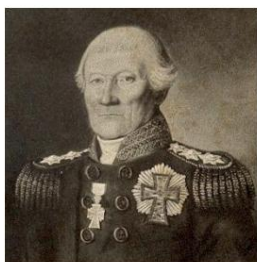


## Section no. 5:

### The period from 1800 to 1815: The Battle of Copenhagen [1], The robbery of the fleet and the English wars[2]

A small extract from the navy's blue book. Some of all the well-known naval officers and shipbuilders on Holmen. The list could contain many more names, because during the gunboat war there were an incredible number of young naval officers who deserved mention.



(Source: KGB digital collections)

**Steen Andersen Bille** (1751 – 1833), was born on 22 August 1751 in Assens, already at the age of 11, although weak in build, he entered the Navy's service as a cadet, after he had done a trial tour the year before. As one of the best in his team, he was appointed second lieutenant on 16 March 1768 and served in the liner *Norske Løve* the same year under his father's command.

In 1773 he was promoted to first lieutenant. In 1775, Bille had his first independent command: an armed vessel, belonging to agent Andreas Bodenhoff, which along with others crossed in the belts on the occasion of a rinderpest that broke out in the duchies.

2 years later he traveled to the West Indies to take command of a small armed brig in the service of the General-Toldkammeret. For about 2 years he remained in this position, which appealed to him very much, in 1781 Bille was appointed captain-lieutenant and was immediately given leave to go on a trunk voyage as captain of the East India Company's ship *Kjøbenhavn*.

In 1788, however, he started again and had a number of chief commands; thus he was the following year at the age of 38 – and recently promoted to captain – Admiral Conrad von Schindel's flagship in the liner *Den Pregtige*.

In 1790 he was in command of a voyage between the frigates *Kronborg* and *Havfruen*, of which he led the latter, and after several other commands in 1795 with the frigate *Frederiksværn* as command of the cadets

In the spring of 1797, conditions in the Mediterranean had become of such a serious nature that they felt the need for a new energetic leadership in the small naval force that was to act as a defender of Danish interests in these waters. Bille was entrusted with this. these conditions.

He left with the frigate *Najaden* early in the spring for Malta, where he met the brig *Sarpen* stationed in the Mediterranean and a small armed chebek, with which ships together went to Tripolis.

By 1801 the squadron had gradually increased to 3 frigates and 2 brigs, and Bille continued to protect it Danish trade, partly by negotiating, partly by constant convoying. and he was promoted to commander captain and appointed chamberlain.

However, Bille had the sadness when he was called home at the beginning of 1801 to see his beautiful work, the recognition of the Danish flag throughout the Mediterranean, in the concept of bursting anew when a war with Tunis became inevitable.

On his return to Denmark in 1801, Bille immediately went back to business, in which Olfert Fischer was wounded, Commander Captain Bille took over command of *the Maritime Defense* on 3 April 1801

He was entrusted with the command of the left wing of the defence: the ships of the line Danmark og Trekroner, the frigate Iris, the brigs Sarpen and Nidelven as well as a large division of gunboats, which force did not, however, intervene very actively in the course of the battle.

Later that year he was in command of Norway, the first ship of the line Hohlenberg had constructed. The ship was sent to sail with Denmark - This was Bille's last voyage.

In 1804 he became a deputy in the Admiralty College and advanced to commander;

However, when the English appeared in our waters again in 1807, and the situation became tense, they immediately resorted to Bille again, appointing him as commander under General Ernst Peymann and in particular as commander of the naval defence.

His and his subordinates' activities here probably did not in and of themselves benefit the cause greatly, since the main man in the defense, General Peymann, was only slightly up to the task; but the many sorties the gunboats made both against the English coastal batteries and the English fleet, which tried in vain to bombard the capital from the sea side, should be counted cheaply to Bille's credit, just as much as the fact that he made arrangements to sink or destroy the fleet, if capitulation became inevitable. To that end, holes were hewn in the ships in the Fleet's Bed, and masts and chancels were piled up ready for burning; but, as is well known, the order to complete these preparations never came.

Of the battles that Bille had carried out, the following are particularly well-known: the attack by the gunboats on 17 August. Against the English fleet, their support for the raid on Classens Have on August 26th and August 31st, the attack against the unity defense battery by the gunboats in Kalvebod Strand, on which occasion the young cadet Peter Buhl received his baptism of fire and lost an arm As well as the attacks on the 21st and 23rd August and September 1 and 2 by our gunboats against the enemy bombardment vessels on Copenhagen's Red. When Copenhagen surrendered on September 7, Bille did not sign the capitulation; he demanded in vain to make a lunge with everything that could bear arms.

When, after the surrender of the fleet, Denmark both went to war with England and Sweden, Bille, as a deputy in the Admiralty, was an active participant, indeed the soul, in the provision of the gun-boat defence, which defended our waters to the best of its ability and with desperate courage; And when, after the war and the loss of Norway in 1815, the country had to raise a naval defense again, it was again Bille who brought this up, and who, through sensible economics, even provided a considerable reserve fund for the agency. In the following years, he rose from rank to rank, in 1825 he became vice-admiral and, on the death of Admiral Johan Peter Wleugel, first deputy in the Admiralty, 4 years later real admiral and finally received the appointment of Prime Minister of the Interior in 1831.

