Barnes and J. H. Owen (London: Navy Records Society, 1938), 26-28.

The key point is that despite some expressions of support for its exchange, public opinion became increasingly alarmed during the eighteenth century at the prospect of losing Gibraltar from the empire. The notion that Gibraltar was generally disliked until the Great Siege placed a patriotic layer of respect towards its 'fortress'-like qualities is problematic. Firstly, it diminishes the central role that political ideologies and the politics of trade played in shaping opinions of the Rock. Secondly, as well as ignoring positive attitudes expressed prior to 1779, the placing of a symbolic circumscription at the siege's conclusion in 1783 detracts from the significant and multifarious cultural productions that raised Gibraltar's standing within British society after the siege. The Royal Navy is central to understanding how both issues were key to its strategic retention and furthermore, its cultural acceptance as a valued British possession. The siege itself was indeed a crucial event for Gibraltar. However, a more thorough investigation into the ways that cultural commemorations of it manifested themselves in the subsequent years reveals that the role of the navy was crucial in influencing how Britons viewed Gibraltar. This chapter will demonstrate that by the end of the Napoleonic era, the 'dishonour'd' feeling expressed in 1749 due to Gibraltar's apparent expence gradually subsided, to be replaced by overtly positive characterisations of its place within the British Empire. It will argue that, contrary to orthodox historiographical opinion, this change was largely driven by naval events that were widely appreciated and celebrated across a multitude of contemporary cultural forms. Thus far, both naval and imperial historians alike have failed to properly consider the cultural role played by the Royal Navy in assimilating Gibraltar into the broader remit of cherished colonial possessions.

### British reactions to the Royal Navy's role in Gibraltar's Great Siege

As Comptroller of the Navy, Charles Middleton (Lord Barham) became involved with planning the third relief of Gibraltar in 1782, and his interactions with the government present a picture of dangerous indecision. His first action was to commandeer provisions intended for North America and redirect them to the relief

convoy.<sup>25</sup> He later became impatient with the political climate that seemed to be delaying the expedition, observing that provisions were assembled and only ships were needed. On 25<sup>th</sup> July he wrote that 'there appears to me to be no decision in the cabinet; the members are too many for conducting the national business.'<sup>26</sup> The Duke of Grafton's (Lord Privy Seal in Shelburne's ministry) later assertion that 'at home the danger was seen with all its consequences' sits uneasily alongside Middleton's own experience.<sup>27</sup> By August, his frustration was palpable:

The ceremony of accommodating flags must give way to the necessity of applying every ounce of our force to its proper object. The clouds, my lord, that hang over us are heavy; we are not without the means of removing them, if our plans are judicious, formed in time, and executed with vigour... The past summer has been unprofitably spent; we have undertaken everything and executed nothing; whereas an early disposition and timely communication might have relieved Gibraltar.<sup>28</sup>

Grafton's comment on the importance of Gibraltar was undoubtedly influenced by the climate of public opinion that arose from the possibility of the Rock being traded away in upcoming peace talks. Such rumours were not entirely unfounded; indeed, secret negotiations had taken place in Madrid in 1780, where the dramatist Richard Cumberland acted as an envoy.<sup>29</sup> It is generally accepted that Lord Shelburne's readiness to lose Gibraltar was only halted by recognition of the national mood.<sup>30</sup> The clamour of public adulation directed towards the navy in particular is reflected in Grafton's memoirs, which referenced Howe's relief against

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<sup>25</sup> *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham Volume II*. Edited by John Knox Laughton (London: Navy Records Society, 1910), 55.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham*, 56.

<sup>27</sup> *Autobiography and Political Correspondence of Augustus Henry Third Duke of Grafton K. G.* Edited by William R. Hanson (London: John Murray, 1898), 341.

<sup>28</sup> *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham*, 58.

<sup>29</sup> Writing in 1862, Sir Edward Cust remarked that feelings toward Gibraltar had undoubtedly changed in the eighty-two years since, and that 'the British minister who would listen to any scheme for giving it up, would be thought insane'. Sir Edward Cust, *Annals of the Wars of the Eighteenth Century, compiled from the most authentic histories of the period* (London: John Murray, 1862), 250.

<sup>30</sup> John Norris, *Shelburne and Reform* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1963), 260-1; Ian R. Christie, *Myth and Reality in Late Eighteenth Century British Politics and other Papers* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), 66.

enemy forces 'greatly superior in numbers' directly alongside Rodney's 'brilliant and illustrious victory' over the French at the Battle of the Saintes earlier in the year.<sup>31</sup>

The idea of Britain's colonies as a drain on the state finances had gained traction in the latter half of the century, inspired partly by political economists including Josiah Tucker and Adam Smith.<sup>32</sup> Tucker's *A Treatise Concerning Civil Government* (1781) had described Gibraltar (along with Minorca) as an unnecessary and expensive possession, 'serving no other end, but to irritate all the world against us'. But it also (perhaps naively) argued that 'the Ocean is the great *Common of Nature*, which belongs to no Nation'.<sup>33</sup> These emerging notions had their admirers in parliament – Pitt the Younger, who led the ministry that succeeded the Fox-North coalition in December 1783, was not opposed in principle.<sup>34</sup> However, he also pragmatically understood the importance of maintaining Britain's strategic advantages wherever possible. Ceding Gibraltar meant surrendering a geo-political asset that would not necessarily be gained elsewhere. It was also now politically expedient to retain it, as public opinion resolutely swung behind the Rock. The public fervour was felt across the United Kingdom. In the Irish House of Commons in December of 1782, Henry Grattan noted that, amid a rumoured deal exchanging it for Puerto Rico and Minorca, 'the cession of Gibraltar will be an unpopular measure ... the very suggestion threw the House into a ferment'.<sup>35</sup> But the public at large remained sceptical of the intentions of their politicians. The *Hampshire Chronicle* reported in

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<sup>31</sup> *Autobiography and Political Correspondence of Augustus Henry Third Duke of Grafton*, 340-1.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 236-8; Colley, *Captives*, 70.

<sup>33</sup> Josiah Tucker, *A Treatise Concerning Civil Government* (London: T. Cadell, 1781), 252.

<sup>34</sup> Martyn J. Powell, 'Consumption: Commercial Demand and the Challenges to Regulatory Power in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and its Empire*. Edited by Phillip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 292.

<sup>35</sup> Henry Grattan, *Memoirs of the life and times of the Rt. Hon. Henry Grattan, by his son, Henry Grattan, Esq., M.P.* (London: Henry Colburn, 1841), 34.

January 1783 that although ‘alarms felt by the public’ were beginning to subside, still

It was feared that as our Ministers did not boggle at giving up the Thirteen Colonies... they would not have made a scruple of throwing up Gibraltar into the bargain, sooner than be disappointed in the great wish of their hearts.<sup>36</sup>

The patriotic fervour evident in local newspapers that accompanied such fears was, however, expressed in a multifaceted way. The *Kentish Gazette* in March 1783 stressed that Gibraltar’s potential as a trading location could in future be utilised to benefit British exports into the Mediterranean. But that went hand-in-hand with its capacity as a naval base – in turn strongly linked to its strategic value. The paper argued that ‘The courts of Versailles and Madrid will naturally, from religion and the ties of blood, be ever fast friends’ – a situation that could be prevented by keeping Gibraltar ‘for ever’. By doing so, Britain would be ‘armed with every desirable superiority over our enemies, and have never any occasion to dread a combination of foes.’<sup>37</sup> Although the American colonies were lost, the retention of Gibraltar, and the understanding that it occurred because of British naval dominance, acted as a rebuttal to a growing anti-colonial sentiment in the war’s immediate aftermath. Gibraltar occupied a central space amongst a complex set of intertwined debates that surrounded the war’s closing stages and immediate aftermath.

In the House of Commons in early 1782, whilst debating the conduct of Lord Sandwich as First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Mulgrave reflected that ‘the relief of Gibraltar was looked for by the whole nation’. Speaking in defence of Sandwich, Mulgrave stated that the sizeable fleet sent with Admiral Darby in 1781 (which had been criticised for taking resources away from the North American theatre) was necessary in tipping the odds in favour of a British fleet faced by the Spanish off Gibraltar. He argued that weakening Darby’s squadron would have risked Britain

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<sup>36</sup> *Hampshire Chronicle*, Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 1783.

<sup>37</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1783.



being 'bullied out of our purpose of relieving Gibraltar', which accordingly was not 'consistent with the spirit of the nation'.<sup>38</sup> Mulgrave's sentiment was emblematic of much of the political and cultural discourse that accompanied the Great Siege and the Royal Navy's trio of reliefs. They were in varying ways attacked and defended, but ultimately held up as exhibiting alternative forms of British supremacy. Despite succeeding in supplying Gibraltar's garrison with much-needed provisions, for some politicians Darby's failure to provoke a definitive action in 1781 was evidence of a decrepit and ineffectual naval department. Sandwich's fortune seemed to ebb and flow with those of Gibraltar; Rodney's first relief and victory at the 'moonlight' battle had initially provided the First Lord with political capital against his many critics.<sup>39</sup> Ironically, the validity of later criticisms against the naval department can be glimpsed in Rodney's private thoughts immediately after his 1780 victory. In a letter to his wife, he wrote 'The Spanish men of war we have taken are much superior to ours. I own they surprise me' and that 'without a thorough change in naval affairs, the discipline of our navy will be lost'.<sup>40</sup> The concurrent debate that still raged over the political status of Gibraltar complicated the matter further, as reactions to events were framed against the benefits of prioritising the Mediterranean versus the North American theatre.

Howe's 1782 relief occasioned a debate concerning the success and efficacy of the endeavour.<sup>41</sup> The main objective of the operation had been achieved. However, the public appetite for a resounding corollary victory was undoubtedly whetted by Rodney's defeat of de Grasse at the Saintes earlier in the year. But another contributing event also played a significant part. The loss of the first-rate *Royal George*, and several hundred lives at anchor off Spithead on 29 August 1782 (immediately prior to the sailing of Howe's fleet for Gibraltar), left contemporaries numb with shock. The event also cost the life of the deeply respected Admiral

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<sup>38</sup> *The Scots Magazine*, Tuesday 1 January 1782.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Trew, *Rodney & the Breaking of the Line* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2006), 55.

<sup>40</sup> *Correspondence of the late Admiral Lord Rodney*, 228; 229-30.

<sup>41</sup> Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy*, 17.

Richard Kempenfelt.<sup>42</sup> Although 1782 saw an upturn in the Royal Navy's fortunes, a sombre atmosphere surrounded the departure of Howe's fleet. British pride was assuaged earlier in the year by Rodney's Caribbean victory, but after the war's previous reverses the sense of national yearning for further naval triumph lingered. The context of a relief squadron also contributed to a mood of cautious expectation – the departure of a large fleet would not ordinarily guarantee a naval battle, but one ordered to relieve Gibraltar, with a large besieging force arrayed against it, was almost certain to ensure a violent clash of arms. As shown above, the indecisive return from Darby's relief led to political ramifications amongst the higher echelons of naval command. Against this backdrop, only an overwhelming victory could have entirely quelled British anxieties over the war's future outcome. Expectations were certainly high – on 16 August 1782 the *Saunders's News-Letter* stated that 'In all probability, the naval exploits of this year will be concluded before Gibraltar' – a sentiment also revealing of how the siege was perceived as an overtly maritime clash of arms.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, Howe's paradoxically underwhelming success did not reverse the opinion of those who still questioned Gibraltar's value. On 12 December 1782, the House of Commons voted to give thanks to Howe 'for the important service he has done to this country by the late relief of the fortress of Gibraltar'.<sup>44</sup> But in the preceding debate, several members expressed dissatisfaction with the notion that Gibraltar was Britain's most valuable fortress, George Onslow being of the opinion that it 'hung like a dead weight round the neck of Britain', and that 'other nations that had no Gibraltar had more trade in the Mediterranean and Levant than we had'.<sup>45</sup> Fox countered this by correctly stating that those nations (Denmark, Sweden and the Dutch) were not at war with France and Spain. In a further debate on 11 March 1783, Onslow continued to assert that 'Gibraltar was not worth our keeping'. He was supported by Sir Cecil Wray, who

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<sup>42</sup> William Cowper memorialised the vessel's loss and Kempenfelt's death in the poem *On the Loss of the Royal George*. Hilary L. Rubenstein, *Catastrophe at Spithead: The Sinking of the Royal George* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2020), 21-2.

<sup>43</sup> *Saunders's News-Letter*, Friday 16 August 1782.

<sup>44</sup> *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England: From the earliest period to the year 1803, Volume 23* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1814), 305.

<sup>45</sup> *Cobbett's Parliamentary History*, 302.

‘complained of the enormous expence of Gibraltar, and wished it had been given to the enemy in exchange for some other possession’.<sup>46</sup> In March 1784, Onslow continued to disparage the Rock in parliament, arguing that its trade was only good for ‘white wine and pig-nuts’. His comment on Gibraltar’s security – ‘at the approach of another war we might have no Howe to conduct our fleet, and there might be no storm to discomfit that of our enemies’ – effectively damned Howe with faint praise.<sup>47</sup> It remained clear then that despite the successful resolution to the siege, the political opinion that favoured jettisoning Gibraltar had not been completely assuaged.

Howe’s expedition had been embarked upon in an atmosphere of understandable indecisiveness, as naval policy makers grappled with the challenge of facing significant threats in multiple theatres. A large fleet would have to be sent to relieve Gibraltar, not only taking potential resources from America but also leaving the North Sea open to attack from the sizeable threat from the Dutch. Britain’s dependence upon naval supplies from the Baltic meant that this consideration could not be ignored.<sup>48</sup> Within this context, Howe’s relief expedition left many in Britain feeling a curious sense of suspended expectation for what might occur. Writing on 30 August 1782, in a letter to Sir Horace Mann, Horace Walpole stated that he was convinced Gibraltar would fall, ‘if not already gone’. He expressed consternation at the ‘strange management’ that had prevented the fleet from sailing. But something of the political mood and national feeling was apparent just a few lines earlier, when he wrote ‘I am so mortified at the fall of England, I see little or no prospect of its ever being a great nation again’.<sup>49</sup> Feelings of diminished

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<sup>46</sup> *The Parliamentary Register; Or, History of the proceedings and debates of the House of Commons; during the third session of the Fifteenth Parliament of Great Britain. Vol. IX* (London: J. Debrett, 1783), 471-2.

<sup>47</sup> *The European Magazine, and London Review, Volume V* (London: John Fielding, 1784), 308.

<sup>48</sup> David Syrett, *Admiral Lord Howe: A Biography* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2006), 104.

<sup>49</sup> *Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, to Sir Horace Mann: His Britannic majesty’s Resident at the Court of Florence, from 1760 to 1785, Vol. II* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1844), 256.

national pride, then, seemed to coalesce around the supposedly grim prospects of Gibraltar's siege and the Royal Navy's ability to uphold ideals of success on the international stage. When news of the relief's success reached Britain, the joy was palpable. On that occasion, Walpole wrote to Mann once again, jubilant at the 'great news', and, in a tone altogether different from his previous letter, remarked that 'there is something sublime in this little island, beset with foes, calmly despatching its own safeguard to maintain such a distant possession'. He was not concerned at the absence of a significant victory, reckoning that it would have been 'dearly bought'.<sup>50</sup> There was a clear tinge of national disappointment, however, as more extensive accounts of what had transpired filtered home. This was perhaps best summed up by the Duke of Chandos, who on 10 November 1782 wrote: 'I think the combined Fleets have disgraced themselves, and we have got great glory; yet I cannot help wishing it had been attended with something more solid'.<sup>51</sup> Despite saving Gibraltar from almost certain loss, Howe's relief did not put a defining end to the siege, which continued until 7 February 1783. William Cowper's observation in a letter of 7 December 1782, that 'The papers tell me that peace is at hand, and that it is at a great distance; that the siege of Gibraltar is abandoned, and that it is to be still continued', summed up the apprehension that accompanied the siege's prolonged climax in Britain.<sup>52</sup>

Two satirical prints by Thomas Colley highlight how the subtleties of public recognition ebbed and flowed during the naval operations that surrounded the siege. *Oh! Lord, Howe- they run or Jack English clearing the gangway before Gibraltar* [see Appendix 2], published in the immediate aftermath of the news of Howe's relief reaching Britain on 2 November 1782, depicts a stout Royal Navy sailor carrying a sack with the words 'provisions for brave ELLIOT' on it, and forcefully discharging a blunderbuss towards caricatured figures of France and

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<sup>50</sup> *Letters of Horace Walpole*, 265.

<sup>51</sup> *Original Letters, principally from Lord Charlemont, the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, and many other distinguished Noblemen and Gentlemen, to the Right Hon. Henry Flood* (London: T. Rodd, 1820), 113.

<sup>52</sup> *The Life and Works of William Cowper*. Edited by T. S. Grimshawe (London: Saunders and Otley, 1817), 102.

Spain. In the face of this assault the two are rendered visibly weak as they cowardly turn away and fall over. A month later, on 9 December, *Taleo, or the Royal Sportsman, running down the Enemies of Great Britain* was published [see Appendix 3]. The print shows George III on horseback, leading five hunting dogs against satirical depictions of Holland, France and Spain. The dog's collars are labelled with the names of British military figures, and their positioning within the piece gives some idea of the hierarchical status afforded to their perceived conduct. In a scene reminiscent of the Battle of the Dogger Bank in 1781, (Admiral) 'Parker' is closely engaged with a recumbent Dutchman, whilst Admiral 'Rodney', just as at the Saintes, gnaws at the leg of a fleeing France, and the figure of Spain is closely pursued by (General) 'Elliott', still at this point under siege at Gibraltar. Two separate hounds are, however, cast in a more passive light. (Admiral) 'Pigot', who had been sent out to replace Rodney in error before news of the latter's victory was known, is behind the King and almost out of frame. The remaining dog is a representation of Howe, who, although visibly snarling, is nevertheless removed from the main action and not engaged with any of Britain's foes. In this instance then, Howe's conduct placed him beneath the more visibly active resistance of Elliott – part of the hunt but disengaged from active combat.

Although Howe's relief was successful and many defended him, a strain of public opinion existed that demanded unyielding aggression from its heroes.<sup>53</sup> In this case, Howe was judged by many to have not adequately delivered it. The lament given by the *Dublin Evening Post* in December 1782 gives some impression of the mood. Whilst describing Howe's expedition as 'gallant and fortunate', it bemoaned the celebration of an event that was not an obvious victory:

To what a state is Britain fallen, when her utmost boast is founded only on her escapes from the designs of her enemies! In former days every military operation wherein victory not followed by conquest would have indignantly been looked upon as little better than defeat.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy*, 17.

<sup>54</sup> *Dublin Evening Post*, Thursday 26 December 1782.

Walter Gordon's 1784 account of the siege argued in favour of Howe, but its use of language was dispassionate in contrast to the ebullient description of 'the Gallant' Rodney – of whom it was said that 'Unfading laurels will forever encircle the head of'.<sup>55</sup> In the eyes of the siege's early chroniclers, the fame that resulted from victory at the Saintes in 1782 clearly attached itself onto Rodney's earlier successes at Gibraltar. Unlike the inconclusive battle off Cape Spartel in 1782, the so-called 'moonlight battle' off Cape St Vincent in 1780 was an undoubted British victory. A print produced by Matthew Darly shortly afterwards demonstrates how the battle was received favourably compared to Howe's later action. Titled *The game at Football* [see Appendix 4], it depicts two British sailors, one holding a caricatured Spaniard by the neck whilst kicking him in the air – as a result, several coins spill out of the man's pockets to the floor, where his broken sword lies. The combination of lost specie alongside shattered weaponry is key to understanding why Rodney's action was conceived of as a great victory. Four large enemy vessels were captured, along with the Spanish commander Admiral Langara.<sup>56</sup> Francis Place, in 1780 a nine-year old London schoolboy, later recalled how Rodney's accomplishments were 'bawled about the streets', with songs 'sung at every corner and in every public house... everyone thought himself in some way mixed up in the fame of Admiral Rodney'.<sup>57</sup> Samuel Curwen noted in his journal that when out walking in Bath, he heard the firing of muskets and 'ringing of bells, to celebrate Sir G. Rodney's victory of Don Langara'.<sup>58</sup> The 1780 victory had categorically delivered upon the expected 'conquest' so desired by the *Dublin Evening Post* two years later. The fame acquired off Gibraltar was also crucial in helping to deliver Rodney's election to Parliament

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<sup>55</sup> Walter Gordon, *The History of the Blockade and Siege of Gibraltar* (Aberdeen, 1784), 8.

<sup>56</sup> The captured vessels were *Fenix* (80 guns), *Princessa* (74 guns), *Monarca* (74 guns), and *Diligente* (74 guns). Godfrey Basil Mundy, *The Life and Correspondence of the Late Admiral Lord Rodney Vol. I* (London: John Murray, 1830) 224.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Marc Baer, *The Rise and Fall of Radical Westminster, 1780-1890* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 14.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Curwen, *Journal and Letters of the late Samuel Curwen, Judge of Admiralty, etc., an American refugee in England, from 1775 to 1784* (New York: C. S. Francis and Co., 1842), 235.

later in the same year.<sup>59</sup> A subsequent but important by-product was that Gibraltar's importance was reinforced.

The legacy of Howe's apparent inaction off Gibraltar never fully dissipated, and resurfaced in naval culture throughout the next century. Prior to his victory achieved in 1794, Howe was repeatedly criticised in print for being unable to bring an action against the French fleet in the Channel.<sup>60</sup> In 1803 George Mason suggested that Howe viewed the Gibraltar action as 'the greatest he had ever performed', and argued that a more decisive battle 'was not in his power to enforce'.<sup>61</sup> William Burney's reflection in 1807 that Howe's relief had been 'accomplished in a manner every way worthy of his high reputation' likewise does not correspond with the contemporary feeling.<sup>62</sup> John Barrow's 1838 biography strenuously defended Howe's conduct in 1782, arguing that in the face of a numerical disadvantage (thirty-four British vessels versus forty-four Allied ships) it 'would have been an act of madness, and utterly inexcusable' for Howe to have offered battle.<sup>63</sup> J. H. Mann's 1870 study of Gibraltar's various sieges barely mentioned Howe, and noticeably omitted him from a list of British Admirals judged to be 'well known to the countless generations of monkeys of the Rock'.<sup>64</sup> Howe himself reacted forcefully to aspersions cast upon his conduct, and challenged John Augustus Hervey to a duel after his fellow officer had publicly questioned his conduct.<sup>65</sup> Hervey's temper was no doubt influenced by the fact that a young

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<sup>59</sup> Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy*, 62; 59.

<sup>60</sup> Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy*, 60.

<sup>61</sup> George Mason, *The Life of Richard Earl Howe* (London: C. Roworth, 1803), 50.

<sup>62</sup> William Burney, *The British Neptune; Or, a History of the Achievements of the Royal Navy, from the earliest periods to the present time* (London: Richard Phillips, 1807), 338.

