

Section 3: The period from 1588 to 1697: From Christian IV to Niels Juel



As a young nobleman, **Niels Juel** (1629 – 1697) was sent on a six-year educational journey, first to France, then to the Netherlands, where he signed up for service. Here he was trained as a naval officer and also learned shipbuilding and administration. He took part in four of the six major naval battles which the Dutch navy fought with the English navy during that period. When he returned home to Denmark, he briefly became captain of the "*Black Rider*", and at the age of only 28 was appointed admiral and commander of Holmen, where he participated in the reorganization of the Danish fleet.

Niels Juel is Denmark's most famous naval hero, which is due to his victories in the Scanian War from 1675 to 1679. (See below). In addition to being a skilled and inspiring administrator and in war, he was a well-prepared and

dazzling leader. In 1677 he was appointed lieutenant-admiral general, later privy councilor and knight of the elephant, and from 1683 he was commander of the fleet. He is considered to be one of the world's most skilled admirals from the sailing ship era.



Cort Sivertsen Adeler (1622 – 1675):

Born in Norway of a Dutch family, trained as a naval officer in the Netherlands, serving in the Venetian fleet 1648 - 1660, including war experience against the Turks.

Was hired in 1663 by Frederik the Third as lieutenant admiral general with a view to reorganizing and rebuilding the fleet.

Henrik Bjelke (1615 - 1683), was a Norwegian colonel who changed careers in 1653. He became a naval officer and ended his career as a rear admiral.

His naval force in Copenhagen could not come to the aid of the Dutch rescue fleet on 29 October 1658 due to north-westerly winds. From 1660 member of the Council of State.



Peder Jensen Bredal (? - 1658/1659), squadron leader. Led a Danish squadron out of the ice in Nyborg Fjord while repeated Swedish attacks were repulsed.



Appointed vice admiral and crew master on the islet after his death. Took part in August 1658 in a sortie against Swedish siege ships outside Copenhagen, whereby two Swedish ships were set on fire. Killed in battle between December 1658 and May 1659.

Christian IV (1577 – 1648), king and commander of forces during several naval battles.

During the Torstenson War , the 67-year-old Christian IV led a naval battle on Kolberger Heide in 1644 .

It was here that the king lost the sight of one eye when a Swedish bullet hit a cannon on the Danish flagship *Trefoldigheden*.



Peder Galt (1584 – 1644), admiral, former Danish agent in Stockholm 1621 – 1624. As commander of the naval force that blockaded the Swedish fleet in the Kielerfjord in 1644, he misunderstood Christian the Fourth's attack order, whereby the Swedes escaped. Sentenced to death for this offense by the Riksrådet (at the king's behest). Beheaded in the square in front of Copenhagen Castle.



Ove Gjedde (1594 – 1660), Danish nobleman who founded the colony Trankebar.

Commander of the Kattegat and North Sea Fleet 1643 – 1645, then appointed Admiral and member of the Royal Council.

Pros Mund (? - 1644), "quarter admiral", commander of the Danish naval force in the Fehmarn Belt on 13 October 1644.

Pros Mund became a ship's lieutenant in 1624 and was promoted to captain in 1628, in which year his activity fell on the southern shores of the Baltic Sea, where he opposed the imperial naval plans in Rostock, Warnemünde, Wismar and Greifswald and supported the defense of Stralsund.

In 1630 he was first sent to the Faroe Islands and the coasts of Norway to protect trade against freebooters and later took part in the battle against the Hamburgers on the Elbe, where the following year he had a station with a few ships. In 1631 and the following years he cruised in the North Sea and along the coasts of Norway, in 1633 as commander of a larger naval division.

When the Torstenson War broke out, however, he was again needed in the navy. Immediately from the beginning of the year 1644 he was out with a smaller squadron. After he had united with Ove Gjedde in Flekkerøy near Kristiansand in May, they sailed together into the North Sea, where on 25 May in the Battle of Listerdyb they had an inconclusive skirmish with the Swedish-Dutch fleet. They then returned to Flekkerøy, where Mund brought charges against several of the officers for having failed him before the enemy.

When he took part in the naval battle on Kolberger Heide on 1 July, where he led the 4th squadron as 'quarter admiral', several of his ship's commanders again neglected their duty. At least Christian IV strongly complained about them, being among those who, as he writes, used him as a screen between himself and the enemy. Whether this appeal was justified or not, it did not concern Mund herself, who had taken part in the battle with great bravery, and whose flagship (the St. Sophia) seems to have had more dead and wounded than any of the other ships.