#### **Peter Buhl (1789 – 1812), Buhl**

was already employed as an 18-year-old cadet in the gunboat division with which Commander Steen Andersen Bille defended Copenhagen from the sea side against the English fleet in 1807. He must have already said on this occasion that he would lose his life piecemeal in this war, which really struck a chord. In a battle in Kalvebod Strand against the English batteries at Old Pesthus (August 1807) he lost his left arm. Soon after, in November 1808, he became a second lieutenant.



(source: Norwegian State Museum of Art)

Buhl later took part in the unfortunate affair, which in 1811 under the leadership of lieutenant Jørgen Conrad de Falsen and major Ketil Melstedt was initiated to expel the English from Anholt. He excelled here, but did not escape capture. After being released by this, he again came under Falsen's command and again took part in his attack on an English convoy on 4 July of the same year. Here he was badly wounded in the back and taken prisoner for the second time.

The following year, Buhl was employed by the Norwegian naval department in the frigate *Najaden* under Captain Hans Peter Holm. In the bloody battle on 6 July 1812 at Lyngør in Norway, where the frigate along with three brigs fought against the English ship of the line *Dictator* and a brig, and where the frigate was completely destroyed, he along with approximately 130 men died a hero's death at only 23 years of age. Holm refers to him in his report as "as noble a person as a capable officer".



**Jørgen Conrad de Falsen, (1785 – 1849).**

He became a cadet in the Navy in 1797, second lieutenant in 1801 and was in the West Indies from 1805 to 1806 with the frigate *Diana*. Falsen became first lieutenant in 1807 and in the autumn of 1807 led the transports between Lolland and Fehmarn and received royal recognition for this.

(Source: unknown)

After the English had taken possession of the Danish fleet in 1807, Denmark joined France, whereby it came to hand over crews to two French liners lying on the Scheldt, about which it was originally said that they were to be launched into Danish waters, so in 1808 Falsen was therefore sent to Antwerp.

At home, however, the war with England was in full swing, and Falsen soon had an opportunity to show his courage and energy. After a short stay at the flotilla in Storebælt, Falsen became commander of the gunboat flotilla at Fladstrand.

Stationed with some gunboats at Skagen, on 27 April 1810 he passed an honorable battle with an English frigate, just as he captured the English cutter *The Alban* off Læsø on 12 September with two gunboats and four gunboats. As a reward for these achievements, he was decorated in 1811 with the Commander's Cross of Dannebrog and was given command of the entire Jutland gunboat division, favors.

When they wanted to drive the English from the island of Anholt, which they had occupied, he also sorted out the details of a plan for the attack drawn up by Commander Lorentz Fisker, together with Major Ketil Melstedt, after he had previously advised against the expedition as useless. This plan, which consisted of a surprise, was moreover prepared so inexcusably slowly by the authorities, and was kept so little secret, that long before its execution it had become known to the enemy.

He departed from Gerrildbugten on 23 March 1811 with twelve gunboats in addition to a transport flotilla of 680 men under the command of Melstedt and Captain Johan Lorentz Prydz, but the voyage was a total failure. The storming of the island's fort was repulsed, the commanding land officers Melstedt and Prydz fell; about 300 men also fell and were wounded, in addition to the enemy taking a large number of prisoners. From the lighthouse, the English also called in reinforcements of men-of-war who sought to block the Danes' way back.

Falsen did manage to save the transport flotilla, but the enemy captured two of the gunboats, whereby the young, heroic lieutenant Peter Buhl was taken prisoner.

On 2 July of the same year, Falsen again had a match to pass with an equally unfortunate outcome for him. During the attempt to destroy an enemy convoy that had gone to anchor between in a calm Sejro and Hjelm, his gunboats got into a dangerous position when the wind suddenly picked up again. The men-of-war of the convoy attacked him, and he had to hastily flee in scattered order. In a i in the space of a few minutes fog had arisen and he was unlucky enough to pass no fewer than three Englishmen ships of the line, which one after the other poured their smooth layers over him. Falsen was injured and eventually had to surrender with two other gunboats. He was traded ten days later, taking over his previous one command.

The following year, however, luck smiled on him again. After having passed honorable battles in the summer of 1812, in which he partly captured convoy ships and partly drove out the enemy men-of-war, on 19 August off Fornæs he captured the brig Attaque and a lugger, and even that without losing a single man. In May 1813, he took Prince Christian Frederik on a boat from Jutland to Norway.

1814 he stepped outside number and traveled to, among other things England and Sweden. He was appointed captain-lieutenant in 1815, captain in 1821.

It wasn't until 1824, however, that Falsen was permanently at home in Denmark

In 1831 Falsen led the king's steamship Kiel for a short time, and in 1832 he was commander of the corvette Diana in the West Indies and he was appointed commanding captain in 1836. In 1838 he resigned with the rank of commander, which in 1848 was raised to the rank of rear admiral.