<sup>63</sup> John Barrow, *The Life of Richard Earl Howe, K. G., Admiral of the Fleet, and General of Marines* (London: John Murray, 1838), 154.

<sup>64</sup> Even the disgraced Admiral Byng warranted inclusion in Mann's list, which read: 'Blake, Rooke, Rodney, Nelson, Byng and Jervis'. J. H. Mann, *A History of Gibraltar and its Sieges* (London: Provost & Co., 1870), 22.

<sup>65</sup> Roger Knight, 'Richard Howe', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Volume 28*. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 488.

relative of his had been killed during the action.<sup>66</sup> Howe was also vigorously defended in Parliament by Sir Charles Turner, who denounced the criticism as maliciously motivated, and 'maintained by falsehood'. Turner's challenge to prove Howe's improper conduct was met with silence in the chamber.<sup>67</sup> Howe was correct to feel personally slighted, as the action itself had been anything but passive.<sup>68</sup> His later reputation as the 'sailor's friend' was enhanced by his role in calming the 1797 mutinies, but his reputation as a cautious commander (at least prior to 1794) originated from the campaign to relieve Gibraltar in 1782.<sup>69</sup>

As demonstrated above, Mulgrave's 1781 observation that the 'spirit of the nation' demanded Gibraltar's relief is firmly backed up by reference to contemporary political and print culture. The Great Siege provided ample occasion for such passionate public displays, and canny politicians likely remembered how even the mere mention of giving up the Rock was received by the public. Lord Keppel's warning that he would resign as First Lord of the Admiralty if Gibraltar 'did not remain in our hands', revealed in George III's correspondence, is a noteworthy demonstration of how the opinions of naval command and the wider public coalesced over this issue.<sup>70</sup> Earlier in the century, politicians that considered trading the Rock away had been dissuaded from doing so by the spectre of public outcry.<sup>71</sup> This sentiment only intensified as the century wore on and after 1783, no British government seriously contemplated the idea. Rather than attributing this solely to

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<sup>66</sup> *Hampshire Chronicle*, Monday 25 November 1782.

<sup>67</sup> *The London Magazine, Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, Volume 52, 79.

<sup>68</sup> In 1789, a report in the *Chester Chronicle* gave an indication of the true ferocity of the action, by relating the tragic death of John Addington, a sailor on board the *Royal William*. His right leg was severed at the thigh during the action on 20 October 1782, and despite the best efforts of a surgeon, Addington died shortly afterwards. *Chester Chronicle*, Friday 9 October 1789.

<sup>69</sup> Brian Lavery, 'Lower-deck life in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars', in *The Naval Mutinies of 1797: Unity and Perseverance*. Edited by Ann Veronica Coats and Philip MacDougall (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 197.

<sup>70</sup> Keppel's passion for retaining Gibraltar is also noteworthy in the context of his opposition to the American war. *The Correspondence of King George the Third*, 172; Wilson, *Sense of the People*, 255.

<sup>71</sup> Geoffrey Holmes and Daniel Szechi, *The Age of Oligarchy: Pre-industrial Britain 1722-1783* (London: Longman, 1993), 307.



the 'stoical' resistance of its garrison, as Plank suggests, it is also likely that contemporary politicians saw the political capital that could be gained from maintaining Gibraltar as an imperial possession.<sup>72</sup> Plank's argument overlooked the Royal Navy as an active participant in the formation of a stronger cultural relationship between Gibraltar and Britain. Furthermore, the Great Siege did not represent an endpoint in assimilating Gibraltar into the empire as a 'thoroughly British' possession.<sup>73</sup> Viewing the Great Siege in such terms has seriously undervalued and diminished events that occurred around the Rock in the years that followed – events that continually served to maintain Gibraltar's presence in the British cultural sphere. If Plank is correct, then why was the Rock's value still being debated in Parliament in 1783, even after the siege had been permanently lifted? Indeed, another anonymous pamphlet appeared in the same year titled *The Propriety of retaining Gibraltar impartially considered*, which repeated the Whig-inspired tropes surrounding the Rock, describing it as 'a feather in our cap, more splendid than useful'.<sup>74</sup> This sentiment was clearly now the antithesis of general public opinion, but it still existed nonetheless.

Furthermore, why had political opposition to its retention virtually disappeared by the end of the Napoleonic period? This question has complex and nuanced answers, but analysing the Rock through the prism of its cultural relationship to the Royal Navy presents a more complete understanding of how Gibraltar was truly 'made' British. As demonstrated above, much of the popular support that coalesced around the Rock during this period expressed itself in promoting its advantages as a naval base and commercial hub. It was also clear to most contemporary British

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<sup>72</sup> As Philip Harding has argued, British politicians were adept at understanding 'how to take advantage' of popular support and opinion during this period. Philip Harding, 'The Duke of York Affair (1809) and the complexities of war-time patriotism', *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 4 (1996): 966. (963-984)

<sup>73</sup> Plank, 'Making Gibraltar British', 369.

<sup>74</sup> The author seemed to understand the effrontery felt by Spain regarding Gibraltar's capture, as he asked the question 'What would England say to a treaty of peace that surrendered Portsmouth to the Spaniards?' However, comparing Gibraltar to Britain's premier naval port would appear to be a tacit recognition of the Rock's own usefulness. *The Propriety of retaining Gibraltar impartially considered* (London: J. Stockdale, 1783), 18; 32.

observers that the Royal Navy, with its three consecutively successful reliefs had been the key to securing Gibraltar. British naval culture repeatedly strengthened the cultural and political ties between Britain and its Mediterranean outpost well into the extended Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods. Rather than manifestly influencing public opinion in Gibraltar's favour, the siege in fact revealed a long-standing public fondness for the Rock.

### The artistic legacy of Gibraltar's 'Great Siege'

In the years following its conclusion, cultural reactions to the Great Siege found expression in varying forms of art, verse and commemoration. The relative disappointment that attended the aftermath of the relief and the subsequent naval action ironically meant that the iconography of Gibraltar was incorporated more conspicuously into the cultural works that ensued. Rather than referencing particular vessels and specific acts of bravery, as may have occurred in a more traditional, conclusive sea battle, artists were instead drawn towards panoramic seascapes that demonstrated the ease with which the navy was able to affect the three reliefs. The image of a large fleet in the straits, and Gibraltar's Rock visible in the background, with enemy vessels in sight but seemingly unable to interfere became a popular trope of marine artists in the years that followed the American war. The Rock itself was integral to these artworks, and ensured that Gibraltar's visual image was key to its conceptualisation in Britain. As Edward Pelham Brenton later stated, Gibraltar was 'one of those places which the pencil can describe with greater accuracy than the pen'.<sup>75</sup> But such vistas corresponded closely with the previous debate regarding Gibraltar's status and usefulness. As the Great Siege progressed, and the navy began to demonstrate its integral role in safeguarding the Rock, representations of Gibraltar began to place further emphasis upon the relationship. An anonymous print (published 21 May 1780) appeared just months after Rodney's 1780 relief, showing the Rock's full topographical extent with a large fleet safely ensconced before it [see Appendix 5]. Dominic Serres's painting

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<sup>75</sup> Edward Pelham Brenton, *Life and Correspondence of John, Earl of St. Vincent, G. C. B., Admiral of the Fleet* (London: Henry Colburn, 1838), 477.

*Gibraltar relieved by Sir George Rodney, 1780* (1780-82) [see Appendix 6] further emphasised the becalming of the geo-politically important straights and the bolstering of local trade.<sup>76</sup> Richard Paton's *Relief of Gibraltar by Earl Howe, 11 October 1782* [see Appendix 7] transposed a similar approach onto Howe's 1782 relief. Gibraltar was a physically imposing fortress, but in the years that followed the Great Siege, its maritime security and prosperity was demonstrably guaranteed by the visible presence of Royal Navy vessels. Increasingly, the message to be taken from pictorial depictions of the siege was that just as a strong navy guaranteed the security of overseas possessions and commerce, so was the successful projection of naval force dependent upon locations such as Gibraltar.

The Corporation of the City of London became particularly eager to celebrate the successful conclusion of the siege. John Singleton Copley's huge *magnum opus*, the painting titled *The Defeat of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, September 1782* [see Appendix 8], was commissioned by the corporation in 1783, at a cost of £1543, and hung on the Guildhall's east wall.<sup>77</sup> It was reported shortly after the commissioning that Copley's subject would be the destruction of the 'Spanish batteries and gun-boats'.<sup>78</sup> The painting was long in gestation, and in 1786 the *Norfolk Chronicle* gave an update of the artist's progress:

Copley is literally laying siege to Gibraltar, as he has models, not only of the fortress, but of gun-boats, ship-tackle, men, and every instrument of destruction, arranged before him in all the stages of his progress.<sup>79</sup>

Copley's original plan was to organise his work solely around the destruction of the Spanish floating batteries and Howe's subsequent naval relief. Upon hearing this news, however, several of the senior officers of Gibraltar's garrison

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<sup>76</sup> In Serres's work, local Mediterranean craft called Xebecs can be seen close to Gibraltar's shore, as the large naval fleet simultaneously sails into the bay on the left.

<sup>77</sup> John Bowyer Nichols, *A Brief Account of the Guildhall of the City of London* (London: John Nichols, 1819), 42-3.

<sup>78</sup> Hereford Journal, Thursday 10 April 1783.

<sup>79</sup> Norfolk Chronicle, Saturday 7 October 1786.

persuaded Copley that they should be included in the painting.<sup>80</sup> The *Kentish Gazette* reported on 13 November 1792 that it was ‘fixed up in the large window, under which the Lord Mayor dines’.<sup>81</sup> On the north and south walls, four further paintings of the siege by Richard Paton were hung, including his depiction of Howe’s relief.<sup>82</sup> Despite the best efforts of the garrison’s Officers, the role that the Royal Navy played in the retaining of Gibraltar was displayed prominently, as other artists also commemorated the siege from a distinctly maritime perspective.<sup>83</sup> Even before Copley’s work was finished, it was reported that a second ‘compartment’ showed Howe’s relief, ‘in the middle of which is seen, the Rock of Gibraltar, and a number of transports entering the bay, under cover of the British fleet’.<sup>84</sup> This small panel included by Copley below the painting depicted the final naval relief, flanked by portraits of Admirals Howe and Barrington, and is perhaps suggestive of the artist’s original intent.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Copley’s work reached a broad audience. Prior to its installation in the Guildhall, Copley’s painting was exhibited under a canopy in Green Park and an image of it on display was also produced as an etching for mass consumption, and advertised in newspapers [see Appendix 9].<sup>86</sup> The Green Park exhibition was, according to Cicely Robinson, a ‘social spectacle’ – an interpretation entirely supported by both prints.<sup>87</sup> The painting’s widespread social appeal is also

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<sup>80</sup> John Bonehill, ‘Exhibiting war: John Singleton Copley’s *The Siege of Gibraltar* and the staging of history’, in *Conflicting Visions: War and Visual Culture in Britain and France, c.1700-1830*. Edited by John Bonehill and Geoff Quilley (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 146-7.

<sup>81</sup> *Kentish Gazette*, Tuesday 13 November 1792.

<sup>82</sup> Nichols, *Brief Account of the Guildhall*, 45.

<sup>83</sup> Copley was forced to travel to Hanover in 1787, in order to take likenesses of ‘four principle Hanoverian officers who assisted at the siege of Gibraltar’. Reading Mercury, Monday 3 September 1787; Saunders’s News-Letter, Tuesday 4 September 1787.

<sup>84</sup> Caledonian Mercury, Monday 7 January 1788.

<sup>85</sup> Bonehill, ‘Exhibiting war’, 151.

<sup>86</sup> *Sheffield Register, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, & Nottinghamshire Universal Advertiser*, Friday 23 December 1791.

<sup>87</sup> Cicely Robinson, ‘Conflicts of Conduct: British Masculinity and Military Painting in the Wake of the Siege of Gibraltar’, in *Britain’s soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715-1815*. Edited by Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 149.

supported by James Thomas Flexner's claim that wealthy homeowners were displeased by the large crowds that it drew to the fashionable area.<sup>88</sup>

An obvious interpretation of Copley's painting is that, by pointing towards the scene of destruction, Eliott was in fact directing proceedings from the shore.<sup>89</sup> However, another plausible reading is that Eliott's outstretched finger is in fact pointing to Curtis, showcasing to his officers and to the audience the idealised character and behaviour exhibited by the sailor. Indeed, upon Copley's alteration of the painting to include the garrison's officers, it was widely reported that the painting now depicted Eliott 'in the attitude of giving directions and applauding the succour afforded the vanquished foe'.<sup>90</sup> Contemporaries were aware of the significance of Eliott's gesture of recognition to Curtis, despite the reticence of modern commentators to acknowledge it.<sup>91</sup> Some modern commentators such as Phillip Shaw have drawn attention towards negative reactions to the painting, and in particular how some contemporaries complained of Copley's use of perspective.<sup>92</sup> Despite referencing a critic in the *Oracle*, who complained about the 'diminished size of the figures in the sea, compared with those of the officers of the Garrison', Shaw appears not to fully appreciate the inspiration behind the complaint.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Shaw elsewhere described the 'dramatic moment' captured by Copley in overtly military terms, as British 'troops successfully routed another invading army' - an interpretation that does not adequately consider the naval

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<sup>88</sup> James Thomas Flexner, *John Singleton Copley* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), 93.

<sup>89</sup> Steven Blakemore, *Joel Barlow's Columbiad: A Bicentennial Reading* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 249.

<sup>90</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, Monday 16 July 1787; *Kentish Gazette*, Tuesday 17 July 1787; *Saunders's News Letter*, Wednesday 18 July 1787.

<sup>91</sup> Geoff Quilley interpreted Mather Brown's positioning of Admiral Lord Howe in his painting *Lord Howe on the Deck of the Queen Charlotte* (1794-5) as showing him 'directing proceedings in a similar manner to Lord Heathfield' in Copley's earlier painting. Quilley, *Empire to Nation*, 195.

<sup>92</sup> Phillip Shaw, *Suffering and Sentiment in Romantic Military Art* (London: Routledge, 2013), 16.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Shaw, *Suffering and Sentiment*, 16.

aspects of the painting.<sup>94</sup> Elliott's outstretched finger draws the viewer's attention towards British sailors, led by Curtis, displaying superior seamanship and humanity in rescuing their doomed foes. Holger Hock has argued that Copley's representation of the siege, aside from celebrating the defence of Gibraltar, allowed British 'national humanity' to be publicly displayed, particularly in the depiction of drowning Spanish sailors being rescued by actively sympathetic British seamen.<sup>95</sup> John Bonehill argues that Copley's painting engaged directly with emerging contemporary attitudes towards sensibility and warfare; deploying Benedict Anderson's memorable phrase when describing how Copley allowed audiences to reconfigure the British 'imagined community' in virtuous, sympathetic terms.<sup>96</sup> Contemporary criticism of Copley was heavily influenced by his decision to exhibit the painting privately, rather than in the Royal Academy's annual exhibition.<sup>97</sup> However, the painting's colossal size meant that no private space could adequately house it.<sup>98</sup> Despite the ever-present figure of Curtis, it remains possible for modern historians to comment on the works that represented the events of September 1782 without making recourse to the navy, let alone its pivotal importance in shaping British cultural reactions to military successes or defeats.

The displaying of Copley's painting in Green Park in particular demonstrates the wide reach and public penetration that the work achieved. As was common practice, Copley's painting was reproduced for sale in the form of etchings and prints, along with the other prominent reproductions of the destruction of the floating batteries and Howe's relief. Copley's image was even included in a 'Ladies

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<sup>94</sup> Shaw, *Suffering and Sentiment*, 16.

<sup>95</sup> Hock, *Empires of the Imagination*, 180.

<sup>96</sup> Bonehill, 'Exhibiting war', 154-5.

<sup>97</sup> Nicholas Tracy, *Britannia's Palette: The Arts of Naval Victory* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 120.

<sup>98</sup> Copley was also likely motivated by financial concerns to exhibit the painting privately. The time taken to complete the painting (eight years as opposed to the originally envisaged two) meant that he had long exhausted his commission from the City of London. The artist later estimated that upwards of sixty thousand people saw the painting in Green Park alone. Jane Kamensky, *A Revolution in Color: The World of John Singleton Copley* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), 350-3.

Annual Journal, or Complete Pocket Book', which could be purchased for 1s.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the spectacle of the defeat of the floating batteries was also produced on furnishing fabrics; one, held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and originally intended for use as curtains, clearly shows Curtis directing his forces amidst the scene of total destruction.<sup>100</sup> The Museum's confusion at why the scene 'was thought to be a suitable ornament for bed-curtains' is perhaps explained by understanding the contemporary yearning for demonstrations and celebrations of naval success. These examples provide a glimpse into how the memory of the naval actions at Gibraltar became deeply ingrained in British society and incorporated into personal interpretations of the domestic sphere.

As Copley's work demonstrated, however, the memory of the siege, and in particular the events of September 1782 were also visibly present and available in public settings. After the Great Siege, Gibraltar's physical topography and geographical location was greatly popularised to a wider audience. In January 1783 a model of Gibraltar, which showed the deployment of the attacking allied vessels on the evening of 13 September 1782 went on display in Dublin, accompanied by an explanatory lecture.<sup>101</sup> In 1799, in the midst of a new war, a panorama of Gibraltar taken from the Barbary Coast was exhibited in a Dublin 'Museum', detailing 'the entrance into the Mediterranean, with particulars of the coasts of Barbary and Spain.'<sup>102</sup> Robert Barker successfully exhibited panoramas of famous naval victories and scenes in the 1790's, including 'View of the Grand Fleet at Spithead, 1791', which opened amidst the patriotic fervour that accompanying the outbreak of war with revolutionary France in 1793.<sup>103</sup> In 1805, his son Henry Aston

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<sup>99</sup> *Bury and Norwich Post*, Wednesday 16 November 1791; *Hampshire Chronicle*, Monday 19 December 1791.

<sup>100</sup> *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. XXIII, no. 3 (1964): 115.

<sup>101</sup> *Dublin Evening Post*, Saturday 11 January 1783; *Saunders's News-Letter*, Monday 20 January 1783.

<sup>102</sup> *Saunders's News-Letter*, Wednesday 4 December 1799.

<sup>103</sup> Ralph Hyde, *Panoromania!: The art and entertainment of the 'all-embracing' view* (London: Trefoil Publications, 1988), 20; Denise Blake Oleksijczuk, *The First Panoramas: Visions of British Imperialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2011), 69.

Barker exhibited his panorama of Gibraltar in Leicester Square; it was shown again in 1808 amidst the fervour that accompanied a new era of Anglo-Spanish friendliness.<sup>104</sup> Admission on both occasions cost one shilling.<sup>105</sup> Susanna Middleton evidently visited, for when she arrived at Gibraltar in September 1805 she commented that 'as I saw it from the ship, the Panorama was an exact representation of it'.<sup>106</sup> Most striking, however, was that created by Thomas Keyse, painter and owner of the Bermondsey Spa pleasure gardens.<sup>107</sup> Sometime after 1780, Keyse produced a monumental representation of the siege, including an apparently two hundred feet long and fifty foot high model of the Rock. Additionally, the scene was surrounded by transparent and opaque paintings, and in the evening illuminated by fireworks.<sup>108</sup> Similar representations of the siege continued well into the Napoleonic period - alongside other famous British victories, it was a regular subject of staged re-enactments at aquatic regattas.<sup>109</sup> As demonstrated above, the public outcry against the possible surrender of Gibraltar had expressed itself in terms of British naval strategic objectives being closely intertwined with future mercantile ambitions. The successful retention of the Rock undoubtedly put some of those issues to rest, but the process was not instantaneous. Rather, during the peace that followed, the actions at Gibraltar were celebrated in finer detail and via grander forms of spectacle delivered to expanding audiences.

With the siege ongoing, the public mood remained anxious over Gibraltar's security. The political debate at the time was primarily concerned with the

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<sup>104</sup> Daly, *The British Soldier in the Peninsular War*, 21.

<sup>105</sup> *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, Tuesday 1 January 1805; *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, Monday 19 September 1808.

<sup>106</sup> The Panorama was clearly well detailed, as when Middleton later ascended the Rock and passed two farms she noted to her sister that 'you see them both at the Panorama'. *Letters from Mrs S. M. Middleton*, 15; 60.

<sup>107</sup> L. H. Cust, rev. Kate Retford, 'Thomas Keyse', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 31. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004), 501.

<sup>108</sup> John Britton and T. E. Jones, *The auto-biography of John Britton, Volume 1* (London: John Britton, 1850), 120.

<sup>109</sup> Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination*, 357.



aggression/non-aggression of Howe, and Gibraltar's overall value. Indeed, a more decisive action by Howe might have prevented Curtis's actions from ever assuming the primacy that they eventually did. However, as peace was concluded and the dust of war settled, Curtis's expression of sensibility began to gain cultural traction. James Jefferys's *The scene before Gibraltar, on the Morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 1782* [see Appendix 10] appeared reasonably quickly in 1783, in time to be exhibited in the Royal Academy. The Academy proved to be a willing exhibitor of works focused upon Gibraltar – the 1783 exhibition also included Thomas Whitcombe's *Destruction of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, 14 September 1782* [see Appendix 11], as well as William Hamilton's *The destruction of the Spanish battering ships before Gibraltar in the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> of September last* [see Appendix 12], Robert Cleveley's *Relief of Gibraltar by Lord Howe*, two non-military scenes of the Rock and a portrait of Sir Roger Curtis.<sup>110</sup> It is not surprising then, that some contemporaries viewed the preponderance of Gibraltar-based material at the exhibition with exasperation.<sup>111</sup> However, despite militarily interpretations dominating the historiography of eighteenth-century Gibraltar, there can be no doubting that in the siege's immediate aftermath, maritime events were front and centre. Jefferys used artistic licence to place direct emphasis upon Roger Curtis; in the centre of what is primarily a dark and foreboding painting, the figure of Curtis calmly orchestrating the rescue is illuminated by the smoke-plume of a cannon, synchronously fired from a doomed floating battery.<sup>112</sup> As described by William L. Pressly, a 'bolt of lightning streaks through the clouds as the heavens themselves

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<sup>110</sup> *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1783* (London: T. Cadell, 1783).

<sup>111</sup> Eleanor Hughes, 'Ships of the 'line': marine paintings at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1784', in *Art and the British empire*. Edited by Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 142.