In September he was ordered to cross between Fehmarn and Lolland with 17 ships to keep the waters clean and watch the movements of the Swedish fleet. But while he was holding the lake with his small force badly haunted by disease, the Swedish main fleet under Carl Gustaf Wrangel quite unexpectedly united with the Dutch auxiliary fleet, and on 13 October 42 ships attacked Mund's 17 ships. Whether the Danes were caught off guard, or whether Mund could not or did not want to avoid the fight, is not known.

However, the superiority on the Swedish side was too great for the outcome to be doubtful. After a strong resistance, the Danish admiral's ship *Patientia* was captured by entry, and under this Mund fell at the entrance to his cabin. The body was thrown into the lake. Only 3 Danish ships escaped, the rest were taken by the Swedes or destroyed.

The overall situation in the period 1588 to 1697

The period was characterized by the fact that Sweden was Denmark's main enemy throughout the period. From approx. 1560 Sweden began its territorial expansions, which lasted for approx. 100 years, when the country gradually subordinated itself to present-day Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the present-day Polish coast and parts of northern Germany. The dual monarchy of Denmark-Norway did not go unscathed either, and in the two major cessions (the Peace of Brømsebro in 1645 and the Peace of Roskilde in 1658), the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway lost a total of the following areas:

- Skåne with the island of Ven,
- Halland,
- Blekinge,
- Bornholm,
- Jamtland,
- Härjedalen,
- Bohus Len,
- Trondheim Len,
- Gotland and
- Øsel



Bornholm, however, was a special case, as the island freed itself from Swedish occupation, and Trondhjem Len was delivered back to Frederik the Third after great power intervention in the final negotiations with Sweden. The

peace terms also included reduced customs rates for Swedes and Dutch in the Oresund and the abolition of customs on the Elbe.

The Swedish army was superior to the Danish, but if the Danish islands were to be exposed to attack, it required a considerable naval force and transport fleet. The presence of a strong Danish navy usually prevented this. If the Swedes came overland from Northern Germany or attacked into Scania, then it required a strong Danish army on the spot. In general, the Danish fleet was better than the Swedish, but there were periods when this was not the case. The Danish ships were better built, and not least the officers and crew were better trained. However, the Danish navy did experience a period of decline between 1645 and 1660. Denmark's greatest disaster occurred when the ice in 1658 bound the Danish waters and the superior Swedish army could cross the ice. Here the fleet could not be useful, and Denmark-Norway had to agree to the peace terms.

The Netherlands alternately supported one and the other party in the war, which was solely due to economic interests, where they wanted to support the weakest party, so that no Baltic Sea power became dominant and destroyed the lucrative maritime trade. The Baltic Sea trade formed a significant part of European trade. There was a European center for grain trade in Danzig (now Gdansk). In addition, fish, timber, mast wood, flax for sail manufacture, hemp for rope, tar for shipping and much more were exported from the Baltic Sea.

The great Swedish army consisted for the most part of mercenary troops, whom it cost the Swedish king enormous sums to pay, and when they were paid, they had to be kept employed all the time. Sweden's economic prerequisite for being able to wage so many wars was the deposits of iron ore. The country earned large sums from exporting iron and weapons to most of Europe. It laid the foundation for the current Swedish arms export.

Sweden had many enemies, so Denmark could exploit alliances, but the allies in the Baltic each had their own agenda. The allies in the Baltic Sea area were Russia, Poland, Saxony and Brandenburg. Denmark made a long series of attempts to get the lost territories back from Sweden, but even if some of the invasion attempts were successful, the European powers - the Netherlands, England and France - did not want to support Denmark. If Scania was given back, Denmark would gain a monopoly-like status for the Baltic Sea trade by possessing the shores.

Christian the Fourth, his voyages of inspection and voyages of discovery

Christian the Fourth, who became king in 1588, was incredibly fond of his fleet and used it when he had to travel around the kingdom. He himself took an active part in the design and construction of the navy's ships, which were built on berths directly opposite the castle. He traveled to Norway 25 times during his reign. Among other things, he rounded the North Cape and inspected Vardø. He traveled "incognito" as Captain Christian Frederiksen.

