

Section 7: The period from 1850 to 1864: The interwar period and the first ironclads

Hardly had peace been concluded and calm in the duchies restored. Before Denmark again pursued a policy that would invariably lead to another showdown, but this time against a far more powerful enemy.

After the conclusion of the peace in 1850, Prussia and Austria had guaranteed a free Schleswig-Holstein. Nevertheless, forces in Denmark pressed for a future Danish border at the Ejderen, i.e. a kingdom including Schleswig.

The fleet underwent a violent renewal during this period, when steam replaced sail. And the navy was thus constantly at the forefront of developments. But at home, the man had not made the military preparations that had to be a matter of course with such a bold foreign policy.

The crucial question of the future of Schleswig and Holstein had not been resolved during the Three Years' War. The peace between Denmark and the German Confederation in 1850 merely meant that the decision had been postponed to a more convenient time.

The following years were also marked by continued Danish-German disputes about the future of the duchies. The German Confederation wanted a united Schleswig-Holstein, while on the Danish side there was a demand for a Danish border at the Ejderen, i.e. Schleswig as part of the Kingdom



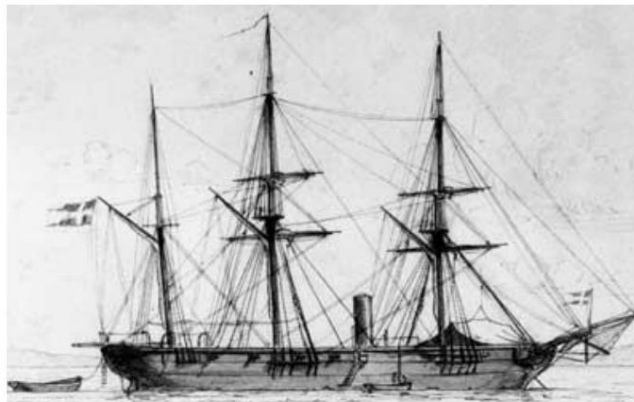
*The entire state of Denmark
and the Duchies After*

the First Schleswig War, the paddle steamers began to be replaced by ships, which were propelled by the new invention: the ship's screw. The fleet thus got its first screw corvette *Thor* in 1851.

Thor is the fleet's - and the first Danish - screw ship. The corvette was equipped with a 2-cylinder low-pressure engine of 650 IHK which allowed *Thor* to reach a speed of 9 knots (equivalent to 16.7 km/h for non-sailors) without the sails set, which was an amazing speed for a ship of that time.

After test voyages in 1851-52, *Thor* was fitted out for war in 1854. In the years 1855-56, *Thor* was on a voyage to the Faroe Islands and Iceland and in 1858 the voyage went to Maderia and the year after 1859 the screw corvette was in the Mediterranean.

In 1858, the fleet was able to inaugurate a new dry dock at Dokøen on Holmen[1] . It was in the same period when it was decided to evacuate Gammelholm or Bremerholm[2] .



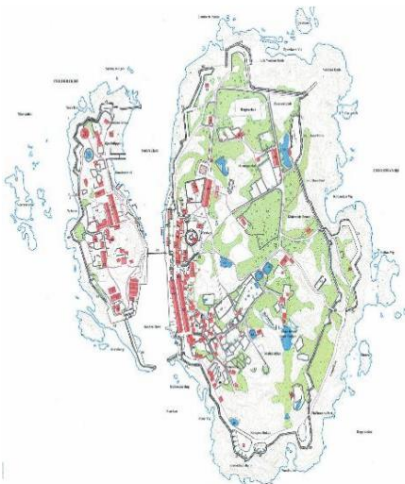
The screw corvette *Thor* 1851

The Crimean War breaks out

But unrest also simmered outside Europe, and at the end of 1853 dark clouds gathered. As an armed conflict between Russia on the one hand and France, England and the Kingdom of Sardinia on the other seemed inevitable.

The risk of Denmark being involved in this kind of conflict was imminent. Not least because of the country's location as the gateway to the Baltic Sea.

The biggest threat to Denmark was that Prussia and Austria would enter the conflict on Russia's side, thus posing a direct threat to Denmark. But Denmark succeeded during the autumn of 1853 in obtaining acceptance from all parties that the country would remain neutral in a possible conflict.