<sup>112</sup> Jefferys was clearly predisposed to alter scenes to depict his subjects in dramatically effective poses. When the artist James Northcote was composing his work *Portraits of the Officers and Men who were Preserv'd from the Wreck of the Centaur* (1784) he had wanted to paint the main protagonists in a formal style. But Jefferys interjected, exclaiming 'Oh! that commonplace thing will never do... you should throw them into an action, something like this'. Accordingly, the head of the boat was reared up like a sea-horse riding the waves'. Quoted in Quilley, *Empire to Nation*, 127.

join the cannon's flash and roar'.<sup>113</sup> Later prints of Jefferys's work were accompanied by explanatory text, including extracts from a letter written by Curtis to the Admiralty. The text stressed the bravery and ingenuity of not just Curtis but also his crew, explaining that the Captain's pinnace (in danger of sinking due to burning timbers) had been saved due to 'the great alertness of the sailors, who stopped the leak with their jackets until boats arrived to their relief'.<sup>114</sup> Curtis also assisted John Keyse Sherwin in his production of *A View of Gibraltar with the Spanish battering ships on fire* (1784) [see Appendix 13].<sup>115</sup> In Sherwin's interpretation, Curtis appears as the embodiment of calm direction, even as another floating battery explodes. In the foreground, British sailors are already assisting their stricken foes, but Curtis's determined look and outstretched hand point to the fact that more are in need of rescue. The maritime vista of destruction was overwhelmingly present in the works exhibited by the Royal Academy. In Hamilton's *The destruction of the Spanish battering ships before Gibraltar in the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> of September last*, various explosions frame the setting within thick black smoke, but they also serve to illuminate the stricken Spanish sailors within, as Roger Curtis is borne toward the scene on his pinnace with sword outstretched. Despite the obvious destruction, Gibraltar remains visible in the background, thus anchoring the scene's location. Many paintings made use of the scene's known explosiveness to illuminate and disorient their subjects, but they also pointedly utilised the image of Curtis acting with calm, yet determined sympathy within the chaotic, fiery landscape.

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<sup>113</sup> Pressly did not, however, extrapolate any further on the figure (Curtis) highlighted by the conjunction of military and heavenly fire. William L. Pressley, *The Artist as Original Genius: Shakespeare's "fine frenzy" in Late-Eighteenth-Century British Art* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 136.

<sup>114</sup> WSRO, Buckle MSS 521, 'Printed account of an action between British and Spanish ships off Gibraltar, 1782'.

<sup>115</sup> In 1784 John Wilkes wrote to his daughter that 'Sherwin has sent me a proof of his noble large print of the heroic action of Sir Roger Curtis at Gibraltar, from a painting done by Sir Roger's direction, under his eye'. John Wilkes, *Letters, from the year 1774 to the year 1796 of John Wilkes, Esq. Vol. III* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1804), 49.

By the early nineteenth century, Curtis's actions were culturally ensconced as one of the siege's enduring legacies. Writers and artists had managed to successfully project his actions into political and popular culture. Much focus has been placed on Copley's depiction of the siege, but as the output at the Royal Academy indicated, a myriad of paintings were produced – the majority of which pointedly oriented their work around the explicitly naval aspects of the siege. The memorialisation of the floating batteries and their destruction maintained Gibraltar's presence in British life in a variety of ways. The anniversary of the 13 September also became a regularly celebrated event on Gibraltar itself, and in 1787 the *Caledonian Mercury* reported that the 12<sup>th</sup> Regiment (which had been present at the siege) engaged in a day of 'rejoicing and festivity' whilst stationed in Edinburgh.<sup>116</sup> The Royal Navy was also never far away from productions that celebrated General Elliott's role in the siege more specifically. Robert Pollard's print of Nathaniel Hone's portrait (printed 29 October 1782) also included a scene of the siege – inevitably, the vista chosen was of the exploding batteries from just six weeks previously [see Appendix 14]. Mary Maria Trotter's 1799 print *The Royal Visitant approaching the Tomb of his departed Friend* depicts an unknown member of the royal family<sup>117</sup> visiting General Elliott's tomb [see Appendix 15]. Gibraltar's shoreline, obvious from the battlements and mountainous land, is shown in the background. Appearing in the background, between the tomb and its Royal visitor, however, is a solitary naval vessel that seemingly stands guard over the legacy of Elliott's defiance.

### Sir Roger Curtis and the destruction of the floating batteries during the Great Siege

The destruction of the Spanish floating batteries on the evening of 13 September 1782 elicited striking reactions from British artists and writers. Emboldened by the arrival of French forces from Minorca, the Allied forces had resolved to try one last

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<sup>116</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, Saturday 15 September 1787.

<sup>117</sup> It is likely that the 'Royal visitor' is Frederick, Duke of York, who had become Commander-in-Chief of the army in 1798.

‘Grand Assault’ upon Gibraltar, and erected huge floating artillery platforms intended to pound Gibraltar into submission. Sir Roger Curtis became the naval officer most associated with the resulting action. He received a knighthood upon returning to Britain after Howe’s successful relief, along with a pension of £500 awarded for ‘services at Gibraltar’.<sup>118</sup> Present at the Rock since 1781, he became famous for his endeavours to rescue Spanish sailors from the apocalyptic scenes of destruction just off Gibraltar’s shore in September 1782. As discussed above, the image of Curtis as the benevolent saviour of doomed Spanish sailors was readily reproduced in varying forms of naval art and written publications throughout this period. This process began with his brief return to Britain in late 1782, initially with a standard portrait ‘drawn from the life’ by William Miller that appeared in *The European Magazine’s* 1783 edition [see Appendix 16]. William Hamilton produced a rather grander portrait, complete with floating batteries exploding off Gibraltar in the background, and a subsequent print of this portrait by James Caldwell was popularly received [see Appendix 17]. Curtis incorporated the image of the rock into his personal coat of arms when he was made a Baronet after the Glorious First of June in 1794, and became indelibly associated with the memory of the Royal Navy’s actions during the siege.<sup>119</sup> In the immediate aftermath, *The London Magazine* extolled his ‘zeal, gallantry, and indefatigable labours’ in defending Gibraltar, but made no mention of his efforts to rescue the stricken Spanish sailors on the night of 13 September. Instead, it celebrated a small action of 1779, when he inspired a heavily outnumbered group of vessels to overcome and succeed against Spanish numerical superiority within sight of the Rock.<sup>120</sup> Curtis’s name was mentioned in the motion of thanks decreed by Parliament in 1783, but the overall debate was dominated by Howe’s conduct. However, the tale of Curtis gradually began to take root in the British cultural landscape. *The New Annual Register* for 1782 said that Curtis ‘exhibited at the same time the most dauntless intrepidity,

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<sup>118</sup> *Parliamentary Papers: Estimates and Accounts. Session 4 November – 30 July, 1813-1814. Vol IX*, 32.

<sup>119</sup> Roger Knight, ‘Sir Roger Curtis’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Volume 14*. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 778.

<sup>120</sup> *The London Magazine*, Volume 52, 4.

and the most generous humanity'.<sup>121</sup> This dual aspect of Curtis's actions would be integral to how they were framed in subsequent years.

Moving on to the period after the American war and into the Napoleonic period, the memory of Curtis's actions was re-invoked to suit newly emerging contexts. The *Annual Register* published a second edition of its 1782 volume in 1791, which contained a lengthy account of the events surrounding Gibraltar. It described the events of 13-14 September 1782 in particularly effusive terms.<sup>122</sup> In the scene described as one of 'active hostility', no doubt was left as to who the true active participants were: 'The honour and danger, however, in this instance, lay entirely with the marine brigade, and with their intrepid commander'. As the garrison could only look on helplessly ('General Elliot and the garrison suffered the most poignant anguish and distress'), Curtis's aggressive humanity was illustrated by his 'dragging with his own hands the terrified victims from the midst of the flames'.<sup>123</sup> One account, printed in *The New London Magazine* of 1786, went out of its way to emphasise the apparent differences in national character that Curtis's actions had revealed. Hearing that many enemy sailors remained on board the floundering batteries, Curtis

generously determined to rescue them from the inevitable death which seemed to impend. Some of these infatuated wretches, however, (it is said) refused at first the deliverance which was tendered to them, preferring the chance of that death which appeared inevitable, to being put to the sword; which, they had been persuaded, would be the consequence, if they submitted to the garrison. Being left however some moments to the horrors

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<sup>121</sup> *The New Annual Register, Or, General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature, for the year 1782* (London: G. Robinson, 1783), 136.

<sup>122</sup> In the midst of a description of the absolute scene of carnage, one sentence simply stated: 'It was indeed a noble exertion!' *The Annual Register, or a view of the History, politics, and Literature, For the Year 1782* (London: J. Dodsley, 1791), 238.

<sup>123</sup> *The Annual Register 1782*, 238.

of their fate, they beckoned the boats to return, and resigned themselves to the clemency of their conquerors.<sup>124</sup>

The events of 13–14 September 1782 could clearly, then, be moulded to suit particular viewpoints and agendas. In some instances, Curtis's humanity occurred as an instinctive reaction to the evolving horror, whereas in others his grace stood in direct opposition to the stereotypically un-martial behavioural impulses of Britain's foes. In 1801, Curtis's role in the events of September 1782 was portrayed in two contrasting yet complementary parts in the *Naval Chronicle*. Firstly, as the Spanish floating batteries were floundering in the face of red-hot shot fired from the garrison,

The fire from the gun-boats [that Curtis had placed between Gibraltar and the enemy platforms] was exceedingly well directed, and kept up with great vigour; it effectually prevented the enemy from approaching to the assistance of their ships.

Elliott was quoted as remarking that Curtis's 'well-timed, judicious, and spirited attack ... rendered this success a complete victory'. The description then took an arresting turn, as the stricken Spanish sailors, having been abandoned by their superiors, 'became objects only of pity, and as much courage was exerted to save them as had before been displayed in repelling their attack'. Curtis was instrumental in the resulting exercise, as

Animated by the example of Captain Curtis, the British seamen discovered as much ardour in employing every effort to relieve their enemies, as they had done in conquering them.

The *Chronicle* concluded the tale with this statement: 'Thus ended a contest in which it is difficult to decide whether the intrepidity or humanity of the English deserved most commendation.'<sup>125</sup> When referring to the subsequent relief, the

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<sup>124</sup> *The New London Magazine for January, 1786* (London: Alexander Hogg, 1786), 459-60.

<sup>125</sup> *The Naval Chronicle Volume 6: From July to December 1801* (London: Bumney & Gold, 1801), 270-1.

*Chronicle* could not resist reinforcing the reputation of its subject by making reference to Howe's apparent dithering, asserting that the fleet would have entered Gibraltar more quickly 'had due attention been paid to the instructions communicated by Captain Curtis'. Herein lay the value that Curtis held for naval forms of nostalgia and remembrance. By retelling his role in the Great Siege, whether in paintings or in popular culture, the simultaneous embodiment of calculated aggression, sentimental compassion and nautical skill could be held up as an idealised behavioural norm for British naval heroes. A lengthy biographical memoir that appeared in the *Hampshire Telegraph* in 1802 stressed Curtis's 'bravery and humanity'.<sup>126</sup> This tone was echoed by the 1803 publication *Lives of Illustrious Seamen*, which in its biographical outline of Curtis described his pivot from ruthlessly brilliant seamanship ('the fire kept up by the gun-boats was exceedingly well directed and vigorous') to an impassioned desire to rescue the Spanish sailors – who were 'dragged from amidst the flames by the personal intrepidity of brigadier Curtis'.<sup>127</sup> The emphasis upon Curtis's direct personal involvement in the scene echoed that of the 1791 re-printing of the 1782 *Annual Register*. In the rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape of the period between 1801-1803, the cultural landscape was thus ripe for deploying Curtis's actions as a parable for an idealised form of naval conduct. *The Naval Chronicle's* memoir of Curtis may have been inspired by the recent battle of Copenhagen (2 April 1801), when after the British victory a threatened bombardment of the city was only narrowly avoided by the Danish acquiescing in Nelson's demands.<sup>128</sup> A copy of Nelson's correspondence with the Danes was even printed in the preceding volume. Nelson wrote that if they continued firing, he 'must be obliged to set on fire all the floating batteries he has taken, without having the power of saving the brave Danes who have defended them'.<sup>129</sup> The presence of 'floating batteries'

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<sup>126</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph*, Monday 15 March 1802.

<sup>127</sup> *Lives of Illustrious Seamen, to whose intrepidity and good conduct the English are indebted for the victories of their Fleets* (London: J. Cundee, 1803), 100.

<sup>128</sup> Ole Feldbaek, *The Battle of Copenhagen 1801: Nelson and the Danes* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2002), 210.

<sup>129</sup> *The Naval Chronicle Volume 5, January-July 1801* (London: Bumney & Gold, 1801) 337.

ensured that parallels with Curtis at Gibraltar were clear. As has been shown, the events that occurred off Gibraltar were sufficiently well known to a large proportion of the population. Eighteen years after the Great Siege, Curtis's actions could still be utilised as an effective parable for idealized naval behaviour.

The preponderance of naval cultural forms and their regular revisiting of Curtis's actions helped to ensure that Gibraltar itself remained prominent in British society. In a time of celebrity admirals feted as 'heroes', Curtis provided a direct link between British consumers of culture and the Rock – a link that continued to reinforce Gibraltar's importance for many years afterwards. Indeed, the *Naval Chronicle's* biographical memoir was accompanied by a portrait of Curtis, under which his coat of arms bearing the Rock of Gibraltar was displayed [see Appendix 18]. Crucially, these images of Curtis would not have been abstract or inconsequential for contemporary audiences. There was a significant amount of accompanying written material that supplemented the pictorial record and nurtured a burgeoning legend that surrounded his actions during the Great Siege. John Drinkwater's account of the siege told how in October 1782 Curtis visited the Count d'Artois, brother of the French King Louis XVII at the Allied camp, 'who thanked him, in very handsome terms, for his humanity and gallantry in relieving the unfortunate prisoners from the burning Battering-ships'.<sup>130</sup> John Heriot's later account drew heavily upon Drinkwater's, but it also mentioned Curtis's presence as a 'volunteer' in the sortie undertaken by the garrison against the Spanish siege lines in 1781 – an action later immortalised in John Trumbull's 1789 painting *The Sortie Made by the Garrison of Gibraltar* [see Appendix 19].<sup>131</sup> Indeed, Curtis's presence amongst the military officers that Trumbull arranged in his painting is clear from his blue naval officer's uniform - despite the reticence of modern commentators to recognise it. Even Trumbull's painting then, as the pre-eminent cultural reproduction of the siege's most celebrated purely 'military' event, contained a

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<sup>130</sup> John Drinkwater Bethune, *A history of the late siege of Gibraltar* (London: T. Spilsbury, 1786), 306.

<sup>131</sup> John Heriot, *An Historical Sketch of Gibraltar, with an account of the siege which that fortress stood against the combined forces of France and Spain* (London: B. Millan, 1792), 72.



signifier of the important and well-appreciated naval presence at Gibraltar. *The London Magazine* reported in 1783 that 'One hundred seamen' took part in the attack, and that 'Captain Curtis could not be prevailed on to refrain from accompanying them'.<sup>132</sup> An accompanying biographical memoir published in the magazine did not make specific mention of his actions during the attack of the floating batteries, beyond remarking that 'His whole conduct during the siege of Gibraltar has been very highly and justly extolled'.<sup>133</sup> The memoir also demonstrated another role that the navy played during the siege, as under Curtis's command 'the sailors performed the duty of soldiers with a regularity and obedience equal to the troops of the garrison'.

Curtis's reputation was evidently well known in explicitly naval circles. The wife of Admiral Markham remarked to her husband in 1798 that 'he [Curtis] must be a fine fellow from the humanity he showed to the enemy, I should like you to be under the command of such a man'.<sup>134</sup> Writing to Barham in July 1805, Nelson commented that 'my friend Sir Roger Curtis' was the perfect person to devise a strategy for combating the threat of gun-boats to the Rock.<sup>135</sup> When writing in his memoirs of a visit to Gibraltar in 1812, William Henry Dillon recalled his professional link to Curtis, and duly described his life-saving actions of 1782 alongside his positive personal experience of the man.<sup>136</sup> However, the notoriety that Curtis's actions achieved reached a wider audience through several popular works of history and biography. The *Naval Chronicle's* 1801 biographical memoir

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<sup>132</sup> *The London Magazine, Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer, Volume 52* (London: R. Baldwin, 1783), 4.

<sup>133</sup> *The London Magazine*, 4.

<sup>134</sup> NMM, MRK/107/3/26, 'August 1<sup>st</sup> Wed [1798], M. Markham to Captain Markham, HMS Centaur, off Cadiz'.

<sup>135</sup> *The Dispatches and Letters of Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson Vol. VI*. Edited by Nicholas Harris Nicolas (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), 476.

<sup>136</sup> As the following passage demonstrates, Dillon's brief description of Curtis's actions was typical of the other accounts described here: 'In spite of every obstacle among the flaming wrecks, he dashed in with his gunboats, to the wonder and amazement of the enemy, and rescued them from inevitable destruction'. William Henry Dillon, *A Narrative of my Professional Adventures: Volume II, 1802-1839*. Edited by Michael A. Lewis (London: Navy Records Society, 1956), 199.

was reproduced, albeit in edited form, in Alexander Stephens's 1803 publication *Public Characters*. In both publications Curtis's biography was preceded by a quote from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: 'Set honour in one eye, and death in the other, And I will look on both indifferently'.<sup>137</sup> The inferred meaning of the quote, alongside the more obvious celebrating of Curtis's virtuous behaviour, clearly set a standard of expected martial behaviour. In deeming events off the Rock as being worthy of comparison to Shakespeare it also further elevated the event into esteemed cultural territory. George Lyttleton deemed Curtis's exploits worthy of inclusion in his 1803 publication *The History of England*, accompanied by a print of Conrad Martin Metz's sketch titled *Sir Roger Curtis gallantly exerting himself in preserving the Spaniards at Gibraltar* [see Appendix 20]. The same image also appeared (though it was reversed) in later editions of G. F. Raymond's *History of England* (first printed 1787). The image shared many tropes with earlier works: the calm, yet determined Curtis borne upon a pinnacle, directing his crew to rescue Spanish sailors as more batteries are explosively consumed in the background. It must be said that Curtis's career was not wholly free of controversy. After the Glorious First of June in 1794, rumours abounded that his advice had led to Howe calling off a pursuit of the French, thus preventing a more complete British victory.<sup>138</sup> But such accusations never truly impacted upon his lasting public image - established off Gibraltar – as a man of uncommon humanity. Reports of his death in 1816 universally emphasised the rare combination of martial ability and human sympathy found within this naval hero.<sup>139</sup> *The Public Ledger* noted his 'gallant and humane conduct' at Gibraltar, whilst the *Staffordshire Advertiser* declared that he

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<sup>137</sup> Alexander Stephens, *Public Characters of 1802-1803* (London: Richard Phillips, 1803), 202.

<sup>138</sup> Sam Willis, *The Glorious First of June: Fleet Battle in the Reign of Terror* (London: Quercus, 2011), 273.

<sup>139</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* noted his 'gallant and judicious conduct at the siege of Gibraltar' and concluded its obituary by stating that 'He was at once a very able and a very good man, beloved for the kindness of his heart and the benignity of his manners, and his death is alike a public and a private loss.' *The Gentleman's Magazine, Volume 120* (London: Nichols, Son, and Bentley, 1816), 478.

had 'so nobly signalised himself by his humanity in saving the drowning Spaniards'.<sup>140</sup>

Sam Willis has questioned the legacy of Copley's *Destruction of the Floating Batteries*, arguing that the commercial failure of its engraving (finally published in 1810) signified a decline in interest towards Gibraltar's Great Siege. Willis asked: 'Who would be interested in a distant siege when the papers were now full of contemporary campaigns?'<sup>141</sup> As this chapter has demonstrated, interest in the siege remained high throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. Indeed, it may be truer to say that the market concerning Gibraltar-related cultural material was saturated, and that much of the attention that configured itself largely around Curtis and the navy was satiated through a wide variety of forms. Curtis's actions fulfilled the now well-understood need to publicly celebrate heroic naval officers. But his memory clearly delivered upon more than just simple heroic expression. Gareth Atkins has shown that many Britons (in particular, evangelicals and abolitionists) struggled to express patriotism through the traditional prism of martial success, with all its grisly connotations. According to Atkins, such people desired 'men who embodied their ideals of religiosity and regard for providence while also winning battles.'<sup>142</sup> What contemporary personality better exemplified these criteria than Roger Curtis? The language that accompanied reports of Curtis throughout his life echoed the artistic portrayals that emerged after 1782, but none were more emblematic of how his tale chimed with the ideals described by Atkins above than the report of his death printed in the *Leeds Intelligencer* in 1816:

On Thursday, at his seat, called Gatscombe, near Portsmouth, Sir Roger Curtis, so conspicuous for his professional skill, humanity, and heroism,

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<sup>140</sup> *The Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, Saturday 16 November 1816; *Staffordshire Advertiser*, Saturday 23 November 1816.

<sup>141</sup> Remarkably, given that this commentary is delivered in a text concerning the Glorious First of June, Willis fails to appreciate how Curtis's appearance in Copley's work connects the two events - Sir Roger was Lord Howe's flag Captain at the battle in 1794. Willis, *Glorious First of June*, 82-3.

<sup>142</sup> Gareth Atkins, 'Christian Heroes, Providence, and Patriotism in wartime Britain, 1793-1815', *The Historical Journal* vol. 58, no. 2 (2015): 400.

during the memorable attack on Gibraltar by the combined powers of France and Spain.<sup>143</sup>

The repeated re-telling of Curtis's actions not only re-affirmed these ideals, but they also ensured that Gibraltar itself was forever associated with his fame, and consequently deemed a location worthy of such patriotic expression. However, Gibraltar's presence in British culture was not limited to the periodical reminders of the events of 13-14 September 1782. Naval events occurring off the Rock during the later Revolutionary and Napoleonic period that followed gave British newspapers ample opportunity to also include it in their pages.

### Gibraltar, the 'wooden walls' and the reception of fleet battles in Britain.

In the years that immediately followed the American Revolutionary War, reports of Gibraltar in the British press understandably retreated into more banal matters. The becalmed status of the western Mediterranean meant that Britons could, temporarily at least, rest relatively easy over the security of the Rock. Reports that reflected national anxiety over Gibraltar's security and the navy's capability gave way to reports of the political events in North Africa and the western Mediterranean.<sup>144</sup> The late 1780s were characterised by recurring alarms for the safety of Gibraltar, and a constant trickle of reporting from the Rock that related episodes of naval skirmishes in nearby waters. The atmosphere turned when the Nootka Sound crisis threatened war between Britain and Spain in 1790.<sup>145</sup> Gibraltar

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<sup>143</sup> Leeds Intelligencer, Monday 18 November 1816.

<sup>144</sup> *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, Monday 28 November 1785; *Derby Mercury*, Thursday 7 June 1787; *Derby Mercury*, Thursday 3 April 1788; *Leeds Intelligencer*, Tuesday 20 May 1788.