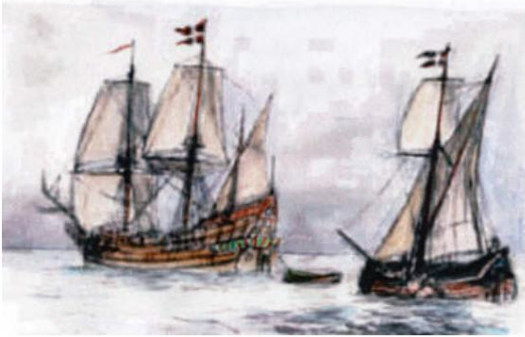
After the great voyages of discovery, where America had been found, and you could sail south of Africa to the "East Indies", the Danish king had also become interested in acquiring overseas possessions with the spice trade and lucrative sea routes. It was important to act quickly, because you were in sharp competition with the other naval powers: the Netherlands, England, Spain, Portugal and France.

In 1618 a naval force departed for India. The leader of this expedition was the 24-year-old nobleman Ove Gjedde, who later – in 1645 – was appointed admiral, i.e. commander of the fleet.

The force consisted of the warships *Elephant* of 500 tons (ex-Swedish *Malkepigen*), *David* of 400 tons (also ex-Swedish) and two merchant ships, *Christian* and *Kjøbenhavn*. In total, the ships could bring home a load of 1,000 tonnes. The journey was to last four years. Denmark established the colony of Trankebar on the Indian east coast, where a Danish fort, "*Dansborg*", was built.

The deal at Trankebar was a success for the next 20 years, because Denmark remained neutral in the conflict between Portugal and the Netherlands. On the other hand, Danish ship traffic in the colony ceased in 1639 due to the Swedish wars, but constable Eskild Andersen Kongsbakke ran the fort and the local trade, waged wars and much more on behalf of the Danish king, until ships came again 30 years later!





In 1619, Jens Munk was sent north with the frigate "*Enhjørningen*" and the auxiliary ship "*Lamprenen*" to investigate the "*Northwest Passage*".

The king's task was:

"Can you sail through Hudson Bay and get north of the American continent and reach the ocean?"

The attempt was not successful, and only after two years did Jens Munk reach home with the "*Lamprenen*" - together with the other two survivors of the total crew of 64 men.

The wars and the management of the fleet

The "Kalmar War" 1611 – 1613 was another Danish attempt to force Sweden into the Kalmar Union, but it failed. The next war Christian the Fourth threw himself into was the "*Thirty Years' War*" (or "*The Imperial War*"), from 1625 to 1629, where Christian IV ended up losing the Battle of Lutter am Barenberge. After this, the Swedes were able to ravage Jutland, but the fleet prevented them from getting on to the islands. In the following decade, Christian the Fourth used his naval power to tighten foreign policy and tighten customs collection in the Øresund. With this he pushed the Netherlands right into the arms of Sweden. When the Swedes felt strong enough in 1643, Swedish troops from Northern Germany went up through Jutland, but again the Danish fleet prevented them from reaching the islands. A Danish concession to the Netherlands on reduced customs tariffs ensured that the Netherlands refrained from plunging into the war on the Swedish side.

In the following year, Christian the Fourth personally participated as commander-in-chief in the Battle of Lister Dyb (between Rømø and Sild/Sylt), where a Dutch auxiliary fleet was forced away. Later in the year, things also went well for Christian the Fourth on board the "*Trefoldigheden*" in the battle of Kolberger Heide (west of Fehmarn).



But the Swedish fleet in the Kielerfjord did cause problems. When the Swedish fleet later managed to fight its way out, the commanding admiral Peder Galt was sentenced to death on the king's orders and beheaded in front of Copenhagen Castle.

Two months later, a Dutch fleet joined the Swedish one, after which they jointly succeeded in defeating and practically annihilating an inferior Danish naval force under the Mouth of Pros in the Fehmarn Belt. As a result of the lost battle, Denmark had to accept the peace terms in Brømsebro. Härjedalen, Jämtland, Gotland and Øsel were lost, and Halland was mortgaged for 30 years.

The Swedes obtained customs freedom in the Øresund, and the Dutch were given customs privileges.