Christiansø and Frederiksø

The small and outdated fortress on Christiansø suddenly acquired an important strategic importance as the Danish fortification that was closest to the Russian Baltic coast. Parts of the fleet were also equipped for war in order to enforce Danish neutrality if necessary.

Denmark managed to remain neutral during the 1854-1856 war, although i.a. The German Confederation, of which Denmark was a part through Holstein, and later France tried to get the country to cancel its neutrality and choose a side in the conflict.

Danish neutrality had apparently been carried out successfully, and it had succeeded in keeping Denmark out of the conflict.

But barely ten years later, Denmark had to pay the price for not choosing a side.

The health customs duty is abolished

Since 1429, Denmark had collected Sundtold for ships that passed through the Øresund or the Great Belt. A tax that made quite a lot of money in the Danish treasury, but also irritated the nations that were charged this tax.

As early as 1848, the United States had made a proposal to the Danish government to abolish the Sundtolden for American ships, in return for reasonable financial compensation. However, the American proposal did not immediately lead to any agreement. On 14 April 1855, the USA announced that from next year they would no longer pay Sundtold to the Danish authorities. It was immediately unthinkable that Denmark would resort to armed force against the Americans to enforce the right to sound customs.

During the autumn, a conference was called in Copenhagen, where the abolition of the Sundtolden was to be discussed, in return for a suitable compensation to Denmark.

England was initially against the Danish proposal, but during the fall of 1856 the English changed their position, and on 14 March 1857 an agreement on the abolition of Sundtolden was signed.

From 1 April 1857, Sundtolden lapsed after more than 400 years of existence.

Greenland "rediscovered"



In 1859 the brig Ørnen was sent to Iceland and Greenland. It thus became the first Danish warship to visit Greenland since the frigate Blaahejren had been there in 1736.

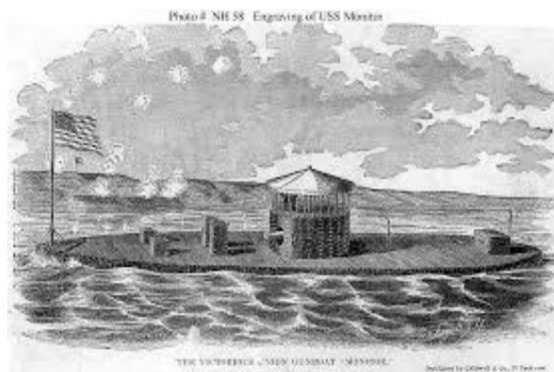
Now the Eagle was not unaccustomed to the long voyages, because already in 1843-44 it had been to South America II. In the following years there were also voyages to the Mediterranean and the coast of Guinea, as well as regular posting as a station ship at the West Indies.

The brig Örn was one of the vessels that reached far around.

The fleet's first armored ship

In the period after the conclusion of the peace in 1850, work on the modernization of the fleet continued. And in the 14 years between the two Schleswig wars, development was not least marked by the transition from sail to steam. But the development of weapons also left its mark on the new ship types, not least the experiences from the naval events during the American Civil War left its mark on the development.

In many ways, the American Civil War was the first modern war. Modern industry could now mass produce weapons and ammunition. Steamships and railroads could move large quantities of goods to where they needed to be used. As well as with the newly invented telegraph, messages could be sent over great distances. Both warring parties in the American Civil War had made use of heavily armored ships. The Northern States introduced the so-called "monitor" (a "casemate ship"), which was an armored ship with two large rotating guns on board.

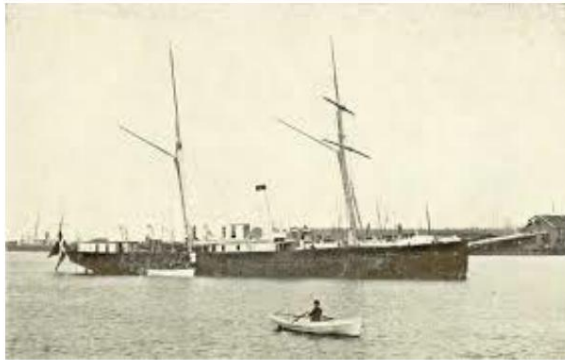


Uss Monitor 1862

Among the other inventions that came to play a role in warfare around 1864 were cartridge ammunition, rifled breech-loading handguns and rifled breech-loading guns, grenades and sea mines.

The Danish navy had been so far-sighted that it had already ordered two armored ships in England in 1861. At the same time, an armored monitor had been ordered in Scotland and this was completed before the experiences from the opening battles of the American Civil War reached Europe.