<sup>145</sup> The Nootka Sound crisis of 1790 occurred when Spanish vessels seized British merchant ships in an un-colonized area of the Pacific Northwest claimed by Spain. The British reacted forcefully to what was seen as an attack upon their right to free trade, leading to heightened tensions between the two nations – which only subsided when it became clear that France, Spain's key ally, was not willing to go to war with Britain. Alan Frost, 'Nootka Sound and the Beginnings of Britain's Imperialism of Free Trade', in *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*. Edited by Robin Fisher and Hugh Johnston (Vancouver: UBC

was naturally a location where potential conflicts between Britain and Spain were brought to bear in a smaller, more pressurised context. The *Caledonian Mercury* reported in July of that year that at Gibraltar, 'a Spanish attack was readily expected', and that women and children of the garrison were being transported back to Britain.<sup>146</sup> A week later, the situation had apparently escalated, as the paper reported that 'there is every reason to believe, that the siege is already begun; and from the redoubled exertions made us of getting a powerful fleet ready, Government seem to entertain the same idea'.<sup>147</sup> From a British vantage point, the safety of Gibraltar was almost always tied to the readiness of the Royal Navy to sail to its defence.

When news of Saumarez's 1801 victory in the Straits reached Britain it delighted the government. The Foreign Secretary Lord Liverpool wrote to the Lord Chief Justice Lord Kenyon not only informing him of the victory, but taking care to note the numerical disadvantage Saumarez faced and the fiery fate of the two Spanish 112-gun vessels.<sup>148</sup> Referring to Saumarez's disdain at being passed over for a naval promotion, A. B. Sainsbury's comment that he had 'contrived to take offence where none was intended' is a valid one.<sup>149</sup> Given the size of the engagement, the rewards were substantial. Saumarez was immediately made a Knight of the Bath, awarded an annuity of £1,200 and in 1803 received a ceremonial sword along with the freedom of the City of London.<sup>150</sup> London's Guildhall voted unanimously to award

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Press, 1993), 104-126; Daniel Clayton, 'Georgian geographies 'from and for the margins': 'King George men' on the northwest coast of North America', in *Georgian Geographies: Essays on space, place and landscape in the eighteenth century*. Edited by Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 24-51.

<sup>146</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, Thursday 8 July 1790.

<sup>147</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, Thursday 15 July 1790.

<sup>148</sup> The date given for this letter, 13 July 1801, is surely incorrect as the battle had occurred only the day before. LA, DDKE 1/1/159/40, 'Notification from Lord Liverpool to Lord Kenyon of an Account of an engagement in the Straight of Gibraltar'.

<sup>149</sup> A. B. Sainsbury, 'James Saumarez', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Volume 49*. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 24.

<sup>150</sup> *The Guernsey and Jersey Magazine, Volume 1* (London: S. Barbet, 1836), 314.

the sword in recognition of 'the eminent services' Saumarez had provided to his country.<sup>151</sup> The ceremony that conferred the knighthood upon him was conducted in Gibraltar, 'in the presence of all the officers of the Garrison', but a corresponding ceremony occurred in London, with Saumarez represented by his brother Thomas.<sup>152</sup> In Parliament the Prime Minister Henry Addington proposed a motion of thanks, stating that Saumarez's first attack was thwarted only by 'the failure of the wind'. Addington added that Saumarez had 'waited for an opportunity to make amends for his failure: that opportunity offered, and he availed himself of it'.<sup>153</sup> St Vincent gave high praise in the House of Lords, and particularly stressed Saumarez's 'dauntless courage and energy' and 'boldness and vigour'. He was followed by Nelson, whose laudatory speech also mentioned the geographical landscape in which the battle was fought, arguing that 'but for that change in the wind', he had no doubt that every Spanish ship would have been led 'captive to Gibraltar'.<sup>154</sup> The Duke of Clarence (the future William IV) also later 'bestowed a very high eulogium' on Saumarez in the upper chamber.<sup>155</sup>

Notwithstanding the typically effusive praise afforded to a victorious admiral, the style of parliamentary debate was markedly different in 1801 compared to 1782. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Gibraltar's value was not criticised in anything like the same manner that it had been during and after the Great Siege. There were also no oppositional voices in the debates regarding Saumarez's conduct, even though his eventual success was preceded by a reverse. The political class, then, appear to have felt more confidence in Gibraltar's safety and were more aware of its strategic value. There was a smattering of gossip surrounding a possible cession of Gibraltar in the peace talks that culminated in the Treaty of Amiens, in particular originating from Lady Spencer, wife of the former First Lord of the Admiralty. But John D. Grainger is correct to dismiss it as being politically motivated and having

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<sup>151</sup> John Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence*, 52.

<sup>152</sup> *The Guernsey and Jersey Magazine*, 314.

<sup>153</sup> *Parliamentary Register 1796-1802 Volume 16: 30<sup>th</sup> October 1801*, 34.

<sup>154</sup> *Parliamentary Register 1796-1802: Volume 16: 30<sup>th</sup> October 1801*, 28-9.

<sup>155</sup> *Parliamentary Register 1796-1802 Volume 16: 3 November 1801*, 52.

little credit.<sup>156</sup> The political climate of 1801, with the Royal Navy recently demonstrating its effectiveness in several striking victories, was markedly different to the melancholic outlook expressed by many in 1782. The political context was also different – facing a prolonged period of opposition, Whig politicians tempered their political language and conducted political debates in an altogether different tone than that of the 1780's.<sup>157</sup> The press reporting in the immediate aftermath of Saumarez's victory was noticeably light on patriotic fervour but full of intricate details of the naval manoeuvring, although the *London Courier and Evening Gazette* on 23 July 1801 (which knew of the first battle but not yet of the second) did postulate that the French would not venture to leave Algeciras so long as Saumarez was at Gibraltar.<sup>158</sup> Saumarez's reputation was well known, as he had been present at numerous engagements, including the Saintes, the Dogger Bank, Cape St Vincent and the Nile. British readers of domestic newspapers were well aware of the continuous naval threat posed to Gibraltar, and in this context a demonstration of British strength alleviated some of the tension. In January 1802, the *Sun* newspaper conferred the highest praise upon Saumarez, stating that 'This Action may certainly vie in activity, enterprize, and gallantry, with any upon record in the proud Annals of British Glory.'<sup>159</sup>

A series of four prints by Edward Harding that appeared in 1802 also helped to contextualise the visual landscape in which the extended action took place. The first showed the initial 'Battle of Algeciras', on 7 July [see Appendix 21]. Intriguingly, for what was a fierce encounter, the scene is strangely calm; only puffs of smoke and faint holes noticeable in the vessels' rigging indicate to the viewer that a battle is taking place. The second print, depicting Saumarez's squadron being repaired after the unsuccessful first action, placed the viewer on Gibraltar's dockside [see Appendix 22]. In the foreground, the docks are a bustling hive of activity, with British workers loading supplies into small craft. Members of Gibraltar's military

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<sup>156</sup> Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, 32.

<sup>157</sup> William Anthony Hay, *The Whig Revival, 1808-1830* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 36.

<sup>158</sup> *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, Thursday 23 July 1801.

<sup>159</sup> *Sun*, 1 January 1802.

garrison are shown, however, they are presented merely as passive observers. One observes the fleet in finer detail through a spyglass, whilst a lady accompanies another on the harbour side – suggesting that a perambulation through the busy docks to view a fleet in high preparedness for battle was a common and desirable social activity for the garrison’s soldiers. Also present amongst the naval hardware and British redcoats on the dockside are two figures that give a glimpse into Gibraltar’s diverse social makeup. The two men, clearly intended to be of North African origin, are likely resident merchants – one of them is in fact crouched beside a large container of fruit. The third print took more of a traditional approach to naval warfare by depicting the British fleet emerging out of Gibraltar (the Rock appearing on the horizon) in pursuit of the Allied vessels placed in the foreground, and which closely guard the captured *Hannibal* [see Appendix 23]. But the final print left little doubt about the eventual outcome [see Appendix 24]. As a British ship sails away from the scene, a violent conflagration engulfs two large Spanish vessels. No scene could better capture the contrast between the initial defeat and the eventual triumph. Indeed, it was at that specific point in the battle that Saumarez had exclaimed to Captain Jahleel Brenton ‘My God, sir, look there! The day is ours!’ – a reaction that the artist clearly sought to replicate in his audience.<sup>160</sup> Harding’s four prints told a sequential narrative of naval defeat, onshore recuperation, determined pursuit and finally, explosive victory. Gibraltar itself served as the hinge upon which Saumarez’s success and reputation turned. Crucially this was not simply as some far-flung geographical curiosity on the horizon, but as a location with real strategic benefit - evidenced by the provisions and supplies delivered to the fleet in Harding’s second print. St Vincent had written to Saumarez shortly after the battle, remarking that ‘the astonishing efforts made to refit the crippled ships in Gibraltar Mole surpasses everything of the kind within my experience’.<sup>161</sup> The Marquis Cornwallis responded to Saumarez’s victory by reflecting that ‘In our wooden walls alone must we place our trust; we should make

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<sup>160</sup> Quoted in Jason R. Musteen, *Nelson’s Refuge: Gibraltar in the Age of Napoleon* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 47.

<sup>161</sup> John Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence*, 6.



a sad business of it on shore'.<sup>162</sup> In the absence of any meaningful siege or military activity on Gibraltar's landward frontier, the high volume of naval activity in the straights, coupled with Gibraltar's unique geographical status as a maritime vantage point meant that the navy was overwhelmingly present in descriptive and illustrative representations of the Rock. Cornwallis's viewpoint reflected the general standing of the navy in British society, which had been bolstered by other victories on a larger scale, but nonetheless it is unsurprising that events off Gibraltar should occasion a patriotic connecting of Britain's overall prospects with the performance of its traditional safeguard. It also echoed the comments of various domestic commentators when hearing of the destruction of the floating batteries and Howe's successful relief in 1782. As demonstrated above, Saumarez's near week-long action also captivated Gibraltar's civilian and military population. Once again Gibraltar's security, along with that of the wider British Empire, was inextricably linked to the capacity and performance of the Royal Navy.

The two battles that occurred in July 1801 have not traditionally found a place within general histories of Gibraltar, despite their very real impact upon the Rock's security and the morale of its population. Instead, larger scale battles such as Cape St Vincent, Trafalgar and even the Nile have attached themselves to the story of Gibraltar's status as a British possession. Trafalgar has, somewhat unsurprisingly, continued to dominate modern assessments of what might be termed the Rock's 'active service' during this period. It was undoubtedly a significant event for Gibraltar, as many damaged British vessels found safe anchorage within its bay. Most famously, these included the *Victory*, which bore the body of Nelson. The famous connection that the Rock shared with the aftermath of the battle has contributed greatly to the narrative of its experience during the Napoleonic Wars. And during the long series of fleet manoeuvres that led up to the battle it proved invaluable in ways that belie the traditional narrative of its role in the battle's aftermath. Pertinently, Britons were especially aware of its centrality through the

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<sup>162</sup> *Correspondence of Charles, first Marquis Cornwallis, Volume III* (London: John Murray, 1859), 380.

reporting of local newspapers. Servicemen in Gibraltar were uniquely placed to comment upon the activities of the French and Spanish fleets, which caused great anxiety to both naval commanders and an expectant British audience. Information from Gibraltar told how, in February 1805, the ships of the Toulon fleet ‘were most effectually dispersed in a violent gale of wind’ after having evaded Nelson’s attention.<sup>163</sup> In March, the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* reported that ‘the enemy’s Gun-boats, of which there are now upwards of twenty in the Bay, intercept every vessel that attempts to come into the Streights without convoy’.<sup>164</sup> Many reports in local newspapers also relayed the effect of naval action upon the Rock itself. The *Hampshire Chronicle* printed a letter from Gibraltar dated 15 May 1805, in which it stated ‘all is bustle and confusion here’, partly because of the arrival of a large number of troops, but also because of ‘the landing of a great many sick from Lord Nelson’s fleet’ – the Admiral having left for the West Indies in search of the French fleet.<sup>165</sup> A seaman in *Victory*, Thomas Mackenzie had written to his mother on 7 May of the crew hoping for a peace, but ‘the people of the Rock Informs us it is A War’.<sup>166</sup> The status of Gibraltar as a nexus of naval activity was also made clear; when Nelson arrived back there on 19 July, the *London Courier and Evening Gazette* reported that he was ‘just in time to give the Combined Fleets another drubbing’, implying that a battle was likely to occur near the Rock.<sup>167</sup> A report in the *London Evening Mail* typified the way in which Gibraltar facilitated the gathering and dissemination of naval information. Firstly, it gave readers specific details of Nelson’s activities after arriving at, and shortly after departing the Rock, having received a ‘partial supply’ of water and provisions. Secondly, it told how from Gibraltar, Admiral Collingwood was able to direct Sir Richard Bickerton to break off his blockade of Carthage to join their two squadrons off Cadiz. Finally, it reported an expected attack on Gibraltar by ‘100 bomb and gun-vessels, the latter fitted with furnaces for throwing red-hot shot’ – along with an attack from the landward side

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<sup>163</sup> *Chester Courant*, Tuesday 2 April 1805.

<sup>164</sup> *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, Wednesday 8 May 1805.

<sup>165</sup> *Hampshire Chronicle*, Monday 10 June 1805.

<sup>166</sup> Watt and Hawkins, *Letters of Seamen*, 215.

<sup>167</sup> *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, Friday 9 August 1805.

by a combined Spanish and French force of thirty thousand men.<sup>168</sup> That attack never materialised, but the reporting of its expectation demonstrates that the dreaded amphibious attacks on Gibraltar continued to inspire fear throughout 1805 regardless of the on-going naval campaign in its surrounding waters.

The year 1805 was in many ways not especially different to the others that Gibraltar experienced during the war. Trafalgar has understandably become a totemic event in Gibraltarian society, especially in evaluations of its relationship with the Royal Navy. The famous battle should not, however, overshadow the more routine but highly regular aspect of the navy's continued presence. Pertinently for this investigation, British observers in 1805 were aware of naval activity at the Rock that was not directly involved with the Trafalgar campaign. In June, whilst the British and Combined fleets were manoeuvring in the Atlantic, the *Manchester Mercury* reported that 'The gun-boats about Gibraltar are become a great annoyance'.<sup>169</sup> This was arguably more typical of the naval experience at Gibraltar than the impact of Trafalgar. The aftermath of the battle was undoubtedly significant – not least for its dockyard facilities that were inundated with vessels in need of repair. Originating from Gibraltar, such observations were lent further credibility by the Rock's proximity to events. British contemporaries were also acutely aware of the secure anchorage that Gibraltar had provided to the fleet post-battle. The *Royal Cornwall Gazette* reported in December 1805 on the steady trickle of the 'Trafalgarian' fleet back to Britain from Gibraltar.<sup>170</sup> Paul Harris Nicolas, serving aboard *Belleisle* as a marine later utilised his intimate experience in his watercolour painting *Belleisle in tow of the Naiad on 23 October 1805* (and reproduced in print form by George Andrews) depicts Gibraltar as a highly visible and much-needed sanctuary for the post-battle fleet [see Appendix 25]. The Rock also continued to provide a vantage point for British observers keen to reinforce national stereotypes that the battle had apparently so glaringly revealed. But as demonstrated above, the actions of the Royal Navy caused 'bustle and confusion' at

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<sup>168</sup> *Evening Mail*, Monday 12 August 1805.

<sup>169</sup> *Manchester Mercury*, Tuesday 11 June 1805.

<sup>170</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, Saturday 7 December 1805.

the Rock continually throughout the year. Modern characterisations of Gibraltar as ‘Nelson’s refuge’ and more generally as a fortress focused predominantly on protecting a land border have rendered it as something of a secure, yet distant citadel – particularly in the aftermath of Trafalgar in which it played host to the victorious but severely damaged British fleet. However, Gibraltar had functioned as a nucleus of naval activity throughout the year 1805, regardless of the large action that brought the crippled *Victory* into its harbour. Ironically, its connection to Trafalgar and Nelson has overshadowed the regular and substantial interactions that the Royal Navy shared with the Rock during this time.

### Gibraltar and the Royal Navy in British newspapers

Taking a wider imperial context, Gibraltar enjoyed relative geographical proximity to Britain in comparison to other more distant, but ostensibly more valuable colonial possessions. The sea route between Gibraltar and Britain was not always a secure one for maritime traffic. The tempestuous Bay of Biscay presented a significant natural barrier, and the long coastlines of France and Spain (usually hostile to Britain in this period) meant that privateers were a constant threat. Meteorological conditions in the Straits were also frequently reported as unfavourable. The loss of the *Courageux* in December 1796, caused by a violent storm shearing her from her mooring in Gibraltar bay, was widely reported.<sup>171</sup> In 1802, the *Gloucester Journal* reported on a ‘violent thunder storm’ that caused four ships of the line to be struck by lightning – fortunately none exploded, but two were forced into Gibraltar for repairs.<sup>172</sup> In 1808 *The Naval Chronicle* stated that ‘the late gales had done much mischief to the shipping in the bays of Gibraltar and

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<sup>171</sup> The vessel’s senior officers were on shore at Gibraltar when the vessel was lost, however estimates put the death toll at more than four hundred men. The *Chester Chronicle* seemed keen to point out that the *Courageux* ‘was a very old French ship, which was taken in an engagement in the year 1761’ and that her loss was ‘attributed to an unskillful young man being entrusted with the watch upon deck.’ *Chester Chronicle*, Friday 6 January 1797.

<sup>172</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, Monday 18 October 1802.

Algeziras'.<sup>173</sup> Notwithstanding the often-hazardous conditions of the Rock's immediate vicinity, news of naval activity occurring in the Straits could be conveyed to Britain in relatively quick time. Accordingly, news concerning the Rock possessed more immediacy than other more distant colonial possessions. Lieutenant Leeky, of the *St. Vincent* cutter, took just nine days to reach Britain with dispatches sent by Lord Keith in January of 1800, and during the lengthy 1805 campaign the *Liberty* brig made the passage in just eight days.<sup>174</sup> The journey to Gibraltar could be even faster – so much so in fact that it was probably not considered as isolated as some modern commentators have assumed. In 1778 it was reported that the *Proserpine* frigate arrived from Portsmouth in just six days, 'the shortest passage almost ever known'.<sup>175</sup> General Dyott's diary entry of 5 January 1802 recorded that the '*Narcissus* frigate came in from the Isle of Wight in seven days, a remarkable quick passage'.<sup>176</sup>

The British presence at Gibraltar provided a location from which the many actions that took place in its neighbouring Straits, a busy naval chokepoint, could be viewed. When relayed to a British audience through numerous local and national publications, these reports were afforded a highly realistic and truthful quality precisely because of the audience's awareness that such actions could be viewed from the Rock itself. These observations inevitably increased during periods of war, but it was not uncommon for skirmishes to be reported on during peacetime – the Straits were after all a crucial maritime gateway for vessels of all nations, but especially those with western Mediterranean coastlines. Even when Britain was not officially at war with Spain, the public was made aware of the Straits's capacity to engender naval hostilities. In 1776, an action between 'four Spanish men of war and frigates, and about twelve sail of the Emperor of Morocco's cruizers' was reported in the *Caledonian Mercury*. The Spanish were victorious, an event which caused friction with the observing British, who unsuccessfully attempted to force

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<sup>173</sup> *The Naval Chronicle Volume 19*, 243.

<sup>174</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 1800; *Morning Chronicle*, Saturday 8 June 1805.

<sup>175</sup> *Oxford Journal*, Saturday 6 June 1778.

<sup>176</sup> *Dyott's diary*, 189.

the Spaniards to part with their prizes (technically the articles of war had been contravened by the taking of vessels under a neutral garrison) - inferior numbers meant the British were obliged to 'sheer off, and return into this [Gibraltar] bay.'<sup>177</sup> The newly independent status of the United States evidently caused British observers concern that American vessels would enter the Straits in 1777, as the *Oxford Journal* printed letters from Gibraltar emphasising the increased activity in the surrounding area, whilst stressing that 'no American Privateer has yet ventured up the Straights'.<sup>178</sup> The *Newcastle Courant* reported in 1779 that 'They write from Gibraltar that the Dutch Admiral in the Mediterranean... had sunk four of the Emperor of Morocco's cruizers, and taken five'.<sup>179</sup>

Gibraltar remained an ever-present fixture in newspaper reports of a naval and maritime nature after 1783, and particularly during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Furthermore, the way in which it was reported demonstrates that the general acceptance of its strategic value was reflected in the British press. Information that emanated from the Mediterranean invariably involved Gibraltar in some form. For example, when the *Kentish Weekly Post* reported the news of the *St. Vincent* cutter arriving in Britain from Gibraltar, it added: 'it is said she brings dispatches of great importance from Egypt'. Following on immediately from this, it reported that four transport ships had left Portsmouth, 'with a valuable fleet of victuallers, storeships, and merchantmen, for Gibraltar, Lisbon, and the Mediterranean'.<sup>180</sup> In successively brief news reports, the strategic importance of Gibraltar was clear to a British audience. It could be appreciated as both a crucial link in ensuring the safe return of intelligence to Britain, and as a vital staging post for British attempts to advance their strategic agenda into the Mediterranean. Furthermore, reports from Gibraltar also conveyed the primacy that maritime affairs had for the inhabitants of the Rock and their everyday concerns.

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<sup>177</sup> *Caledonian Mercury*, Friday 23 August 1776.

<sup>178</sup> *Oxford Journal*, Saturday 26 April 1777; *Oxford Journal*, Saturday 11 October 1777.

<sup>179</sup> *Newcastle Courant*, Saturday 17 April 1779.

<sup>180</sup> *Kentish Weekly Post*, Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 1800.

It was not uncommon for extracts to be printed from journals ‘kept at Gibraltar’, as the *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* did in March 1808. The extract, detailing ten entries between 18 January and 10 February, was overwhelmingly concerned with naval activities. Beginning with rumours of an expedition headed by General Spencer set to sail for Gibraltar from Britain, the next entry (22 January) gave information of Spanish preparations at Ceuta, provided by British sailors rescued by a Portuguese vessel. The next day, ‘26 transports arrived here, with about 3000 men’ – the promised expeditionary force. Two entries further illustrate the point: on 29 January ‘All the gun-boats have been ordered to be got ready for embarking troops – we believe for Ceuta’, and then on 31 January ‘The *Phoebe* sailed. It is thought she goes to Admiral Purvis to recommend a strict blockade of Ceuta’. *Phoebe* was however ordered to sail ‘immediately’ for Sicily on 5 February, a date which also saw ‘one of the most violent gales ever witnessed here. ... Many vessels have been totally wrecked, and three of the transports driven out of the Gut.’ The extract was not completely lacking in concerns regarding the shared border with Spain, as it reported on ‘the enemy’ being ‘busy in repairing some of the barracks in this neighbourhood’. But even so, the author implied that the increased naval activity was a motivating factor, stating ‘they have also begun to shut some of the ports near this, entirely to cut off our supplies’. As was often the case at Gibraltar, when the garrison and border were threatened, maritime concerns were never too far away. The extract concluded by observing ‘This day, at one o’clock, Sir R. Strachan, with seven sail of the line and one frigate, passed in pursuit of the enemy’ – thus bookending a journal heavily adorned in maritime endeavours with yet more news of naval activity.<sup>181</sup> From reading this journal extract, a British observer could be expected to appreciate the precariousness of the British naval presence in the western Mediterranean, as British vessels were threatened by the fractious local context, unstable situations to the east, and the unpredictable weather. But crucially, they could conclude that most of these concerns were centred on Gibraltar itself. The Rock continually acted as a lodestar for both naval strategy and British domestic attention towards the western Mediterranean theatre.