Since 1643, the navy's financial affairs had been left to the Reichshofmeister Corfitz Ulfeldt, who was also married to Christian the Fourth's daughter Leonora Christine. In connection with looking after the Navy's treasury, Ulfeldt had become an incredibly wealthy man. In 10 years, he had "saved up" a personal fortune which corresponded to one year's total state income for the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway!

The collaboration with Frederik the Third did not go well, and Ulfeldt therefore reported to the Swedish king, with whom he was later also at odds.



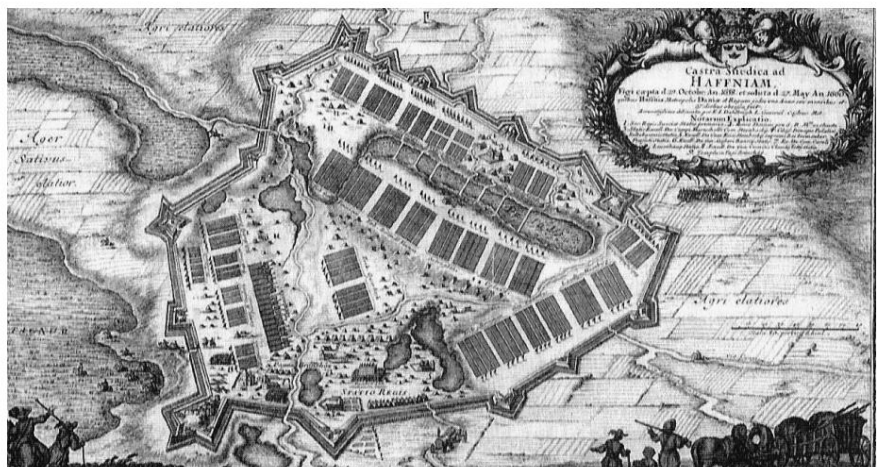
Already in 1657, Frederik the Third believed that the time was ripe for a war of revenge against Sweden. When Denmark was the aggressor, the Netherlands was not bound by the treaty. So the war had an unexpectedly short course. A Swedish army was already ready in Poland, and after a rapid march through Northern Germany, the Swedes captured the fortress at Frederiksodde (near Fredericia) on the Little Belt. The winter was unusually hard, and on 29 January 1658 the Swedish king began a march with the army across the ice from Jutland via Funen and Langeland to Lolland.

Nothing could be put up against the Swedish army.

The only bright spot in the war was Peder Bredal, who lay with a squadron of four ships, "Samson", "Svenske Løve", "Svenske Lam" and "Emanuel" in Nyborg Fjord. Nyborg Castle quickly fell to the Swedes, but Peder Bredal defended himself bravely against the Swedish attacks across the ice. After hard battles, he was able to "saw his way out of the ice" with the help of large forest saws and got his strength out into open water.

Denmark had to make peace with the Swedes in February, but shortly after the peace in Roskilde, the Swedish king began to think about the total annihilation of Denmark.

It required that Copenhagen be conquered, and therefore he sent a siege army, which was assembled in a newly established field camp "Carlstad" at Bellahøj.



The Carlstad fortress

Copenhagen could now only be supplied and rescued from the sea side, but a rescue fleet came to help from the Netherlands.

The fleet consisted of 35 warships, 6 cargo ships and 4 destroyers[1] under the command of Admiral Jacob Wassenaer van Obdam



Jacob Wassenaer Van Obdam



Carl Gustav Wrangel

The Swedish fleet of 30 warships and 13 cargo ships was under the command of Admiral Carl Gustav Wrangel. The two naval forces met off Helsingborg on 29 October 1658 in one of the largest naval battles in world history, which the Dutch won while the Swedish king watched from inside Kronborg. The Danish fleet could not take part in the battle because the wind was against it, as it had to set out from Copenhagen. A curious detail about this battle - but typical for the period - was that Karl the Tenth Gustav and Reich Admiral Wrangel had discussed over several days how to deal with the Dutch naval force. Among the Swedish advisers were four Dutch admirals in Swedish service!

The final storm on Copenhagen took place on the night between 10 and 11 February 1659. Niels Juel ensured that the fleet participated with manpower and cannons, and the two warships "*Højenhald*" and "*Prammen*" (called "*Svinetruget*" by the Swedes) was stuck in the ice between the current Knippelsbro and Langebro bridges.



From here they could shell the Swedish troops who attacked across the ice at Kalveboderne. The attack failed, and Denmark was - in a reduced form - saved.