As early as 1862, the fleet received the armored schooners Absalon and Esbern Snare, both built in England.



The armored schooner Absalon



The armored schooner Esbern Snare

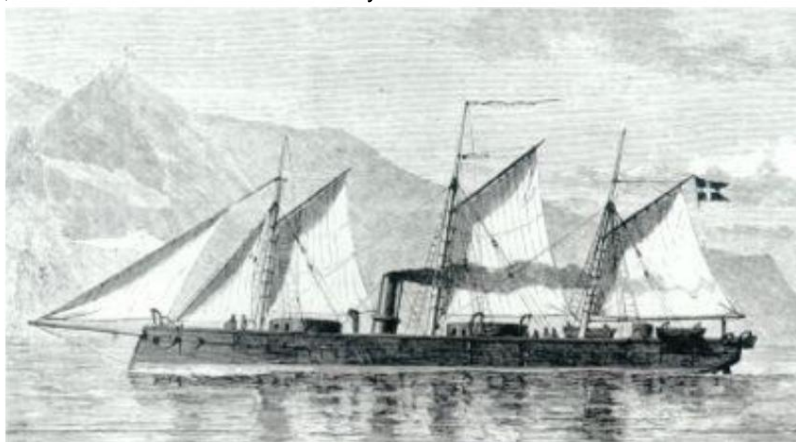
The ships are built in iron with 3 watertight shutters running from keel to deck which divide the ship into 4 watertight compartments. The upper deck is a continuous smooth deck, while the underlying deck is interrupted by the engine and boiler room.

The hull is protected by a side armor made of 64 mm iron plates resting on a 13 mm thick iron hull. In height, the hood goes from the top deck to approx. 1 m below the waterline and longitudinally from bow to stern. The gun could be lowered in certain places due to the swiveling cannons, which are set up in the center line of the ship.

Both ships were equipped with 1 smooth-bore 60-pounder cannon located amidships and 2 rifled 18-pounder cannons located forward and aft respectively. An armament that was changed several times during the life of the ships.

Absalon and Esbern Snare were the navy's first ships with armour, but due to the small thickness of the armor they were not a true armored ship.

In the autumn of 1863, the Scottish-built armored battery Rolf Krake arrived.



The armored battery Rolf Krake.

The ship was ordered in England by the Danish government shortly after the announcement of the skirmish at Hampton Roads on 9 March 1862 during the North American Civil War had been received in Copenhagen.

The battle in 1862 between two armored ships CSS Virginia and USS Monitor, propelled by steam and without sails gave the impetus to a new ship type the monitor. "Rolf Krake" became the first monitor in Europe. Compared to the original "Monitor", it had a higher freeboard and was thus more seaworthy.

The growing tension surrounding the Schleswig-Holstein issue made it necessary to reinforce the fleet with a new powerful ship.

Rolf Krake, when it was delivered, was the first armored ship outside the United States with the guns mounted in rotating turrets. By March 1862, the first turreted ironclad, the USS Monitor, had been in battle and shown its worth, but beyond that only four turreted ships had been started in England, and none of them had been completed when the Ministry of the Navy commissioned Rolf Krake in August 1862.

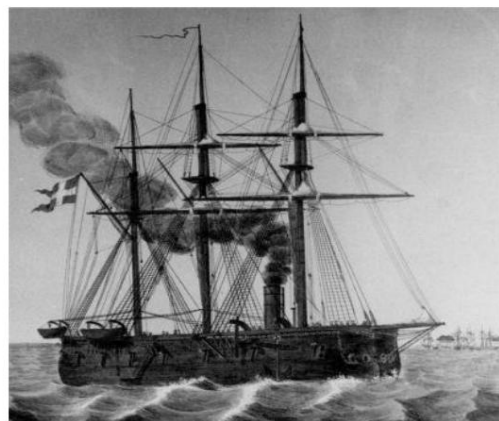
The Danish government thus took a technological chance, but in return received one of the most advanced warships in Europe when it was handed over in July 1863.

Rolf Krake's guns were not as powerful as the Monitor's, but on the other hand there were two gun turrets and the guns could be fired every 3 minutes instead of every 7 minutes on the Monitor.