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<sup>181</sup> *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, Thursday 10 March 1808.

The *Gloucester Journal* likely reflected much of national and regional press coverage when in 1802 it declared that ‘Hardly a week passes that some French, Spanish, or Dutch ships of the line do not pass the Streights!’<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, newspapers also reinforced the notion that Gibraltar was a crucial node for the flow of military and political information from the Iberian Peninsula back to Britain. In October 1807, the *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* reported that communications between Spain and Gibraltar had been broken off upon a request from the French ambassador – ‘that we might not receive any intelligence of the movements of the different French armies which are advancing into Spain’.<sup>183</sup> A month later the same publication told of communication across the lines being ‘rigidly cut off’. However, it still reported on troop movements on the Iberian Peninsula (with twenty thousand Spanish troops supposedly marching on Portugal), as well as across the Mediterranean, with news that the British army recently departed from Alexandria was bound for Sicily.<sup>184</sup> In 1812, the *Perthshire Courier* printed an extract from the *Gibraltar Chronicle* detailing events at the recent siege of Burgos.<sup>185</sup>

The reach of newspapers, and how they conveyed Gibraltar into the national consciousness can be further appreciated by consulting diaries and letters. As noted above, the poet Cowper’s confusion at the situation during the Great Siege was framed through his reading of newspapers. The American loyalist Samuel Curwen, exiled in London, commented regularly on the progress of the siege and British naval manoeuvres through information received from printed reports. These included the sailing of Lord Howe to relieve Gibraltar, recorded in his journal on 14 September 1782. Barely a month later, on 7 October after the destruction of the floating batteries, he wrote an extremely detailed account including the number of

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<sup>182</sup> The paper also went on to describe how ‘two Algerine harbours’ had been ceded to the French – again underlining how Gibraltar facilitated both routine reporting on naval affairs and wider developments of geo-political significance. *Gloucester Journal*, Monday 18 October 1802.

<sup>183</sup> *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, Wednesday 11 October 1807.

<sup>184</sup> *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, Wednesday 11 November 1807.

<sup>185</sup> *Perthshire Courier*, Thursday 22 October 1812.



casualties, the amount of cannon lost by the Spanish and the rescue of ‘three hundred poor souls’ attributed to General Elliot.<sup>186</sup> The fate of Howe’s expedition was still unknown, accordingly Curwen wrote of the popular expectation that his arrival would cause the Allies to retreat from Gibraltar. But he cautioned that ‘in case of reverse, I know not what rage, disappointment, and despair might be the natural effects; the political evils are too obvious not to be seen and dreaded.’<sup>187</sup> Writing to her sister Cassandra on 11 April 1805, Jane Austen noted that the storeship *Ambuscade* had reached Gibraltar the previous month ‘& found all well; so say the papers.’<sup>188</sup>

It was also possible for British newspaper readers to glimpse the vast riches on offer due to the taking of prizes in and around the Straits. In January 1800, several publications reported that four Spanish prizes had been captured and taken into Gibraltar the preceding Christmas Day.<sup>189</sup> The *Reading Mercury* provided more detail, stating that one of the prizes was ‘richly laden with silks and bale goods, from Cadiz to Lima, in South America; said to be the richest ship carried to Gibraltar during the war’.<sup>190</sup> On 19 October 1805, shortly before the battle of Trafalgar, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* reported an action off Gibraltar between *Dexterous* and a Spanish gunboat, which was captured along with seven enemy merchant vessels. The report characteristically emphasised the numerical disparity against which the British vessel had triumphed: ‘these vessels were taken in the face of eight of the enemy’s armed vessels who had the charge of the convoy, and who carried near 300 men’.<sup>191</sup> Another local newspaper, the *Kentish Weekly Post* enthusiastically praised the plucky *Dexterous*, which ‘attacked them [the Spanish] without

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<sup>186</sup> Curwen, *Journal and Letters* 352.

<sup>187</sup> Curwen, *Journal and Letters*, 355.

<sup>188</sup> *Jane Austen’s Letters*. Edited by Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 99.

<sup>189</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 1800; *Sherborne Mercury*, Monday 20 January 1800; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 1800; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, Thursday 23 January 1800.

<sup>190</sup> *Reading Mercury*, Monday 20 January 1800.

<sup>191</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, Saturday 19 October 1805.

hesitation, and took one of the gun-boats, with seven of the merchantmen!’<sup>192</sup>

Enemy privateers occasionally used the geography of the Straits to their advantage. In 1807, the crew of *Dexterous* again demonstrated their ‘cool and steady behaviour’ by sailing across the strait to round a small island that was being used as ‘a lurking place for the enemy’s privateers which infest the Gut’.<sup>193</sup> Another action in 1807 again generated significant interest. In November, the hired armed brig *Ann* captured a Spanish privateer named *Vensejo* and put a nine-man crew aboard her. Continuing her cruise, *Ann* was approached by ten Spanish gunboats, and *Vensejo* was quickly recaptured. But after a long action, *Ann* was able to beat them off, albeit without recapturing her prize.<sup>194</sup> The vessel’s commander, Lieutenant McKenzie, reported in *The London Gazette* that ‘although six of the largest were within pistol-shot for nearly an hour and a half, I have not a man hurt’.

Unsurprisingly, the numerical disparity against which the *Ann* triumphed allowed for stereotypical assertions of characteristic superiority to be made. McKenzie described his ‘great satisfaction on beholding the high flow of spirits which is generally manifested in the countenance of every British sailor, although opposed to so superior a force’.<sup>195</sup> Several local newspapers repeated the *Gazette*’s report, ensuring that McKenzie’s positive description of the British seafaring character was carried widely across the country.<sup>196</sup>

Actions that took place outside the confines of the Straits also found themselves invariably linked to Gibraltar. In 1811 a lengthy report from a Lieutenant Williams, who commanded the cutter *Entreprenante*, appeared in *The Naval Chronicle* describing an action against four French counterparts between Malaga and

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<sup>192</sup> *Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, Friday 18 October 1805.

<sup>193</sup> *Oxford University and City Herald*, Saturday 3 October 1807.

<sup>194</sup> The *Star* of London reported that the number of gunboats was ‘18 or 19’. This figure was surely erroneous, but it points to a desire to portray British vessels in the straits as underdogs against a numerically superior enemy. *London Star*, Saturday 19 December 1807.

<sup>195</sup> *The London Gazette*, 22 December 1807.

<sup>196</sup> *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, Saturday 19 December 1807; *Kentish Gazette*, Friday 25 December 1807; *Oxford Journal*, Saturday 26 December 1807; *Hampshire Chronicle*, Monday 28 December 1807.

Almeria. It was typically effusive on the bravery exhibited, as Williams contended that the repulse of successive boarding attempts by the superior French force was affected 'with the courage that every Englishman is possessed'. The action had been reported in various newspapers earlier in the year.<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, an account had also been reproduced in the *Gibraltar Chronicle*, which repeated the stereotypical descriptions of bravery whilst further emphasising the success against 'the superior force of the enemy'. In a final emphasis of how the action impacted upon the Rock's society, the *Chronicle* also reported that the merchant community at Gibraltar had organised a subscription 'for the purpose of presenting a valuable sword to Lieutenant Williams, for his gallant conduct'.<sup>198</sup> John McAleer has demonstrated how the presentation of ceremonial swords helped strengthen links between local merchants and the Royal Navy in the contexts of the Caribbean and the Cape of Good Hope, and the examples of Saumarez and Williams demonstrate that this also occurred at Gibraltar.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, these rewards were known to a wider British audience through their reporting in newspapers. The reporting of the action also highlights a connective atmosphere in which the detached readerships of Britain and Gibraltar were assimilated through the actions of the Royal Navy. As demonstrated above, it was not uncommon for reports in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* to be reproduced in the British domestic press. In 1808 the London-based *Sun* told of communications between Portugal and its exiled royal family by way of such an extract from Gibraltar's newspaper.<sup>200</sup>

Despite its reputation as a 'garrison state' strongly connected to the army, the multifarious cultural forms through which Gibraltar was represented to the wider British world stressed its relationship to the Royal Navy and Britain's maritime interests in the Mediterranean. Alongside Gibraltar's proximity to major

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<sup>197</sup> *The Scots Magazine*, Tuesday 1 January 1811; *Caledonian Mercury*, Monday 21 January 1811; *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, Thursday 24 January 1811; *Hampshire Chronicle*, Monday 28 January 1811.

<sup>198</sup> *The Naval Chronicle*, Volume XXV (London: Joyce Gold, 1811), 134-5.

<sup>199</sup> John McAleer, "'Eminent Service': War, Slavery and the politics of public recognition in the British Caribbean and the Cape of Good Hope, c. 1782-1807", *The Mariner's Mirror* Vol. 95 no. 1 (2009): 38.

<sup>200</sup> *Sun*, Monday 11 April 1808.

engagements such as Trafalgar and Cape St Vincent, a huge number of publications reported in detail the more regular, and smaller-scale naval skirmishes that occurred within sight of the Rock. Trafalgar still provides modern Gibraltarians with a valuable connecting link to Britain, but in the years before 1805 the Rock was already widely recognised as an important naval location. Smaller-scale actions were usually conveyed to the British public as either a financial boon to British interests through prize money, or as a demonstration of the Royal Navy's inherently superior seamanship and bravery under fire – indeed, in most cases, it was seen as a combination of the two. In contrast, news concerning Gibraltar's military garrison was usually restricted to succinct reports of troop movements. Furthermore, the logistical reality of Gibraltar's location ensured that these troop movements depended upon the navy for their security and success. When the Spanish publicly announced a blockade of the Rock in 1800, officers on leave from Gibraltar and Minorca were ordered to return to their garrisons, 'in a ship which is appointed to convey them'.<sup>201</sup> Even when France and Spain became enemies in 1808, the sea route from Gibraltar remained crucial for the conveying of information to Britain. News of the Battle of Bailen, which on 19 July 1808 resulted in the surrender of a French army to General Castanos, was transmitted to Lord Castlereagh by Sir Hew Dalrymple, the Governor of Gibraltar.<sup>202</sup> Anxieties surrounding Gibraltar's security did manifest themselves during occasional reports of an expected Spanish assault, but the lack of any substantive land-based conflict on that front - at least after the Great Siege - ensured that for British consumers of culture, the real and very present threat to Gibraltar lay almost exclusively in the maritime seascape that surrounded it. On occasion, the difference between the land and maritime sectors was stark. In 1806, the *Caledonian Mercury* reported that the *Avon* brig had arrived at Gibraltar, but not before being 'warmly attacked by some of the gun-boats in the Gut'. It also provided details of six Spanish prizes that had been brought into the Rock, with cargoes of fruit, flour and bread. Pertinently, however, the *Mercury* went on to describe conditions in the garrison in the following terms:

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<sup>201</sup> Kentish Gazette, Tuesday 18 March 1800.

<sup>202</sup> *The Naval Chronicle Volume 20*, 235.

The Garrison is now extremely gay and pleasant, as we have assemblies and plays weekly, and masquerades are now introduced. General Fox gives a most superb one at head-quarters on Monday. About 400 tickets are issued for the occasion. The communication with Spain is also nearly as open as it was in time of peace. The Officers of the garrison and the inhabitants, are allowed to go on parties of pleasure or a shooting into Spain, for several days at a time, and the Spanish Officers sometimes come into our assemblies.<sup>203</sup>

Clearly then, anxieties surrounding an enemy attack at Gibraltar could just as easily be glimpsed by looking towards the ocean as they could by looking towards the border with Spain. Furthermore, such representations that told of the naval experience at the Rock were carried by a wide range of publications, and extended to all corners of Britain, ensuring that Gibraltar's naval importance was not confined to specialist publications such as *The Naval Chronicle*. Indeed, the way in which naval actions and battles were recorded in *The Naval Chronicle* often extended the memory of such events – as glimpsed by how, in 1801, it recalled Curtis's behaviour during the Great Siege of 1779-83. A further example is the reporting of the loss of HMS *Weazel* in March 1804.<sup>204</sup> Initially, the British press simply recorded that the vessel had been wrecked near Cabrita Point.<sup>205</sup> The *Hampshire Telegraph* recorded in May that 'the Merchants of Gibraltar' had presented an address to the Governor requesting that the Captain of the *Weazel*, William Layman, should be reappointed 'to a ship of force, for the protection of the trade in the Gut'.<sup>206</sup> *The Naval Chronicle* published the full text of the address in 1817, as part of a biographical memoir of Layman. Strikingly, the letter attributed Layman's

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<sup>203</sup> Caledonian Mercury, Thursday 27 February 1806.

<sup>204</sup> All but one of the crew was saved in the wreck. The deceased turned out to have a personal connection to Portsmouth Dockyard, as recorded in the *Hampshire Telegraph*: 'at Gibraltar, Mr Waterman, Quarterman of his Majesty's Dock Yard there, and son of Mr. Waterman, many years Foreman to the Master Boat-builder at this Dock Yard – He was the only person drowned by the loss the *Weazel* brig'. *Hampshire Telegraph*, Monday 23 April 1804.

<sup>205</sup> London Courier and Evening Gazette, Monday 2 April 1804; Royal Cornwall gazette, Saturday 7 April 1804; Morning Chronicle, Tuesday 10 April 1804; Exeter Flying Post, Thursday 26 April 1804.

<sup>206</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph*, 28 May 1804.

superior knowledge and information with regard to the tides and currents of this bay, and the whole of the Streights in general, from his long practise in going between this place and the Barbary and Spanish coasts, east and west, gave us all a superior satisfaction and security that we had not previous thereto experienced, by the terror he caused, and the unusual diligence he performed in keeping the enemy's cruisers in general from annoying our trade.<sup>207</sup>

The impact that the actions of even a small naval force could have upon the morale and success of the inhabitants of Gibraltar is apparent. Although the full, unabridged account had not been printed in Britain in 1804, Layman's behaviour was relatively well known to newspaper readers. Printing it in 1817 may likewise appear inconsequential, but the mood regarding the state of the Royal Navy can be glimpsed in another extract from the next volume (39) of *The Naval Chronicle*, providing further insight into the 'naval symbol' status that Gibraltar had acquired. An anonymous reader expressed concern that 'our number of ships is now so greatly *below* the amount we possessed at the end of the war'. However, the letter finished on an upbeat note, as the writer suggested that 'the British Lion, if again roused, may still be able to dash off the assailing foe, as the rock of Gibraltar does the united waters of the Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea'.<sup>208</sup> The interactive aspect of the *Chronicle*, which allowed for contributions in the form of letters to the editor, often revealed how the public perception of Gibraltar was highly cognisant of the Royal Navy's role as a cultural interlocutor between it and Britain. Another anonymous writer commenting upon depictions of HMS *Speedy* in 1809 recalled how Jahleel Brenton's victory over Spanish gunboats in 1799 had 'elicited the admiration of all Gibraltar'.<sup>209</sup>

### Gibraltar and the Royal Navy in literature

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<sup>207</sup> *The Naval Chronicle Volume 38, 2.*

<sup>208</sup> *The Naval Chronicle Volume 39: January – June 1818, 41-43.*

<sup>209</sup> *The Naval Chronicle Volume 21, 213.*

Gibraltar has not enjoyed a reputation for inspiring great works of literature during its three centuries as a British possession. Indeed, one modern literary critic has referred to it as a 'no-mans literary land'.<sup>210</sup> As we have seen, both famous writers and eighteenth-century commentators alike have not been averse to describing the Rock's population and culture in derogatory terms. Such statements have been seized upon by historians, leading to a broad historiographical interpretation of the Rock as having little value for cultural commentary or criticism. However, the Great Siege was a pivotal event for Gibraltar in the mind of British writers, and the subsequent years saw a substantial, if thus far unappreciated raft of literary works that celebrated its place in the wider British world. A small indication of its impact came when a young William Lisle Bowles was awarded Oxford University's Chancellor's Prize in 1783 for a Latin composition on the siege titled *Calpe Obsessa*.<sup>211</sup> Similarly to the work of artists, the events of 1779-1783 allowed Gibraltar to be placed into poetry, drama and theatre that celebrated British martial achievement in an imperial setting. The tone of these works was markedly different from the 'Humorous description of Gibraltar', whose anonymous author had concluded in 1772 'come to England, damn'd rock! – for I'll not come to you'. Instead, in the siege's aftermath British writers sought to connect Gibraltar more closely to Britain, primarily through the actions of famous personnel such as Eliott and Curtis.

First-hand accounts written by soldiers of Gibraltar's garrison did appear in print form. John Drinkwater Bethune's *A History of the late siege of Gibraltar 1779-1783* (1785) was remarkably circumspect in its retelling of the repulse of the 'grand attack' on 14 September 1782.<sup>212</sup> Drinkwater's proclivity for dispassionate reporting

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<sup>210</sup> Ana Manzananas Calvo, "The Line and the Limit of Britishness: The Construction of Gibraltarian Identity in M. G. Sanchez's Writing", *Spanish Journal of English Studies* 38 (2017): 27.

<sup>211</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register*, Volume 14 1820, 481.

<sup>212</sup> Drinkwater's account of the siege is the most well known to a modern audience. It was very popular in the years after the siege, and went through four editions in four years. Francis Espinasse, rev. David Gates, 'John Drinkwater', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Vol. 16*. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 926.

over the sentimentalisation of events is shown in his description of the attack's aftermath - when the corpses of Spanish sailors began washing up on shore, Drinkwater merely used it as an opportunity to comment upon the apparent old age of the enemy's forces.<sup>213</sup> Samuel Ancell's account, first printed in 1784, was altogether different in approach, and has been recognised as being determinedly sentimental and commercially successful.<sup>214</sup> On 14 September 1782, Ancell's account recorded:

One ship has this moment exploded, in the midst of our boats, who are humanely relieving a distressed enemy. The explosion was grand and terrible – the wreck spread to a vast extent and the concussion broke several panes of glass on shore. The greatest uneasiness is felt for the safety of Brigadier *Curtis*, and the boats with him. The whole are enveloped in a cloud of smoke.<sup>215</sup>

The garrison's anxiety concerning Curtis's safety abated when he returned to shore, along with British seamen 'bringing the trophies of victory on shore'. These included the Spanish flag, 'which was intended by the foe to be hoisted on these battlements.' There is a strong sense then, of both the awe with which the Rock's community witnessed the hazardous naval operation, and of the sheer relief that was felt when victory was secured. As Ancell recorded, 'the hills and heights were covered with spectators... incessant shouts and repeated acclamations continued

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<sup>213</sup> Drinkwater wrote of the dead sailors: 'Several bodies were thrown ashore, all of which seemed advanced in years; and one in particular appeared, from his grey beard and lean visage, past sixty'. In true soldierly fashion, he had earlier told how a Spanish Captain of Marines who had died in captivity was buried 'with all military honours'. Drinkwater, *A history of the late siege*, 297.

<sup>214</sup> Neil Ramsey, *The Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture, 1780-1835* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 31.

<sup>215</sup> Ancell's sentimentalizing work employed almost preposterous timing to demonstrate the apparent providence on display. In one memorable instance he wrote of a young Spanish boy, who, 'observing our boats making for shore, got upon the head, wept and cried, and in the *Spanish* tongue called for help; his entreaties prevailed, and one of our boats; notwithstanding the immense danger which threatened, rowed towards him, which he perceiving, jumped into the sea, and at that very instant the ship exploded, with the greatest part of the hands on board. The boat very soon after took the boy up.' Samuel Ancell, *A circumstantial journal of the blockade and siege of Gibraltar* (Cork: A. Edwards, 1793), 213-4.



from the *Mole* to the *South Parade*'. As well as those that appeared in the form of printed books, the siege was also retold through detailed accounts that appeared in regional newspapers. *The Scots Magazine* printed a lengthy piece concerning the destruction of the floating batteries in 1784.<sup>216</sup>

Catharine Upton's incredibly focused account (covering six weeks between 12 April – 27 May 1781) was unapologetically rushed to publication with the siege ongoing out of a self-described 'anxious desire to benefit my little family'. Her husband, a Lieutenant in the 72<sup>nd</sup> Regiment continued to serve at Gibraltar.<sup>217</sup> It was, in Upton's words 'impossible for my husband to appear as a gentleman *there*, and support his Offspring in *England*.'<sup>218</sup> It powerfully displayed the hardships suffered by the inhabitants despite the lax Allied blockade that allowed supplies to trickle in. She was particularly scathing at what she saw as price-fixing, that caused the cost of provisions to soar so high 'that few subaltern officers could become purchasers.' She even suspected the resident Genoese fishermen of catching 'very few, that they might have a pretence for enhancing the price'.<sup>219</sup> But it was also sentimental in tone and presented idealised modes of behaviour. After taking the difficult decision to part with her husband and leave Gibraltar, for the protection of her children, she recalls how her son Jack

observing me grieve, just now ran to me, and said, "Don't cry, Mamma; the good roast beef we shall get in England will soon make me a man, and then I will return to Gibraltar, sink the gun-boats, and kill all the Spaniards." I embraced my little hero with a smile, and he is now exulting in the thought of having dried his mother's tears!<sup>220</sup>

For the financially motivated Upton, casting her son as a would-be 'young hero' situated her work amongst an increasingly popular genre of texts that celebrated

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<sup>216</sup> The Scots Magazine, Thursday 1 January 1784.

<sup>217</sup> "The works of Catharine Upton", *Romantic Circles*, accessed 31 March 2020, <https://romantic-circles.org/editions/upton/editions.2016.upton.intro.html>.

<sup>218</sup> Upton, *The Siege of Gibraltar*, vi

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 2; 3.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

the intrepid endeavours of youthful seamen.<sup>221</sup> Jack's chosen target for his future retribution is significant - as detailed above, gunboat warfare formed an integral part of the experience at Gibraltar during wartime. She recorded the following on 19 April 1781:

The Spanish gun-boats were firing upon us with all the rage of well-directed artillery. *Gun-boats*, methinks you say! What are those? I will tell you. They are boats constructed on purpose for carrying mortars and cannon, from which they throw thirteen-inch shells, and twenty six pounders! 'Tis all chance, and they are such small objects, and so uncertain to hit, that it is only a waste of ammunition in our batteries to attempt to bear upon them.

