



*The English sail away with the fleet while Danish naval officers and sailors look on.  
Painting by Chr. Molsted*

# The fleet oaks

By Christian Raun

It is exactly 200 years ago that the English, after the Bombardment of Copenhagen, went home with the entire Danish fleet and put an end to Denmark's days of greatness as a naval power.

Already in October 1807, a Gaelic fleet left Holmen in Copenhagen with 17 ships of the line, 15 frigates, 7 brigs and 31 smaller vessels, as well as 92 merchant ships loaded with naval equipment.

Before that, the English had destroyed the unfinished ships at Holmen's shipyard.

The loss caused panic in the nation, which had been rightly proud of its large but poorly maintained navy.

Now the Danish fleet hardly existed, and oak trees grew as long as possible, so that even though Frederik VI already three days after the English attack issued a renewal of the "Ordinance prohibiting the export of oak trees and oak timber from Denmark and Norway" and a week later "Placard, by which it is prohibited to sell either treated Oak timber, which to

Shipbuilding can be useful, or in general some useful oak wood for ship timbers, whether the same stands on the root or is cut", then there was only wood for very few new warships. After the new construction of the ships of the line »Phønix« and »Danmark« in 1810 and 1817 respectively, these large warships with several deck guns completely disappeared from the fleet. The two line ships never really got to sea. Ships of the line, which are named after the attack stack and the number of guns on board (there were supposed to be over 70), had become too heavy and deep for the Danish waters.

In contrast, several frigates were built until the mid-1800s. You didn't have to use nearly as much oak timber for the relatively light ships, and they shot good speed in sound and belts - and at the fishing banks, which marked Denmark's outermost borders.

At the same time as Frederik VI seized all suitable oak, which was to be used for the establishment of a new fleet, he ordered

he that a large number of oak trees were planted around the country.

It should be mentioned, however, that already before the Battle of the Nest on 2 April 1801, the king had initiated the planting of new oak trees for future shipbuilding by creating 50 oak coppices that were sorted under the Maritime Commissariat. Six years later, when the Norwegians sailed away with the Danish fleet, more oak trees were seriously needed.

But there was not enough oak in the forests because new trees were not planted when the old ones were felled. The forests had therefore slowly receded, and around the year 1800 the forest area in Denmark was historically low at 3%. Denmark had become a forest-poor country due to predatory exploitation.

Today, 11% of Denmark is covered by forest - there is thus 3 times as much forest area as urban area!

In 1808, a placard was issued on the marking of marine oak, which was already reserved for the navy at the root. Many of these oaks were later used in warships, but you may be lucky to still find oaks that still have the marks they were provided with at the time.

A great many oak trees had to be used for the new fleet. 1,500 full-grown oak trees were used for a liner. By exploiting the natural shape of the oaks, you got the strongest ships. Egen therefore had great military significance.

However, no one could have guessed that less than 100 years later oak was obsolete as a shipbuilding material and now 200 years later, there are 90,000 oak trees ready for felling in the Danish forests. Enough to build a fleet of 16 ships of the line, 10 frigates and a host of smaller ships! And it is not relevant.

**The fleet eggs come out to sail** . However, some of the fleet eggs are felled.

In the past, the Norwegian Forest and Nature Agency has grown quite large oak trees that have been "hand-picked" from the old fleet oak forests for, for example, the frigate Jutland and for the restoration of wind turbines in the Netherlands.

In 2003, the Swedish Forest and Nature Agency supplied 24 naval oaks for the restoration of one of the USA's national treasures - the two-masted and 70-metre-long "Coronet" from 1885.

It was about approx. 130 m<sup>3</sup> wood or 5-6 m<sup>3</sup> per tree.

The selection of ship timber is done after a careful assessment of each individual tree. The trees must be 100% healthy and without large knots. In addition, there are special requirements for height, thickness and trunk shape.

Felling of the trees with a trunk measuring over one meter took place in Ryget skov, Værløse.

The trees were delivered for cutting at Hans Larsen's sawmill at Ølstykke. There

then the journey went to Århus, where the tree was gassed to kill any pests. The wood was then packed into containers and sailed across the Atlantic.

The restoration of "Coronet" takes place at the "International Yacht Restoration School" in Newport, USA. The work is led by the well-known shipbuilder and Danish-American Hermann Hinrichsen.

A lot of wood is wasted during cutting at the sawmill and processing at the American shipyard. Of the 130 m<sup>3</sup> of wood delivered from the forest, less than half - approx. 55 m<sup>3</sup> - to be included in the finished ship construction. The Norwegian Forest and Nature Agency earns approx. DKK 400,000 on delivery.