In a royal resolution from 29/4-1862, it was decided that Denmark's last ship of the line, the Dannebrog, launched in 1850, was to be razed and rebuilt into an "armored corvette with closed battery and steam engine with screw". The liner was armored with 114 mm wrought iron plates which were mounted on the outside of the wooden hull from the upper edge of the battery to 1.25 m below the waterline.



The liner Dannebrog 1850



Dannebrog after conversion to an armored frigate

In addition, the fleet had received the three new screw frigates Niels Juel, Jylland[3] and Sjælland as well as a number of screw corvettes, gunboats etc.



Niels Juel



Zealand



Jutland

The three new screw frigates Niels Juel, Jylland and Sjælland are identical in construction and armament, the only immediate difference lies in the ships' machinery.

Niels Juel was equipped with English machinery from Maudslay Sons & Fields of 900 IHP, which enabled the ship to reach a speed of 9 knots (16.7 km/h)

Zealand was also equipped with English machinery from Maudslay Sons & Fields, albeit at 1000 IHP which enabled the ship to shoot at a speed of 10 knots (18.5 km/h)

Jutland was equipped with machinery from Baumgarten & Burmeister consisting of a 2-cylinder low-pressure machine of 1300 IHP which enabled the ship to shoot at a speed of 12 knots (22.2 km/h)

Jylland thus became the first ship in the fleet with a Danish-built steam engine for a larger ship.

On the road to war again

"Danmark to the Owner", was the slogan that after the peace in 1850 had characterized daily life in Denmark, to the great annoyance of the population in the duchies, not least in Holstein. After a change of government in 1860, the Ownership Policy really took hold.

When Denmark decided at the end of 1863 to draw up a joint constitution for the Kingdom and Schleswig, it was effectively a declaration of war against the German Confederation (Prussia and Austria), which had guaranteed a united Schleswig-Holstein.

The Danes had blindly believed that the Western powers could be won over to the Danish cause. But none of them had forgotten the attitude of the Danes during the Crimean War, where the Danish government had been very dismissive of the Anglo-French naval commanders.

Denmark was thus very much alone when Prussia and Austria presented Denmark with an ultimatum on 16 January 1864: "Repeal the common constitution or face the consequences".

In December 1863, a German federal army under Austrian and Prussian leadership had moved into Holstein without a fight. The German states demanded the repeal of the November Constitution and threatened to continue up Schleswig otherwise. The Danish government refused again, and on 1 February 1864, Austrian and Prussian troops entered Schleswig, making the war a reality.

L.E.K

[1] The dock still exists and is located approx. 100 meters north of the new opera building. Next to it is the pump house, which housed the steam engine that could empty the dock of water.

[2] Between 1858 and 1866, the navy vacated its old base and shipyard, which was roughly the area between the current National Bank building, the Royal Theatre, Nyhavn and the harbor run. The area was then to be built up with housing, and the streets were named after the navy's famous admirals. At the same time, Holmen's Canal was filled.

[3] The frigate Jylland is the only Danish combined steam and sailing ship from the Danish fleet that exists today. Jutland's last active voyage went to the West Indies in 1887-87.

The masts were then dismantled and Jylland subsequently functioned as a barracks ship until it was decommissioned from the fleet in 1908.



After that , the frigate had a tumultuous fate for the next several decades. First as an exhibition ship in 1909 and the following years until the First World War broke out in 1914. During the World War itself, the ship was located in Nørresundby as a telegraph station and accommodation for soldiers who stood guard at the Ponton Bridge over the Limfjord. After the war, Jutland ended up being anchored in Sandbjerg Vig north of Juelsminde, and then functioned as a telegraph station until 1925.

The frigate Jylland as many remember it

In 1934, Thorvald Stauning joined the battle for the national treasure, and the work to preserve the ship became a sensible employment project for the unemployed during the crisis the country suffered after the stock market crash on Wall Street in 1929.

From 1936-49, the frigate was used as an accommodation facility for approximately 200,000 provincial children who were invited to the capital on a school trip by the "Association for provincial children's stay in Copenhagen". But when the frigate sank in Copenhagen's harbor on the night of 2 December 1947, it was clear that it was no longer suitable as a holiday home.

The solution was that in 1960 the treasure was sailed to Ebeltoft to function as a tourist attraction. However, it was not until the 1980s that the money was raised for the necessary renovation, so that in 1994 the doors to the museum Frigatten Jylland could be opened. The frigate is today the world's longest preserved warship built of wood.



Frigate Jylland restored with mast and rigging