The effect on shore was vividly described; after a woman 'was cut in two' in a tent near her own, Upton resolved to gather her children close: 'I clasped my darlings, and prayed most fervently, that the ball that should pierce their tender bosoms might transfix my own too!'.<sup>222</sup> She took to sheltering behind a rock, but the attacks from 'our old disturbers' were constant, and moreover the energy exerted in resisting was extreme: 'I was so harassed for want of rest, that I thought fatigue would kill me, if the Spaniards did not.' During one attack the Spanish 'had the temerity to advance so near, that the people in our ships could hear them say, *Guarda Angloise!* which is *Take care, English!*' finally determined her to leave Gibraltar with her children.<sup>223</sup> The deaths of several of her neighbours in the camp from direct hits led Upton to conclude that 'it was not *courage*, but *madness* to stay', and as 'conjugal affection gave place to maternal tenderness' she obtained leave to sail soon after.<sup>224</sup>

Upton's narrative took the form of a letter to her brother, written during her passage home to England. Consequently her retelling of events during the siege was interspersed with accounts of the voyage, during which she faced the possibility of capture by French vessels. At one point, she describes the ship being

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<sup>221</sup> Ronald, *Youth, Heroism and War Propaganda*, 1.

<sup>222</sup> Upton, *The Siege of Gibraltar*, 14.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

‘cleared for action’ and being sent down into the hold at the Captain’s instruction. Soon after, she ‘sewed a few guineas in the plaits of my petticoat, for if they are privateers, they will take everything from me.’ This was prudent, as one ship from their convoy was taken by the enemy.<sup>225</sup> The immediacy of naval warfare, then, was starkly clear and present throughout her narrative.

The Birmingham innkeeper and songwriter John Freeth immediately capitalised upon the destruction of the floating batteries with his ballad *The British Salamanders* (1782).<sup>226</sup> As a form of song intended to be sung in communal settings (Freeth was landlord of a tavern in Birmingham), ballads formed a crucial part of the cultural landscape in which the navy’s place in British society was constructed.<sup>227</sup> *The British Salamanders* played upon the dualistic nature of events off Gibraltar by casting the British as equally at home in water or flame, anthropomorphising them as an amphibious species that according to myth was born in fire. Freeth’s work strikingly portrayed the inferno viewed by hundreds (if not thousands) who had travelled to the Spanish lines for the purpose of seeing Gibraltar conquered:

No scene could more attention draw,  
Found hope did all inspire,  
And many thousand went and saw  
The atmosphere on fire.  
The Grandees who the host survey’d  
Were struck with melancholy,  
And weeping stood to see ‘em made  
A sacrifice to folly.  
When all in flames their batteries

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>226</sup> Roy and Leslie Adkins, ‘The British Salamanders’, *Gibraltar Heritage Journal* Vol. 25 (2019): 103-5.

<sup>227</sup> James Davey, ‘Singing for the Nation: Balladry, naval recruitment and the language of patriotism in eighteenth-century Britain’, *The Mariner’s Mirror* Vol 103 no. 1 (2017): 46.

Were floating on the waters,  
Mount Etna never pour'd a blaze,  
More dreadful to spectators;  
What mortal man can usage brook?  
The Dons and all around 'em  
The Garrison for Devils took,  
But Salamanders found 'em.

Freeth clearly derived much creative patriotism from the enemy 'Grandeos' witnessing the floating batteries become 'A sacrifice to folly' in front of their own eyes. But the ascription of amphibious qualities to the British through the ballad's title also allowed for an explicitly aquatic superiority to be celebrated. Freeth's ballad had the Spanish exclaim from the wreckage:

" 'Twixt fire and water who can live;  
"I fear we all shall lost be;  
"Your help we crave, assistance give,  
"Or burned or drown'd we must be."

Consequently, Curtis performs his rescue inspired by a mix of bravery and compassion:

Humanity attends the brave,  
By Britons ever cherish'd  
And many lives did Curtis save,  
Which otherwise had perished

Freeth went beyond simply recounting Curtis's act of humanity. Crucially, it was also configured as demonstrating innate British superiority in the maritime sphere. The initial act of rescuing stricken enemies from the fiery waves, performed seemingly with ease, was followed by subsequent lines that detailed stereotypically

cowardly actions of the Spanish in the face of more aggressive British seamanship when attempting to deny Howe access to Gibraltar:

From Cadiz Bay Cordova rode,  
The waves in fury smiting;  
The British fleet he dodg'd, but show'd  
No appetite for fighting;  
'Gainst pow'ful odds for bloody scenes  
The tars were all in motion  
A proof that Britain still maintains  
Her empire o'er the Ocean.

By contrasting the mixture of humanity and aggressiveness present in British seamanship against the apparently craven conduct of the Spanish, Freeth demonstrated that Curtis's actions, as well as displaying an ideal form of sentimental behaviour towards Britain's enemies, also pointed to the inherent skill of British sailors over their maritime-averse continental opponents. *The British Salamanders* was widely circulated, being printed in the *Aberdeen Journal* and the *Kentish Gazette* in late 1782, as well as *The Gentleman's Magazine* for that same year.<sup>228</sup> Elliot also figured highly in the ballad's celebratory tone - indeed, Freeth's celebration of the martial heroism displayed by Gibraltar's defenders alongside the maritime prowess of the Royal Navy epitomised the 'double consciousness' through which the Great Siege was memorialised in British cultural forms. Underlining all of it, of course, was the re-confirmation of Britain's true strategic advantage over her continental neighbours, as shown by the final lines of the passage quoted directly above: 'A proof that Britain still maintains, Her empire o'er the Ocean.' Although something of a radical, Freeth's work also regularly celebrated the success of the navy, and was produced rapidly in order to capitalise on the public fervour that

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<sup>228</sup> Adkins, 'British Salamanders', 105; *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle Volume 52* (London: J. Nicholls, 1782), 590.

surrounded these events.<sup>229</sup> Other works in a similar vein included an earlier ballad titled *Langara's Defeat: or, the British flag triumphant* which celebrated Rodney's victory in the 'moonlight battle' off Cape St Vincent in 1780, and *Britannia Triumphant! on the Glorious Victory of April 12, 1782*, a ballad that eulogised Rodney's later victory over de Grasse in the Caribbean.<sup>230</sup>

Philip Thicknesse's *Gibraltar Delivered* (1783) was one of the first literary works to commemorate the siege. Thicknesse inevitably glorified Eliott as 'a Chieftain of undaunted might; Whom neither heat, nor cold, nor want, can foil'. The poem does not mention Curtis, instead placing the credit for the destruction of the floating batteries and the rescue of the stricken Spanish sailors to Eliott. But Thicknesse was especially praiseworthy of Howe's relief and its restorative effect on the garrison – unsurprisingly, as the poem was inscribed directly to the Admiral and General Eliott. It describes Howe's arrival in ebullient terms:

But lo! thy country's fleet's in view!  
High in the air the British pendants fly,  
A train of transports mark the wish'd supply.  
While HOWE securely stems the swelling tide  
In full triumphant pomp of naval pride,  
With the UNITED-FLEET the tempest's sport,  
And wreck their vessels in the very port.

Thicknesse placed particular emphasis on the providential weather that allowed the British relief squadron into the bay, as Spanish onlookers bemoaned their ill luck: 'With HOWE, she cries, *the elements unite, In Britain's cause the winds and waters fight!*' Thicknesse, who had earlier drawn direct parallels between Britain's possession of Gibraltar and her own 'rock' like status, strove to link the siege's

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<sup>229</sup> Jensen, *Napoleon and British Song*, 15; John Horden, 'John Freeth', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Vol. 20. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 943.

<sup>230</sup> John Freeth, *The Political Songster* (Birmingham: Thomas Pearson, 1790), 33-4; 45-6.

successful conclusion to contemporary hopes and expectations for the future of Britain. *Gibraltar Delivered* concluded by stating that Britain was ‘Guarded by heroes of three kindred lands’. Howe represented England, the Roxburghshire-born Eliott Scotland, and whilst no person stood for ‘Grateful Ierne (Ireland) for *replevied* laws’ (a reference to the recent granting of Judicial independence), the poem’s last line hoped that each entity ‘Shall nourish heroes to the common cause’. *Gibraltar Delivered*, then, sought to present Gibraltar’s security and Britain’s future political stability as distinctly inevitable and intertwined. In classical terms, Britain possessing Gibraltar was presented as an inevitability, as was Eliott’s resistance in the face of Allied ineptitude (itself also undeniable). But the final inevitability was the superiority of the Royal Navy – described in the poem as ‘ENGLAND’S floating pride’. *Gibraltar Delivered* depicted Howe’s fleet as being borne by the seemingly pre-ordained climate steering the fleet into the bay. This may not have reflected reality (Howe in fact struggled to force a decisive action in the straights), but it did reflect a cultural climate of expectation that Britain’s constituent parts could successfully co-operate to achieve success on the global stage.

Anna Seward’s *Ode on General Eliott’s Return from Gibraltar in 1787* (1787) served as a conclusion to her previous work that had focused on the American war.<sup>231</sup> The poem placed Eliott alongside Marlborough, Cumberland and Wolfe in the pantheon of British military heroes. But Seward could not avoid linking the defence of Gibraltar to the Royal Navy, and more specifically to Roger Curtis - the siege’s other great hero. The poem set the scene of devastation that followed the attack by the floating batteries, as accompanied by the roar of the ‘British lion’, enemy sailors are said to ‘plunge! – in wild despair, With raiment scorch’d, and blazing hair!’ The next stanza reads:

Warm in virtue’s native glow,  
 Heroic ELIOTT’S great ally,  
 His valiant CURTIS, bending o’er the prow,

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<sup>231</sup> Claudia T. Kairoff, *Anna Seward and the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 134.

With all the twice-bless'd angel in his eye,  
Commands to push his conquering oars,  
Where most the fiery torrent pours;  
The victims from their instant fate to save,  
And snatch them back to life, from the devouring wave.

Appearing in 1787, these words sit comfortably alongside the numerous artistic representations and written publications that had depicted Curtis during his heroic act. As well as honouring Curtis, Seward's work also explicitly connected Gibraltar's retention with the superiority of British maritime commerce, as the following stanza shows:

Fruitful as the ensuing morn,  
When smiling May with zephyr sports,  
The graceful arts Britannia's dome adorn,  
And floats her Commerce to the distant ports.  
To thee, brave Eliott! well she knows  
Their mild prosperity she owes;  
Since awful honour must his beams unveil,  
Ere full the arts can bloom, or Commerce widely sail.

Seward's intention to glorify Eliott perhaps resulted in hyperbolic language and exaggerated conclusions. This was not lost on contemporary observers – *The English Review* hoped that Eliott's return would 'meet with more generous and unforced congratulations than this'.<sup>232</sup> A letter written by Seward after the poem's composition gives some insight into her inspiration. She wrote: 'I always considered General Elliot's defence of Gibraltar as a truly great, patriotic, and heroic action', and that 'by this action alone, we were enabled to make a

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<sup>232</sup> *The English Review, Or, An Abstract of English and Foreign Literature, Volume X* (London: J. Murray, 1787), 191.



creditable peace, and, in some degree, regain our prosperity as a nation.’<sup>233</sup> Gibraltar was not, it must be said, solely responsible for Britain’s global trading success. However, Seward’s locating of it as being crucial to the overall trend was entirely consistent with the growing popular sentiment that placed great value in the Rock as a commercial location. Indeed, it is entirely commensurate with the numerous artistic representations of the immovable, static rock with British merchant and naval vessels ensconced in its foreground that emerged in the aftermath of the Great Siege.

Among the crop of patriotic yet distant poetic observers, Joseph Budworth’s *The Siege of Gibraltar, a Poem* (1795) provided a unique eyewitness voice.<sup>234</sup> Having been wounded in the siege, Budworth’s poem consequently focused more upon the realities of siege warfare than the other works described above.<sup>235</sup> It provides an insight into the provision of hope that the Royal Navy afforded to the besieged garrison. One verse in particular illustrates this – as it describes the attempt of an unnamed vessel to get past the blockade. ‘A signal for a ship – all eyes one way – To see her round Cabreta – for the Bay’ strikingly demonstrates the propensity for Gibraltar-based eyes to be drawn towards the ocean, as the entire garrison observed the unresolved naval conflict.<sup>236</sup> Budworth continues by stressing the disparity in skill between British and Spanish sailors:

A broad-side fir’d – see how she closely veers,

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<sup>233</sup> *Letters of Anna Seward: Written between the years 1784 and 1807 Volume I*. Edited by Archibald Constable (Edinburgh: George Romney & Company, 1811), 348.

<sup>234</sup> Budworth provides shocking details that demonstrate the horrors of life under siege – in particular, when one of his close friends succumbed to a speculative shot by an enemy marksman: ‘One fatal shot (the saddest in the day) Tore from my friend – the vital spark away’. Joseph Budworth, *The Siege of Gibraltar, a Poem* (London: Hookham and Carpenter, 1795), 20.

<sup>235</sup> Budworth was wounded during the siege. Thompson Cooper, revised by M. Clare Loughlin-Chow, ‘Joseph Palmer [formerly Budworth]’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Vol. 43*. Edited by Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 514.

<sup>236</sup> Budworth, *The Siege of Gibraltar, a Poem*, 12.

And in the wind, the skilful pilot steers.  
Another giv'n – the pilot changes tack,  
And throws the less-skill'd enemy a-back.

In this instance, the vessel successfully 'makes the Rock – and leaves her foes behind'. But the verse's last two lines exemplify the effect that failure could have upon the garrison: 'But when a luckless vessel falls a prey, We d—m her – and are sulky all the day'. Despite favouring a more chronological approach than other writers, Budworth's poem nevertheless partook in many of the same tropes, including making similar connections to classical antiquity. Budworth introduces Curtis – 'the naval Chief' – in the midst of the destruction of the floating batteries, positioning him as a man 'In whom true courage, and good conduct join, In whom Humanity did nobly shine'. But Budworth's characterisation of Curtis was tempered with outright disgust for the actions of the Spanish. After rescuing 'The victim'd Spaniards from the' impending grave', Budworth tells how the Spanish continued to fire upon Curtis's men:

But what – the haughty Spaniard will not do;  
Witness, ye base – your murders at Peru;  
No wonder then – as the good naval Chief  
Did almost more, than man – to yield relief;  
Her very sons – should fire upon the crew:  
Deny it, Spain? – She cannot – 'tis too true.

This incident, which clearly exercised Budworth, intriguingly does not appear in other descriptions – and most revealingly of all, it is not present in Curtis's own account. The scene of absolute destruction may have understandably resulted in confused reactions. Curtis's letter to the Admiralty (printed in the descriptive text attached to Jefferys's *The Scene before Gibraltar*) described the horrific scene, with ships continuing to explode as

the fire got to the magazines, and the firing of the cannon of others, as the metal became heated by the flames, rendered this a very perilous employment.<sup>237</sup>

It is entirely plausible that onlookers interpreted the accidental cannon fire as a malicious act on the part of the Spaniards. Whatever the truth, for many observers, the destruction of the floating batteries represented the siege's true climax, rather than Howe's relief or the siege's actual end date, 7 February 1783. Yet Budworth's account, tinged with authentic eyewitness details, lent the burgeoning legend that accompanied Curtis's actions further credibility. It also went further than simple tacit recognition of the superiority of British seamanship and railed against the apparent inhumane actions of the Spanish in comparison to the benevolence exhibited by British sailors. In some instances the Royal Navy's role in the siege was not exclusively celebrated or even mentioned. Yet even where this was the case, authors continuously fell back upon maritime-inspired phraseology and oceanic metaphors to demonstrate the Rock's importance as a British possession. The known classical connotations of Gibraltar, as one of the 'pillars of Hercules', also allowed many writers to directly associate the British Empire with the empires of antiquity. As would become characteristic of much of the subsequent Gibraltar-inspired literary work, poets revelled in describing the ancient nature of the Rock – or 'Calpe', its Latin name. The purpose of such connotations was, of course, to symbolically link classical civilisations to the Rock's current occupier, as Thicknesse did:

Lo! on these Rocks, whose blood-disputed right,  
Contending nations long engaged in fight,  
Victorious Britain sits enshrined in stone;  
Herself a *rock*, and not to be o'erthrown.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> WSRO, Buckle MSS 521.

<sup>238</sup> Philip Thicknesse, *Gibraltar Delivered, a poem, in Latin and English* (London: M. Davis, 1783), 9.

Whilst waiting for Howe's expected relief, Budworth recalled seeing an eagle, of which it was commented: 'Why should not the *Britons* think it an omen of victory, as the *Romans* would have done?'<sup>239</sup> Many of these works referred to Gibraltar as 'Calpe', and made constant reference to 'Britannia', the Roman personification of Britain. The latter was clearly not unusual for the time, but for contemporary observers it appeared providential that Britain shared a classical heritage with the empires of antiquity through its possession of Gibraltar. The behaviour of British soldiers and sailors seemed to live up to such martial connotations. Thomas Dermody's *Gibraltar* (1807) referred to Eliott as 'The Mars of Albion', and to the victorious British defenders 'Like a dreadful row of gods embattled on Olympus top'. For Diego Sagla, Dermody equating Britons with classical figures was counter-balanced by his comparison of Spanish forces to the sixteenth-century armada.<sup>240</sup> Suffering the same fate, 'Spain's dismounted fleet' off Gibraltar two centuries later was, for Dermody, evidence of 'the Muse's truth' – that Britain possessing Gibraltar was providentially assured by the gods of antiquity.<sup>241</sup>

The Great Siege also ensured Gibraltar's presence in musical works and theatre productions intended to be performed publicly. Howe's relief in 1782 inspired a Hungarian noblewoman to commission Mozart to set a piece to a verse from the Austrian poet Michael Denis. Although the work remained unfinished, news of the relief had nevertheless occasioned Mozart to express his 'great joy' at what he described as 'England's triumph'.<sup>242</sup> Internationally as well as nationally then, it was the specifically naval events that provided the major inspiration for cultural reactions to the siege. The well-appreciated brutality of the destruction of the floating batteries is also apparent in Robert Burns' cantata *The Jolly Beggars* (1785). Part of the composition is sung by a soldier who was a veteran of the Plains

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<sup>239</sup> Budworth, *The Siege of Gibraltar*, 14.

<sup>240</sup> Diego Sagla, *Poetic Castles in Spain: British Romanticism and Figurations of Iberia* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 42.

<sup>241</sup> Thomas Dermody, *The harp of Erin, the poetical works of T. Dermody* (London: Richard Phillips, 1807), 265.

<sup>242</sup> Friedrich Kerst, *Mozart: the Man and the Artist* (Fairfield: Literary Society, 2004), 55.

of Abraham in 1759 ('a son of Mars who have been in many wars, and show my cuts and scars wherever I come'). However, he is described as having lost an arm and a leg at Gibraltar, where he was 'with Curtis among the floating batt'ries'.<sup>243</sup> Burns' soldier was undoubtedly a satirical caricature of a heedless patriot.<sup>244</sup> But the poet's evocation of this distinctly maritime event, at the expense of numerous land engagements that might have sufficed demonstrates the prevalence of the siege in contemporary British culture. Moreover, it highlights just how dominant the scene of the floating batteries had become, as even interpretations focused upon soldiers forced their subjects into the naval sphere. Similarly, Susanna Blamire's song *Old Harry's Return* concerned a soldier recently home from Gibraltar.<sup>245</sup> But again, the memory of events at the Rock is framed through his supposed participation in the rescue of stricken Spanish sailors.<sup>246</sup> Success on land was thin on the ground during the American War, and as demonstrated above, the 1782 victories at the Saintes and Gibraltar gave British morale a distinctly naval boost. However, the uniqueness of Gibraltar's position allowed for soldiers to be present (however inaccurately) in satirical and sentimental cultural productions. Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins' epistolary novel *The Victim of Fancy* (1787) places the brother of its heroine Theresa Morven at Gibraltar as a Major in the army. Welcoming him home at Portsmouth, Theresa is shocked to find that he has been severely injured, 'having received a dangerous wound at the moment of assisting

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<sup>243</sup> Robert Burns, *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns, Vol. VI* (New York: Cosimo, 2009), 129-130.

<sup>244</sup> For a discussion of *The Jolly Beggars* see Alan Bold, *A Burns Companion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 212.

<sup>245</sup> Blamire attributed the rescue to the orders of General Eliott: 'For when that the Spaniards were wreck'd on the tide – "They are soldiers, my lads, let us save them," he cried'. *The Poetical Works of Miss Susanna Blamire* (Edinburgh: John Menzies, 1842), 196-7.

<sup>246</sup> Christopher Maycock described Blamire's song in the following terms: 'The artlessness of the song belies the depth of Susanna's knowledge of the historical background'. Blamire's composition 'The Sailor Lad's Return' is also said by Maycock to refer to the experience of a sailor in Lord Howe's relief. Blamire's brother William served on *Alexander* during the campaign. *A Passionate Poet: Susanna Blamire, 1747-94, a Biography* (Penzance: Patten Press, 2003), 77-8.

the gallant Curtis in the protection of his enemies'.<sup>247</sup> Inserting Major Morven into Curtis's rescue allowed his character's humanity - extolled by Theresa throughout the novel – to be emphatically conveyed to the reader at its conclusion. Thanks to the large garrison, it was plausible to readers that soldiers may have participated in the action.

The Great Siege also provoked an active response in theatre and stage productions. The Rock appeared in the performative operatic art form, as both London in 1784 and Dublin in 1785 staged Robert Houlton's 'Gibraltar'.<sup>248</sup> Notably, however, Frederick Pilon had scripted *The Siege of Gibraltar: A musical farce* as a direct response to Rodney's successful relief in 1780. At the play's conclusion, the garrison watches nervously as a vessel flying a Spanish flag approaches. After a drawn out and typically farcical explanation, Rodney's victory is proclaimed, and the character Major Bromfield exclaims

this is a piece of intelligence which once more dispels the gloom from Gibraltar. Let the whole garrison salute the fleet, for the strength and bulwark of England at all times has proved her navy.

This expression of Gibraltar's reliance upon the Royal Navy, communicated by a fictional military officer in the context of an ongoing siege is revealing of how contemporaries judged the Rock would ultimately be safeguarded. But, as demonstrated elsewhere, the navy's defence of Gibraltar was strongly associated with cultural conceptions of Britain as a successful maritime trading nation. In response to Bromfield, a Sergeant O'Bradley states that 'the firmest ground an Englishman ever stood upon is the ocean'.<sup>249</sup> Despite the drawn-out way that the garrison received the news, the play's conclusion envisaged the navy sailing into Gibraltar in calm, benign circumstances – a representation that corresponded heavily

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<sup>247</sup> Elizabeth Sophia Tomlins, *The Victim of Fancy*. Edited by Daniel Cook (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 100.

<sup>248</sup> Hibernian Journal, Monday 23 February 1784; Dublin Evening Post, Saturday 7 May 1785.