In 1655, an admiralty was established based on the Dutch model, where the top naval commanders advised on the relationship between the navy and the merchant navy. From 1663, Henrik Bjelke, Niels Juel and Cort Adeler oversaw the rebuilding of the Danish fleet after the period of decay from approx. 1645.



In the Scanian War from 1675 to 1679, it was initially the Dutch admirals Cornelis van Tromp and Philips van Almonde who were commanders of the combined naval forces, but Niels Juel himself was responsible for the conquest of Gotland in 1676 and a number of other independent actions as well as at the battle on 1 July 1677 where he had been appointed as commander of the force.



This battle is sometimes erroneously referred to as the "Battle in Køge Bugt", but it actually took place in the waters between Stevns and Falsterbo. Here Niels Juel defeated a superior Swedish naval force, i.e. because he anticipated an important change in wind direction during the battle.



In 1676, the fleet landed an army of approx. 14,000 men at Rå in Scania, just south of Helsingborg.

But the army lost in the subsequent bloody battle at Lund, and the navy had to evacuate the sad remnants of the army that should have recaptured Scania.

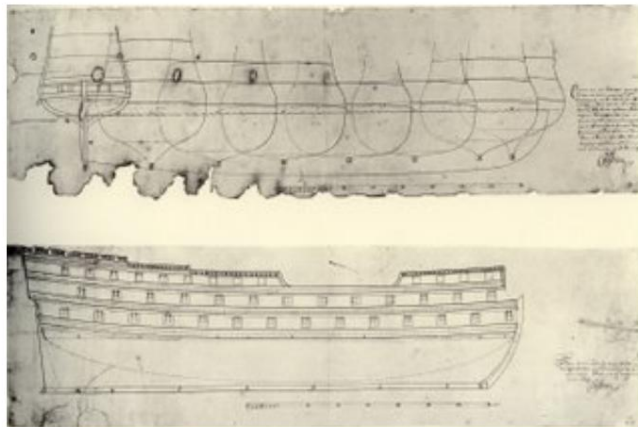
After Sweden in 1677 had founded the naval base in Karlskrona, the fleet fortified Ertholmene, the outermost Danish outpost in the Baltic Sea.

Niels Juel saw to it that in 1684 cannon positions were established on the largest island, hereafter named Christiansø, after the king.

Between the two islands of Christiansø and Frederiksø, where a gunpowder tower was built, ships could lie in the harbour, and there was also the possibility that the navy's ships could anchor under the shelter of the islands' cannons.



A few years later, Niels Juel began to develop the new naval base at Holmen (Nyholm), and in 1692 the first ship was launched at Holmen. It was the liner "Dannebrog".



Niels Juel had a mansion built that today houses the French embassy on Kongens Nytorv in Copenhagen. The Navy has honored Niels Juel by naming a number of ships after him, and in Copenhagen there is a statue of him by Holmens Kanal, at the entrance to the Navy's old main base. The most beautiful memory, however, is set for him by Thomas Kingo. In Holmen's church, you can read Kingo's tribute to Denmark's greatest naval hero:

*"Stand Wanderer, and look at a sea hero in stone, And if
you yourself are not Flint, honor his dead legs, For it is
Herr Niels Juel, whose marrow and bones and blood With fiery
heart stood for his king's honor, Whose manhood drifts in
so many sea battles stands, And through sea and air and land
with honor walks, A man of ancient virtue and Danish sincerity.*

*Of Yes and No and what you know well and honestly.
His soul, it is with God, his bones in this grave, His name in
memory, while there is water in the sea."*

Notes:

[1] Dilapidated craft, loaded with incendiary and explosive items, were set alight and sent down towards the enemy ships in the hope that the incendiary would set the enemy forces on fire.

Burners are used in two ways:

- Either against ships at anchor or in port, where incendiaries are carried by the wind towards ships without maneuverability, where they can ignite enemy ships or at least cause confusion or panic
- Or they are used tactically at sea, where in formations they took place on the side of the line away from the battle to be commanded forward, if it appeared that flares were a favorable combat weapon, e.g. if an enemy ship's maneuverability was impaired, then a slow-sailing bomber had a chance to get close.

Burners were either towed or towed into position, and small craft from both sides often tried to ward off the attack by pushing away the burners, - or boarding them and maneuvering them away etc.