*America's national treasure, the 2-masted and 70 meter long Coronet from 1885, which is being restored at an American shipyard using 24 Danish naval oaks.*

"Coronet" is a yacht with many sea miles under its keel. Two years after the yacht left the shipyard, it won a race across the Atlantic.

Later it sailed around the world a few times, and was the first American yacht to round Cape Horn. The boat will now be restored to its original appearance and sailing characteristics, after which it will function as a floating museum.

The Americans have set aside about 8 million dollars for the restoration. So buying bits of the Danish fleet oaks is just a small trick in your pocket. The restoration is sponsored by, among other things by American historical societies, which consider the ship to be of national significance as it is the only original yacht of its age and size.

Also in the domestic waters, the fleet eels get on the water. In Nexø on Bornholm, a group of wooden ship enthusiasts will rebuild the 120-foot-long barque "Svan nen" in the old dock in Nexø.

It is expected to stretch the keel on the 150th anniversary of the first keel stretching in 1857. The first tree has already been felled, and the major work of organization and historical documentation is in full swing. Soon

Nexø's old dock must also smell of good wood and tarred ropes.

#### **From trunk to house, chair and commemorative plaque**

, as mentioned, the navy oak is mainly used for very special purposes, so if you were to dream of a new oak parquet floor in the conversation kitchen, you can put the idea out of your head. Something else is if you are the happy owner of a historical museum.

In Ribe Vikingecenter, a long house of the Trelleborg-Fyrkat type has been built. For that, 160 oak trees were used.

At the Norwegian Navy's operational command in Aarhus, there is a plaque commemorating our former chief of defense, Admiral Hans Jørgen Garde, who perished together with his wife, two other officers and four crew members when one of the air force's Gulfstream III aircraft flew into a rock wall at the Faroe Islands. airport Vágur on 3 August 1996.

The commemorative plaque was designed by artist Jytte Jepsen and the plank is very passable, as a memorial to an admiral, cut out of one of the old naval oaks.

In 2004, master carpenter Søren Holst Pedersen from the tradition-rich carpentry PP Møbler became aware of some particularly beautiful oak trees in Grænge Skov in Lolland and got the idea to transform these historic spoon trees into 150 copies of Hans J.

Wegner's "The Chair" which he designed in 1949. With its simple expression and beautiful curves, the chair is perhaps the best known of Wegner's chairs.

The 150 chairs are individually numbered with a small silver plate.

In particular, the chair is known from the TV duel between Nixon and Kennedy from 1961, just as Jens Otte Krag and Anders Fogh Rasmussen, among others, have also made important decisions from Wegner's "The Chair", which he himself calls "the round".



*Hans J. Wegner's chair "The Chair" designed in 1949. Flådeegge has agreed to produce 150 copies of the chair.*

# Today's oak forests

At a census in 1990, there were approx. 16,000 harvest-ripened fleet oaks in Skov and the Nature Agency's forests in North Zealand. Many of the fleet oaks are allowed to remain for the enjoyment of us and nature. But it is possible to cut down some of them, as long as you do it for a worthy cause, and without cutting down entire forests.

By far the largest part of North Zealand's oak forests are allowed to remain standing.

The oak, which is Denmark's national tree, currently covers only 7% of the forest area.

However, this corresponds to 30,000 hectares of oak forest. In recent years, a lot of new oak forest has been planted. Oak is the most popular tree species when a new forest is built.

#### **150 years and ripe for harvest**

It takes an oak tree approx. 150 years to reach a harvestable size - then the tree is approx. 25 meters high and has a trunk measurement of approximately one meter. Oak can be several thousand years old, but is often felled around the 150th year, when the forest owner gets the most money from harvesting.

Particularly crooked oak trees are still sold for shipbuilding. Oak is the most valuable wood in shoe friend. The barely 200-year-old fleet cakes yield DKK 15-20,000 per tree.

#### **Fleet oak in many places**

There are fleet oak in many places in the county. It would be too extensive to list the places here, but it is possible to find some of them on the Norwegian Forest and Nature Agency's website. Or simply by searching the internet under "Flådeegge"

It just needs to be mentioned that on Sjælland it is possible to see fleet oaks: In

- the western part of Frederiksborg Slotshave, Hillerød in the western part of Ganløse Ore
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- At Jægerpris På
- Køge Ås Elder
- fleet oak planted in 1798 can be seen, among other things, in Nørreskoven at Furesøen