<sup>249</sup> Frederick Pilon, *The Siege of Gibraltar: a Musical Farce in two Acts* (London: G. Kearsly, 1780), 41.

with later artistic representations of the event. In January 1784, a Pantomime appeared on Drury Lane titled *Harlequin Junior; or, THE MAGIC CISTUS*, a production that according to *The European Magazine* was a ‘satire on the inconstancy of modern husbands’. Consequently, the capricious husband Harlequin spends the pantomime wandering from his beautiful wife Columbine – that is, until his riches and partner are taken away from him, to be returned only when he has ‘by his own virtue and courage performed such actions as may deserve her’. Accordingly, Harlequin is sent to the siege of Gibraltar, ‘where, after fighting gallantly in defence of his country, he is at length forgiven, and directed to “stray no more”’. The inherent connotations of idealised male behaviours and how patriotically serving one’s country could deliver them are clear, and Gibraltar was undoubtedly a useful vessel into which such concerns could be poured. Furthermore, the pantomime’s climax once again emphasised that the cultural reception of Gibraltar was refracted primarily through naval culture and imagery. The magazine described the final scene, ‘exhibiting the destruction of the gun-boats at Gibraltar’ as ‘full of terrible grandeur. The red-hot balls, the bombs, and the ships on fire, form a picture of sublime beauty.’ A sample of the pantomime’s lyrics was printed in the magazine, including the following verse from a ‘Chorus of Sailors’:

OLD England to thyself be true,  
 Firm as this rock thy same shall stand:  
 The sword that Elliott, Curtis drew,  
 Be never wanted thro’ the land:  
 Join then this prayer, our foes shall rue,  
 Let England to herself be true.<sup>250</sup>

The legacy of the floating batteries continued to be apparent on stage well into the Napoleonic period, and in increasingly spectacular fashion. In 1804, the Sadler’s Wells theatre hosted *Okeaneia* – a sequence of productions that according to *The Lady’s Monthly Museum* intended to ‘produce representations of every remarkable naval

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<sup>250</sup> *European Magazine*, 68-9.

victory'.<sup>251</sup> The theatre was specially adapted for the purpose; the stage could be flooded and a tank in the roof allowed for a waterfall effect to be displayed.<sup>252</sup> Charles Dibdin's *The Siege of Gibraltar* formed part of this set piece that had an undeniably rousing effect upon its audience.<sup>253</sup> The moment 'when the British sailors plunged from the boat into the water' in order to save the drowning Spaniards – played by children – was said to have 'acted as an electric shock upon the audience'.<sup>254</sup> According to Susan Valladares, the production's success was a 'blockbuster sensation' that popularised the aqua-drama format for a more genteel audience.<sup>255</sup> It was an undoubtedly maritime spectacle, with the stage visibly 'flooded from the orchestra to the extremity of the Theatre', but it was also explicitly naval – as the *Museum* reported, 'The ships, floating batteries, &c. were beautiful models, and perfect, in every respect, to the smallest minutiae'.<sup>256</sup> The various musical and stage productions described here displayed their patriotic reactions to the siege and to Gibraltar's continuing status as a British possession overwhelmingly through naval events and iconography. Furthermore, these demonstrations did not merely represent an idealised form of 'stoic' resistance by the garrison – an image that has come to define the siege for modern commentators. Rather, they chose to depict the scene that represented the most active form of resistance. That this moment occurred at sea, and featured the Royal Navy, only served to increase the cultural reception of such works, as they inevitably chimed with public expectations of Britain's 'wooden walls' and its traditional safeguard.

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<sup>251</sup> *The Lady's Monthly Museum* Vol. XII, 347.

<sup>252</sup> Susan Valladares, 'The Changing Theatrical Economy: Charles Dibdin the Younger at Sadler's Wells, 1814-19', in *Charles Dibdin and Late Georgian Culture*. Edited by Oskar Cox Jensen, David Kennerly and Ian Newman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 172.

<sup>253</sup> Many of Dibdin's most popular works were patriotically inspired sea songs – including 'Poor Jack' (1789) and 'Push the Grog About' (1789). Jon A. Gillespie, 'Charles Dibdin', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 16. Edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 28.

<sup>254</sup> Russell, *Theatres of War*, 72; *Lady's Monthly Museum*, 347.

<sup>255</sup> Susan Valladares, *Staging the Peninsular War: English Theatres 1807-1815* (London: Routledge, 2015), 110.

<sup>256</sup> Dibdin had assiduously researched the fine details of this maritime spectacle, even recruiting shipwrights from Woolwich to construct the boats, which were fully functional. Russell, *Theatres of War*, 71-2.



## Conclusions

The destruction of the Spanish floating batteries was certainly the event from the Great Siege that elicited the most passionate cultural reaction. Most depictions of Curtis's actions in September 1782 were based upon idealised reproductions by distant observers. These events, and Roger Curtis's heroic rescue of the Spanish sailors allowed contemporary expectations of superiority and magnanimity to be dramatically displayed to the wider British public. But Gibraltar as a platform, both literally and metaphorically, was also ripe for such interpretations that drew clear comparisons between Britain's martial capabilities and those of ancient civilisations. In the context of the end of the American War, which saw significant military reverses for Britain, it was even more important for those connotations to be publicly reaffirmed. This was not merely exclusive to works of art, but to works that appeared in verse and on stage as well. In a way strikingly similar to the furnishing fabrics discussed above, the naval legacy of the siege is readily apparent in its commemoration in verse and performative cultural forms, as Gibraltar invariably came to be remembered and represented overwhelmingly through expressions of naval exploits rather than soldierly resistance.

As discussed above, even a broad range of cultural sources, such as this chapter has attempted to compile invariably have limitations when attempting to ascertain public opinion regarding Gibraltar. However, what the above collection of sources points to is that the navy often superceded the Rock's supposedly martial character and fortress-like qualities when Gibraltar did appear in British cultural forms. In the evolving global landscape of the late nineteenth century, reconfiguring itself in the wake of the Suez Canal's construction (opened 1869) and the existence of a new maritime trade route to the East, Gibraltar's value continued to be viewed primarily through the actions of eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century heroic naval figures and battles. The pre-eminence of naval symbolism in discussions of Gibraltar calls into question the current historiographical orthodoxy concerning both the internal structure of the Rock's militarily constructed society and its status within the wider

British world. The legacy of Gibraltar's contribution to formations of identity and national pride has in recent times focused upon the resistance of its military garrison in times of siege. However, eighteenth and nineteenth-century culture actively placed the Rock alongside the more traditionally celebrated centrepieces of British imperial achievement. The Royal Navy was consistently present in cultural works and political discussions that led to the conceptualisation of Gibraltar as identifiably 'British'.





## Conclusion

A strand of eighteenth-century opinion had seen diminishing Gibraltar's status as a patriotic act of refocusing government foreign policy away from a barren, commercially unproductive Rock. However, the proliferation of cultural material that appeared in the aftermath of the Great Siege proved critical in what might be termed the 're-making' of Gibraltar as a thoroughly British possession. Plank's assessment of the siege's importance, whilst useful, does not fully appreciate the impact and legacy of such works. The repulse of the siege itself was not solely responsible for engendering greater affection towards the Rock – rather, artists and writers were inspired by the specific ways in which it was repulsed, leading to Gibraltar occupying a much greater space in the British cultural milieu. New paintings, journals, poems and songs continually re-inserted Gibraltar into national discussions concerning patriotism and the performance of Britain's armed forces. Despite Gibraltar's subsequent reputation as a military 'fortress', naval iconography and naval individuals representing suitably 'heroic' behaviours were overwhelmingly represented in most of these works. It was primarily naval events that characterised the Rock's reputation in the years that followed, in particular the story of Sir Roger Curtis. Ultimately, the lifting of the siege provided great short-term comfort to a beleaguered Britain in the latter stages of the American Revolutionary war, but it was the celebration and commemoration of specific events throughout the years that followed that provided the Rock with a patriotic narrative through which it could be accepted as a British possession.

Robert Browning's poem *Home-Thoughts, from the Sea* conveyed an idealised yearning for England in response to the culturally significant coastal landmarks of the western Mediterranean and its Atlantic approaches.<sup>1</sup> Successive lines list, under a 'glorious blood-red' sunset: Cape St Vincent, Cadiz and Trafalgar, and finally, Gibraltar. Observing these geographical landmarks from the sea, the viewer asks

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<sup>1</sup> *Selections from Robert Browning*. Edited by Robert Morss Lovett (Chicago: Wildside Press, 1934), 51.

“Here and here did England help me: how can I help England?”. The magazine *Echoes* referenced the poem in 1869, in response to an apparent suggestion by an admiral that Gibraltar should be given up. The contributor stated incredulously:

An admiral recommends the cession of Gibraltar! Verily we should like to call up a council of dead admirals to discuss the matter. What would Nelson think of the proposal? What would Rooke and Rodney, Elliott, Curtis, Saumarez?<sup>2</sup>

In this instance, the Royal Navy’s role in securing Gibraltar is clearly evident in the British historical memory of the late nineteenth century. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt’s poem *Gibraltar* did not reference the navy specifically, but its presentation of Gibraltar’s bay as a safe harbour of ‘still water and the calm of a sweet evening’ after ‘seven weeks of sea, and twice seven days of storm Upon the huge Atlantic’ spoke to an evident cultural assumption. That is, as Blunt wrote, that Britain’s martial spirit had pacified ‘the famed rock which Hercules And Goth and Moor bequeath’d us’.<sup>3</sup> Gibraltar continued to be associated with the narrative of naval success in surprising ways. In 1887 the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette* carried a ‘short sketch’ of the Royal Navy, which specifically referenced ‘the action between our fleet, under Lord Howe, and the combined fleets of France and Spain off Gibraltar’, over several more recognisable battles.<sup>4</sup> Alongside patriotically connecting the Rock to the Royal Navy, nineteenth-century opinion also recognised Gibraltar’s status as an important node for extending British trade and power in a more concrete way than in the previous century. In 1855, the *Ipswich Advertiser* printed a full-page feature on the Great Siege, which attributed England’s ‘supremacy in the Mediterranean, and immense commerce with the surrounding coasts’ to its control of the Straits of Gibraltar. The piece concluded by emphasising how Gibraltar’s importance extended beyond its status as a supposedly ‘impregnable’ fortress:

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<sup>2</sup> *Echoes*, Volume 1, Saturday January 9 1869, 2.

<sup>3</sup> R. D. Heinl, *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1967), 134

<sup>4</sup> *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, Wednesday 30 November 1887.

for whether it be regarded as the key to the Mediterranean commerce; or as an advantageous station from whence a British armament may issue to the terror of its foes, or retire in perfect safety from the attack of a superior enemy; it has certainly become a place of considerable consequence to Britain.

Edward Pelham Brenton's 1838 biography of Lord St Vincent contains a vignette that succinctly conveys the cherished place that Gibraltar occupied within naval society. At an unspecified date, Brenton presented the Earl with a drawing of Gibraltar's Rock and bay, that he had drawn himself in 1812. St Vincent 'placed it in his drawing-room, and said he took great delight in looking at it, as it reminded him of many by-gone events'.<sup>5</sup> For St Vincent, then (whose comments have been used to demonstrate Gibraltar's failings), the memory of Gibraltar conjured up proud recollections, perhaps even of the battle that earned him his earldom. The stretch of European coastline that straddled the meeting point of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean was littered with important sites that became ingrained in the lexicon of the Royal Navy's memorialising nomenclature, of which Gibraltar was an integral piece.

The modern historiographical reaction to the British presence at Gibraltar is dominated by a focus on the military garrison and the resulting inward social and economic pressures of the so-called 'garrison state'. But Gibraltar was increasingly thought of by contemporaries as what Jenks termed a 'naval symbol' – a topic and landmark around which the Royal Navy's role in British society was continually debated and celebrated.<sup>6</sup> Debates about its value to Britain, which had raged even in the latter stages of the Great Siege, had gradually given way to a tacit acceptance of the need for a fortified presence in the Mediterranean. Political opinions of Gibraltar were divided along ideological lines prior to the Great Siege, as advocates of free trade derided it as a financial sinkhole which consumed more resources than it produced, whilst others championed its strategic value. The Great Siege was

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<sup>5</sup> Brenton concluded the anecdote with this addendum: 'The deeds of the days of other years' – a reference to a line from the epic poem *Fingal*, by the Scottish poet James Macpherson. Brenton, *Life and Correspondence*, 478.

<sup>6</sup> Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, 6.

critical in re-orienting Gibraltar into the space of a truly cherished colonial possession in British hearts and minds, as 'heroic' acts added on layers of cultural appreciation that were celebrated in art and in print. Gibraltar, then, in the aftermath of the Great Siege became a crucible through which evolving ideas of empire and British success coalesced and aligned themselves alongside artistic and public demonstrations of the Royal Navy's dominance at sea. In the process, viewpoints shifted away from seeing a potential value to losing Gibraltar and towards policies that supported its permanent retention. As this chapter has shown, a huge amount of cultural material concerning Gibraltar was either naval in origin, or highly revealing of a mind-set that appreciated how dependent the Rock's security was upon the Royal Navy. When commenting upon a rumoured attack upon Gibraltar in 1807, the *Kentish Weekly Post* expressed not only nonchalance at the chance of its success ('of the result of such an attack, should it really be meditated, we entertain no serious apprehension'), it pointed to recent history to suggest a glorious outcome: 'Gibraltar's famous rock, however barren in other respects, will produce an abundant crop of laurels to grace another triumph of the Sons of Britain'.<sup>7</sup> The Rock's position within the empire had certainly shifted since the onset of the Great Siege, and as this thesis has shown, the vast majority of the 'laurels' produced there were naval in origin. In the finale to Pilon's 1780 play *The Siege of Gibraltar*, Major Bromfield sings 'Led by glory, Britons ever, Shall their well-earn'd laurels keep; Bourbon's gordian still they'll sever, And reign rulers of the deep'.<sup>8</sup> By neglecting to seriously consider Gibraltar's relationship with the sea, modern historians have consequently overlooked the profound importance of the Royal Navy in culturally linking the Rock to Britain and the wider empire. As shown in poetry and literature, reporting in regional and national newspapers, and in artistic representations, naval symbolism was crucial to this process.

Visitors undoubtedly derived great pride from the Rock's fortifications and its history of resisting attack. But in Gibraltar the maritime sphere was never far from view, and even vistas that included militarily impressive bastions and battlements

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<sup>7</sup> *Kentish Weekly Post or Canterbury Journal*, Tuesday 10 November 1807.

<sup>8</sup> Pilon, *The Siege of Gibraltar*, 41.



also featured British naval vessels and the naval architecture of the dockyard and victualling facilities. Modern developments, however, have rendered Gibraltar's waterfront markedly different from the period discussed in this thesis. The line wall, where William Mark had stood and watched the Woodin family come under attack from Spanish gunboats in 1804, is now in places up to a kilometre from the sea. The King's Bastion, which bore the brunt of the 'Grand Assault' during the Great Siege and previously sat directly on the waterfront is now flanked by high-rise residential developments where vessels would once have resided in the harbour. Land reclamation had extended the dockyard in the 1890's, but in the 1980's a much more extensive project substantially increased Gibraltar's footprint and eased the pressure on space available for affordable housing.<sup>9</sup> A further expansion into the harbour is planned whilst another project aims to create a superyacht marina on Gibraltar's eastern side. Even prior to these projects, however, nineteenth-century developments to the Rock's fortifications had rendered its physical landscape different to that experienced in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. The line wall was rebuilt in 1841, and in the same year Wellington Front bastion was built south of King's Bastion – which was itself remodelled later in the century to facilitate greater firepower.<sup>10</sup> The Rock's fortifications were undeniably present to residents and visitors between 1779-1830, but Gibraltar's ramparts have also assuredly evolved and strengthened over time. Modern commentaries of 'fortress' Gibraltar have not thus far contextualised experiences within this framework. Standing on the line wall today produces a distinctly different experience to that of William Mark's over two-hundred years ago.

Gibraltar has often been connected to the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars through the naval battles of St Vincent, the Nile and Trafalgar. However, this thesis has shown that smaller-scale yet acutely visible skirmishes in the bay brought the

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Garcia, *The Changing Face of Gibraltar in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Gibraltar: FotoGrafiks Design, 2017), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 135; Fa and Finlayson, *Fortifications*, 31-2; 33.

wars sharply into the lives of those watching from the Rock's shoreline. Jason Musteen describes all three of the large-scale engagements, as well as Saumarez's two battles during the campaign of 1801 as being 'inextricably linked to Gibraltar'.<sup>11</sup> His argument that the twin battles of 1801 were a turning point for Gibraltar's population gives an insight into how varied forms of naval activity around the Rock have been overlooked. But it also demonstrates how the dominant historiographical trends concerning Gibraltar persist in generating conclusions couched in the language of siege warfare. Musteen writes:

Prior to the twin naval battles at Gibraltar, the war had been a distant reality for those on the Rock, particularly for the civilian population. With fourteen sieges in the history of Gibraltar, the Gibraltarians, many of whom were survivors of the Great Siege, expected the Rock to be the site of a land battle. However, the naval battles in the summer of 1801 made the war a local reality and also reinforced the strategic value of Gibraltar as a naval station commanding access to the Straits of Gibraltar.<sup>12</sup>

The testimonies of, amongst many others, Benjamin Miller, Aeneas Anderson and George Landmann all illustrate the substantial impact that gunboat warfare had upon Gibraltar's community. Moreover, a broad range of sources show that people looked towards the navy and to the sea in general whilst living on the Rock. The community actively celebrated Gibraltar's history as a British possession – specifically through commemorating the anniversary of 13 September. Gibraltar's lived experience appears to contradict Isaac Land's argument that Britons serving overseas, 'guarding imperial possessions whose names and histories eluded them' felt no overt threat to Britain, which was 'not exactly under continuous siege in this period'.<sup>13</sup> Gibraltar was very much felt to be under threat, and in experiencing that threat its inhabitants extolled the navy's performance and its history in defending the Rock. Crucially, they did so even after the progress of the Peninsular war shifted

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<sup>11</sup> Musteen, *Nelson's Refuge*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Confusingly, Musteen later recognised the effectiveness of the Spanish gunboats, writing that they 'had plagued the army and navy for decades' merely a page after stating that the 'war had been a distant reality' in the passage quoted above. Musteen, *Nelson's Refuge*, 139-140.

<sup>13</sup> Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor*, 5.

the military epicentre away from southern Spain and the spectre of gunboat attack diminished. Prize vessels continued to be brought into Gibraltar, and the continental system drove its growth as a commercial entrepot. The navy at Gibraltar was also a crucial facilitator of information and finances into Iberia during the Peninsular war. The large numbers of soldiers and impressive fortifications notwithstanding, it had also been surprisingly common for residents of Gibraltar to contrast the inactivity of its garrison against the intensity of the naval actions fought nearby. Some even had their safe passages to Gibraltar threatened by these same processes. Musteen's study was chronologically focused upon the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, but others with broader timescales have similarly fallen back on simplistic conclusions regarding the character and outlook of the Rock's community. Histories of Gibraltar have found convenient echoes between the dynamic of living alongside a large military garrison and the politically embattled modern Gibraltarian community. These parallels can undoubtedly be drawn, but they do not totally represent the experience of Gibraltar during the period discussed here.

Representations of Gibraltar's military character have occasionally had detrimental effects upon other fields that might have benefitted from the input of naval historiography. Daniel Froid's assessment of Catharine Upton's work is a case in point. As noted above, Upton's account of the Great Siege was heavily impacted by her encounter with the maritime sphere. Spanish gunboat attacks were her primary motivation for returning to England, and her narrative of the voyage home revealed her anxiety at the threat of being captured at sea. Yet through his reading of Gibraltar's military history, and filtered through the work of Grocott and Stockey, Froid's assessment instead frames Upton's experience as one that highlights how 'Gibraltar functioned as a symbol of Britain's power and strength'.<sup>14</sup> Instead of recognising the naval aspects present in Upton's work, Froid falls back upon Gibraltar's history of having been besieged fourteen times. Upton's account was one of many that explicitly demonstrated Gibraltar's geographical weakness to

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<sup>14</sup> "The works of Catharine Upton", *Romantic Circles*, accessed 31 March 2020, <https://romantic-circles.org/editions/upton/editions.2016.upton.intro.html>.

maritime attack, but there were many others that celebrated British naval superiority through its retention in 1783 and its continuing status as a British possession in the years that followed. Too often, such sources have been obscured by the shadow cast by the Rock's current historiographical image, and even the recent advances in the cultural and social historiography of the navy have been unable to penetrate the fortress paradigm.

Negative projections of Gibraltar's importance have also filtered through to modern histories of the navy. Ellen Gill's work on Susanna Middleton's correspondence is confusingly accompanied by a lengthy footnote describing Gibraltar as 'not a major naval or military stronghold during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.'<sup>15</sup> Unhelpfully framed through Hills's unfavourable assessment, this statement is at odds with the corpus of her work, which situated Susanna as a naval wife in a challenging yet socially vibrant context. Gill also stresses the importance of 'military, diplomatic and naval networks' in furnishing her with news whilst residing there.<sup>16</sup> In such a context discussions of Gibraltar's importance are unproductive. The Rock's effectiveness as a depot for goods, people and information materially affected the lived experience of the families – naval or otherwise – that resided there. Naval histories have also been culpable in not fully explaining the relationship between the Royal Navy and the Rock. Macdonald's article in the Naval Dockyard Society's special volume on Gibraltar's dockyard could have benefitted from a greater enquiry into Gibraltarian history. When describing an increase to the cost of the Rosia water tanks that were built by Giovanni Maria Boschetti, she understandably suggests that this was due to his 'virtual monopoly of building work in the town and garrison'.<sup>17</sup> If he had such a monopoly, it was indicative of a British willingness to incorporate people from the wider Mediterranean (Boschetti was, after all an Italian catholic) into Gibraltar's society if it helped to strengthen their operational capacity in that theatre. Similarly, Constantine's work, which featured Boschetti as a member of the new Gibraltarian social elite boldly constructing a

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<sup>15</sup> Gill, *Naval Families*, 163n.

<sup>16</sup> Gill, *Naval Families*, 174.

<sup>17</sup> Macdonald, 'The Victualling Yard at Gibraltar', 54-5.

civic identity in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, could have substantially benefitted from the further context provided by the extensive evidence of lucrative naval contracts awarded to him and that Macdonald presented in her work. Boschetti is of course just one individual, but he is emblematic of how historiographical insights have been concealed within the gulf that exists between naval and Gibraltarian historiographies. His history of having constructed large projects for the benefit of the Royal Navy is crucial in understanding how he came to be involved with the Exchange and Commercial Library in 1817. Traditional naval histories that have placed importance on Gibraltar as a strategic location have not successfully explored the navy's social and cultural links to the Rock's community. Meanwhile, histories of Gibraltar have upheld its traditional 'fortress' image through militaristic vocabularies, in the process excluding the navy from being meaningfully incorporated into discussions concerning the construction of Gibraltar's civic identity.

To speak of Gibraltar as an important strategic location for the Royal Navy is not controversial. In seeking to promote the role of the navy as a cultural and social institution within Gibraltar, and to stress the impact of naval warfare upon the civic society that began to cohesively emerge in the post-Napoleonic period, however, this thesis has not sought to denigrate the importance of the military. Rather, it is hoped that the currently dominant garrison state/fortress orthodoxy can be challenged and improved upon. Jenks's study of the Royal Navy and British patriotism also made clear this distinction, and his observation that naval actions 'were more readily invested with imaginative consequences and significance' is highly pertinent in the context of Gibraltar, where no definitive military action with the enemy actually took place after the Great Siege.<sup>18</sup> Soldiers and ramparts were highly visible to residents and visitors, and military routine in many ways dictated the schedule of daily life on the Rock. But Gibraltar was surely a unique fortress, where instead of secluding themselves from the outside world behind high walls inhabitants could instead glimpse what Henry Sewell Stokes termed the 'wide

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<sup>18</sup> Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, 3-4.

world of waters', with commerce and travellers usually being borne securely under the protection of the Royal Navy. It is scarcely believable that residents of the British 'seapower state' could arrive at a fortress, render themselves wholly influenced by military practises and in the process find the cultural place of the navy in the British empire diminished within their worldview. The various sources discussed above demonstrate that this was not the case. Moreover, soldiers and other non-naval visitors to the Rock espoused the centrality of the Royal Navy and its positive impact upon British commerce in their writings. Surprisingly, modern histories of Gibraltar have not picked up on these insights and have largely chosen to instead frame historical events against modern political events that have placed uniquely modern pressures upon Gibraltar and its populace.

Some historians have argued that the opening of the Suez canal in 1869 led to Gibraltar assuming a greater role within the empire, as it came to form a link in the chain of British possessions that ran through the Mediterranean and Middle-East to India.<sup>19</sup> But it was possible for people from earlier periods to think of Gibraltar in similar ways. As William Cobbett wrote to Lord Hawkesbury in 1801, Britain had

By this line of naval stations, all of the impregnable, all inaccessible to our enemy, Gibraltar, Mahon, Porto Ferrajo, and Malta... laid a solid foundation for the sway of Great-Britain, in that distant sea, so lately regarded as the patrimony of France

Cobbett argued that these possessions created a barrier between 'French ambition... and our golden territory of the East.'<sup>20</sup> When spoken of in isolation as a 'fortress' Gibraltar itself becomes isolated and isolating; when connected via the sea to wider historical processes it becomes something else entirely. The 'fortress' mentality and historiographical image has largely been fostered by narrow

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<sup>19</sup> John Zumerchik and Steven Laurence Danver, *Seas and Waterways of the World: An Encyclopedia of History, Uses and Issues* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 254; David Abulafia, *The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 851.

<sup>20</sup> William Cobbett, *Letters to the Right Honourable Lord Hawkesbury, and to the Right Honourable Henry Addington on the peace with Buonaparte* (London: Cobbett and Morgan, 1802), 37-8.

histories, many produced by Gibraltarians themselves. The very term ‘Gibraltar’ is a modern construction, and one that would have been alien to people residing at Gibraltar during the period of this thesis’s focus.<sup>21</sup> It has often been deployed anachronistically to describe early iterations of the Rock’s community. Consequently, this thesis has avoided using the term, except when referring to the Rock’s modern historiography and community. The ‘fortress’ image is periodically reinvigorated in response to both external and internal pressures perceived as attacks upon Gibraltarian identity and sovereignty. But Grocott and Stockey are correct in their assessment that such histories can be selective and teleological in approach.<sup>22</sup> Academic historians such as Constantine, Muller and Plank have not successfully contextualised the historiography of Gibraltar within an understanding of how it often reflects an embattled socio-political psyche, rather than an apparently unimpeachable historical truth regarding the character of the Rock.

Nevertheless, the navy has continued to figure prominently in Gibraltar since the Napoleonic period. There were brief flashpoints during the 1969-1985 border crisis when naval skirmishes in the bay appeared imminent.<sup>23</sup> Armed conflict did not ultimately materialise, but the closed border and increased numbers of service personnel altered Gibraltarian society – one impact being that Gibraltar’s social scene flourished.<sup>24</sup> Global conflicts involving Britain have periodically caused naval warfare to reappear in the bay. When part of the squadron that had sunk the *Bismarck* returned to Gibraltar in 1941, one serviceman recalled that

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<sup>21</sup> Blinkhorn, ‘A question of Identity’, 53.

<sup>22</sup> Grocott and Stockey, *Gibraltar*, 3-4.

<sup>23</sup> Benady, *The Royal Navy*, 226.

<sup>24</sup> The memoir of Captain William Pakenham, present on the Rock during the border closure, provides further context: ‘The social round seemed almost frenetic, with everyone entertaining and reciprocating. Our social life was mostly with the British service officers and officials and their wives, and the few British residents of the Rock. We also saw many officers from the British ships which visited. There were also several charming Gibraltarians who were part of this circle.’ William Pakenham, *Sometimes at Sea: Glad Memories of a Naval Life* (Southampton: Talbot Court Press, 2007), 118.

Black Watch pipes played us into harbour, and every resident and serviceman had the day off. Every mole, every wharf, every window was full of flags and people... boats laden with sightseers, buzzed, sailed or rowed around us. A small ray of sunshine in a rather depressing part of the war.<sup>25</sup>

This scene is remarkably similar to the one that greeted Saumarez on his arrival at the Rock with the Nile prizes in 1798 and after his victory in the straits three years later. Saumarez's 1801 Algeciras campaign also resonates strongly with another modern event. When the Falklands crisis erupted in April 1982 the cruise vessel SS *Uganda* was brought into Gibraltar. After a rapid three-day conversion that stretched every sinew of the Rock's resources she sailed for the south Atlantic as a hospital ship, cheered off by Gibraltarians who lined the shore in large numbers.<sup>26</sup> In 1801, Gibraltar's dockyard had similarly strained to refit British vessels, and the community had coalesced on the shore to watch them sail off into battle. The Royal Navy always had the capacity to energise and galvanise the Rock's community in differing ways, but levels of naval activity also signified British intentions to the Gibraltarian populace. For a time, a single British warship was designated on standby to sail for Gibraltar in case a heftier response than small harbour patrol vessels was required to meet Spanish infringements of territorial waters.<sup>27</sup> The Falklands crisis could not stop the closure of Gibraltar's dockyard, despite the plea of Lord Boothby, who in the House of Lords asked a government minister: 'Why choose this moment to harm the Gibraltarians, now happily British subjects, and still further to weaken British naval power?'<sup>28</sup> Naval events may have taken on a different character in the twentieth century, but they have always been key to understanding the experience of Gibraltar within the wider British world.

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Benady, *The Royal Navy*, 188.

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Rankin, *Defending the Rock: Gibraltar and the Second World War* (London: Faber & Faber, 2017), 586-7.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Edmonds, 'Gibraltar – where two monologues do not make a dialogue', *Review of International Studies* Vol 7 no. 4 (1981): 223-4. (217-225)

<sup>28</sup> "Gibraltar Dockyard Closure", *Hansard 1803-2005*, accessed 20 March 2021, [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1983/jul/05/gibraltar-dockyard-closure#S5LV0443P0\\_19830705\\_HOL\\_61](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1983/jul/05/gibraltar-dockyard-closure#S5LV0443P0_19830705_HOL_61).





Appendix 1: William Wells, *Anticipation, or, the contrast to the royal hunt* (1782). British Museum.





*Oh! LORD HOWE -- they Run  
or Jack English Clearing the Gangway before Gibraltar.*

Appendix 2: Thomas Colley, *Oh! LORD HOWE -- they run, or Jack English clearing the Gangway before Gibraltar* (1782). British Museum.





**Taleo, or the Royal Sportsman, running down the Enemies of Great Britain.**

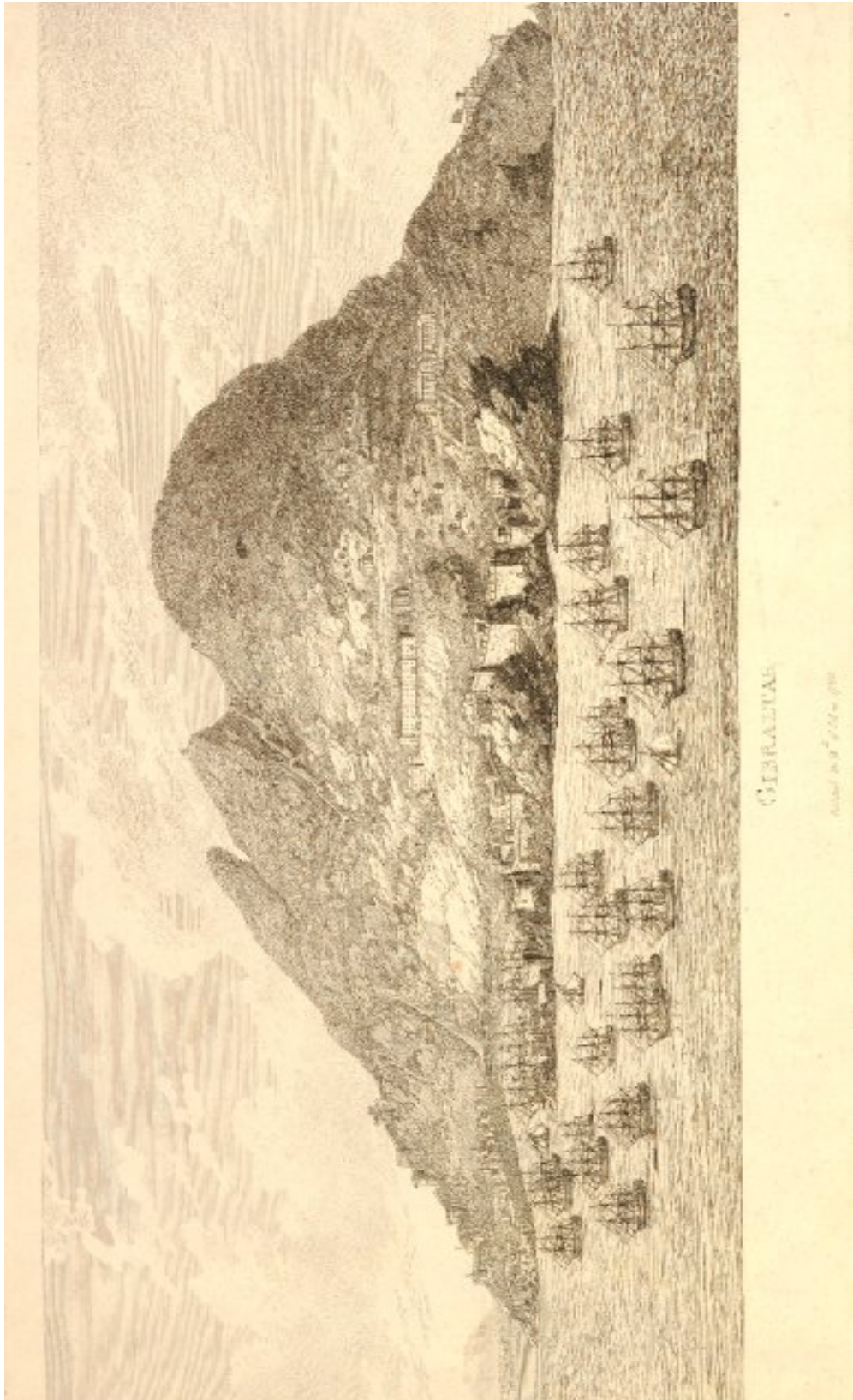
*Published by W. Richardson, Dec. 3, 1782, near Chancery Lane.*

Appendix 3: Thomas Colley, TALEO, or the Royal Sportsman, running down the enemies of Great Britain (1782). British Museum.





Appendix 4: Matthew Darly, *The Game at Football* (1780).



Appendix 5: Anonymous, *View of the rock of Gibraltar with a fleet moored in the foreground* (1780). British Museum.





Appendix 6: Dominic Serres the Elder, *Gibraltar relieved by Sir George Rodney* (1780-82). The Royal Academy 03/460.





Appendix 7: Richard Paton, *Relief of Gibraltar* by Earl Howe, 11 October 1782 (c.1783). National Maritime Museum [BHC0453].





Appendix 8: John Singleton Copley, *The Defeat of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, September 1782* (1791). London Guildhall art Gallery.





Appendix 9: After Francesco Bartolozzi, Mr Copley's Picture of the Siege of Gibraltar as Exhibited in the Green Park near St James's Palace. British Museum [1894,0102.67].





Appendix 10: James Jefferys, *The Scene before Gibraltar, on the Morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 1782* (1782-83). Government Art Collection.





Appendix 11: Thomas Whitcombe, *Destruction of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, 14 September 1782* (1782). National Maritime Museum [BHC0451].





Appendix 12: William Hamilton, *The destruction of the Spanish battering ships before Gibraltar in the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1782*. (I have been unable to determine exactly where this painting is held, although there is a print of it in the British Museum's collection).





Appendix 13: John Keyse Sherwin, A View of Gibraltar with the Spanish battering ships on fire (1784). British Museum





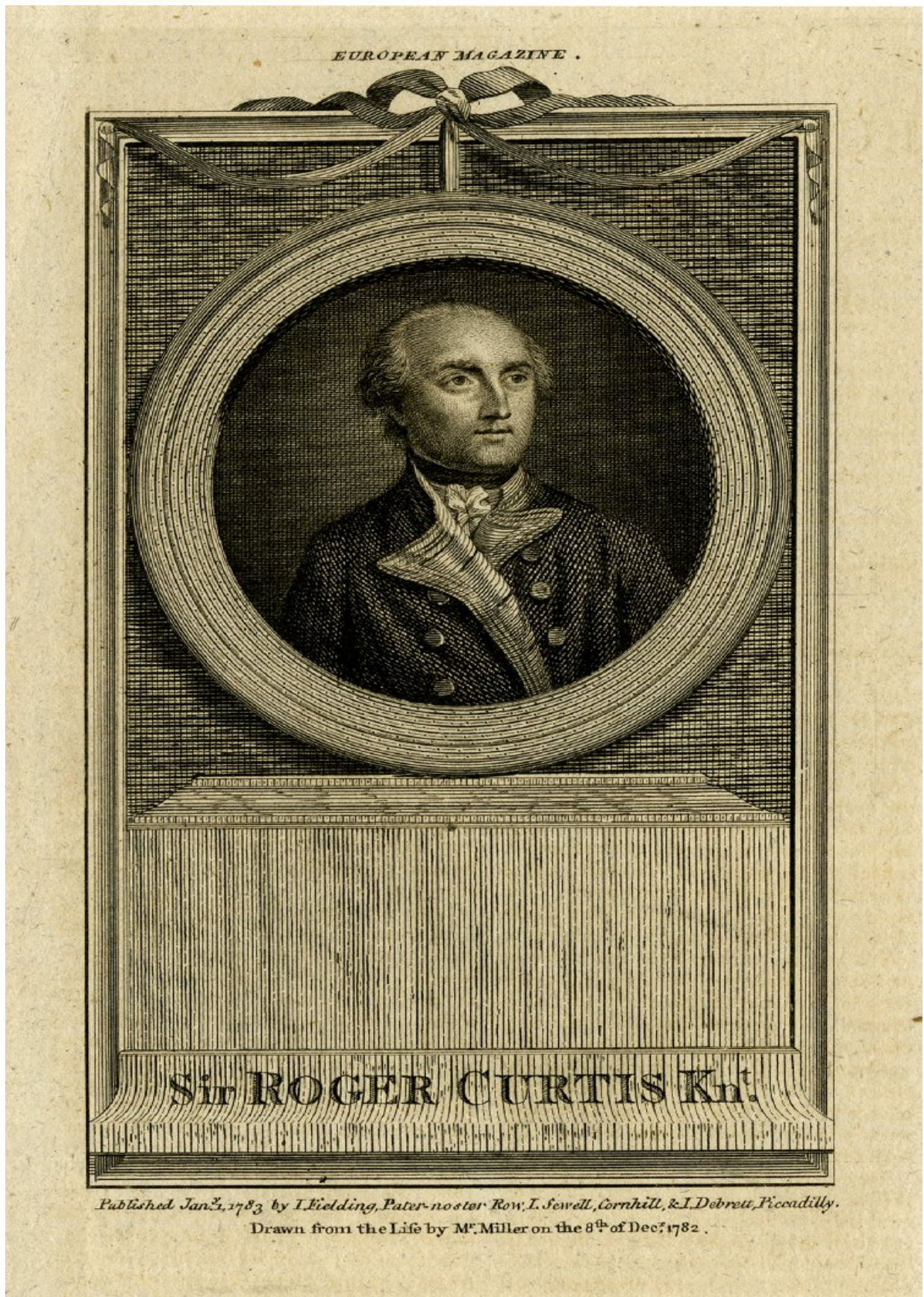
Appendix 14: Robert Pollard, after Nathaniel Hone, *Portrait of George Augustus Elliott (1<sup>st</sup> Baron Heathfield) with view of Siege of Gibraltar (1782)*. Royal Academy [06/5693].





Appendix 15: Mary Maria Trotter, *The Royal Visitant approaching the Tomb of his departed Friend* (1799). National Portrait Gallery [NPG D35668].





Appendix 16: William Miller, *Sir Roger Curtis Kn.t* (1783). British Museum [1918.0107.34].





Appendix 17: James Caldwell, after William Hamilton, *Sir Roger Curtis* (1783). British Museum [1861,1012.2621].





Appendix 18: William Ridley, *Sir Roger Curtis Bart. Vice Admiral of the Red Squadron* (1801). British Museum [1872,0713.162].





Appendix 19: John Trumbull, *The Sortie Made by the Garrison of Gibraltar* (1789). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York [1976.332].



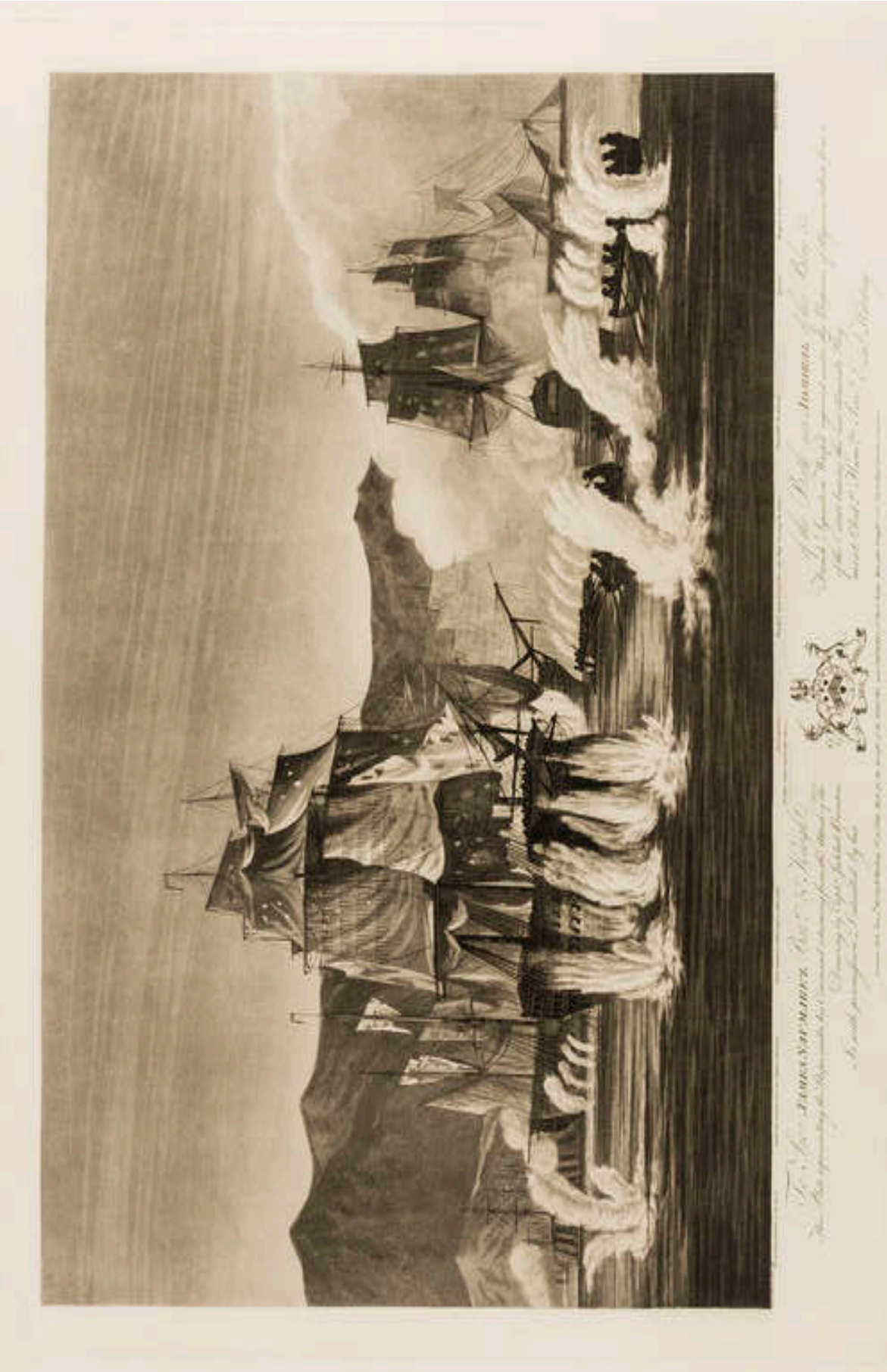


*Sir Roger Curtis gallantly availing himself in preserving the Spaniards at Gibraltar.*

*Published as the Act demands, Price 6d. after the 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1804. Price 10d. after the 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1805.*

Appendix 20: J. Stratford, after Conrad Martin Metz, Sir Roger Curtis gallantly exerting himself in preserving the Spaniards at Gibraltar. British Museum [1872,0113.205].





Appendix 21: Edward Harding [To sir James Saumarez, this plate representing the Gallant attack of the French Squadron under the  
Batteries of Alexandria. National Maritime Museum. DAI170007]





Appendix 22: Edward Harding, *The British Squadron ... preparing to pursue the Combined Squadron of France & Spain, on the Afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1801* (1802). National Maritime Museum [PAH7992].





Appendix 23: Edward Harding, *Representing the Condition of the British Squadron, on the morning of the 12 of July at the time the Caesar hauled out of Gibraltar Mole to pursue the Enemy's Fleet under way off Algeciras* (1802) National Maritime Museum [PAH7994]





Appendix 24: Edward Harding [To Sir James Saumarez, this plate representing the capture of the St Antonio of 74 Guns under French colours & the blowing up of the Real Carlos and San Hermenegildo. National Maritime Museum, PAH7998].







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