**Johan Olfert Fischer (1747 – 1829),**

Became a sea cadet as a 6-year-old and a cadet in 1753. 1770-72 he was first lieutenant with the warship Prins Friderich in a squadron against Algiers and with the warship Sejerø in a squadron in the Mediterranean. In 1773-74 he was as captain lieutenant second in command on the warship St. Croix in squadron.



(Source: unknown)

In 1777 he became an Auscultant in the Construction Commission

1779 Temporary inspection officer at the Dock and member of the Construction Commission 1781 He was appointed Captain and 1782 as Temporary Crew Master at the Dock 1784 he was Commander of the frigate Bornholm, guard ship in the Sound 1788 Flag captain in a squadron under Rear Admiral

JC Krieger, who cooperated with a Russian squadron during the war with Sweden - appointed Commander-in-Chief

1790 1794 Commander of the warship Neptunus and flag captain in a squadron under Vice

Admiral JC Krieger 1795 Crew master at Dock 1796 Commander of the warship Oldenborg in a squadron

1797 Member of the Doc Commission

1798 Member of the Signal Commission and Member of the commission regarding Convoy regulations

1799-1800 Commander of the warship Oldenborg During a convoy of East Indiamen , during a storm in Taffel Bay near Cape Town in 1799 - with the use of good seamanship - he managed to save the entire crew by setting it aground, which probably caused the ship to be lost.

1800 Commander of the warship Odin.

Was advanced to Commander when he was given the biggest task of his life, the defense of Copenhagen in 1801. Head of "the floating defense at Kongedybet" and the forts, i.e. all Danish forces deployed during the Battle of the Nest. Takes command of the blockship Dannebrog, and acts as commander-in-chief in the Battle of the Nest on 2 April 1801 until he was wounded by a wooden splinter in the head. But he still led the Danish forces skilfully under the difficult conditions - later that year he became a member of the Defense Commission

1803 Chief of the 4th division and retires as crew chief at Dokken 1805 Division chief in the Evolution squadron

1807-09 Chief of the battery Three Crowns with subordinate piece barges etc. appointed Rear Admiral 1813-1815 Chief of the 1st Division - And after 72 years of service in the navy appointed Vice Admiral in 1825.



(Source: KGB digital collections)

**Frantz Christopher Henrik Hohlenberg (1765 – 1804),**

Became a cadet in 1777, second lieutenant in the Navy in 1782 and immediately trained as a ship designer. Since his evaluations from the Naval Academy do not testify to outstanding abilities, factory master Henrik Gerner must have felt that Hohlenberg had hidden talents for the art of shipbuilding.

At Gerner's suggestion, Hohlenberg and Second Lieutenant Tycho Jessen were ordered immediately after their appointment as officers to be trained in the sciences related to shipbuilding and to be auscultators in the Construction Commission.

Also on Gerner's initiative, the two officers were sent on a study trip abroad in the spring of 1788. They traveled first to Holland and from there to England, where Lieutenant Jessen died. Hohlenberg, who had advanced to first lieutenant in 1789, continued his studies in England until he traveled to France in December 1790, where he studied under constructor Borda until the French Revolution forced him to leave the country in December 1791. Then he traveled to Italy, from there again to England and Holland and finally to Sweden, where he stayed for a year.

In 1795 he was employed as a teacher in shipbuilding at the Cadet Academy, became a member of the Construction Commission and was given the task of building a frigate based on his newly gained experience. The following year, he obtained the rank of captain-lieutenant and at the same time appointment as interim factory foreman, and in 1797 was permanently employed as such. In 1801 he became a member of the Defense Commission.

Hohlenberg was a talented but also expensive factory master. During his period, 4 ships of the line were built according to his drawings, which were equally good both as naval and combat ships. These were considered so excellent that the English, who in 1807 took possession of 3 of these (among others the Lineship Christian VII) together with all the drawings, had some similar ones built (*HMS Cambridge* and *HMS Black Prince* classes).

In addition, he constructed 11 frigates in addition to a number of smaller ships, some of which had the fault of being too slender. It was probably this characteristic of the frigate *Hvide Örn* he designed that caused it to capsize and go down with man and mouse on this Christmas night 1799 in the Mediterranean

In 1803, after he had built the frigate *Róta*, he suffered the disappointment of the report disapproving of his work. And that Crown Prince Frederik, who was otherwise very wary of Hohlenberg, agreed with its view. Although the crown prince later sought to soften the impression of the verdict in a careful letter to him, Hohlenberg was nevertheless very strongly affected by the criticism his building style had been subjected to here.

At the same time he suffered from chest disease and did not have much income. In his regret, he asked for his resignation and got it with the rank of captain and employment as a foreman at Christianssted on St. Croix. An office with which the board of a small shipyard on the island was also connected. In this position, which was considered extremely profitable, he only remained for a short time, as death already took him away on 9 January 1804.



(Source: unknown)

#### **Hans Peter Holm, (1772 - 1812)**

Holm became an officer in 1789. He was 1804-06 superlodge and harbor master on Sankt Croix and then served in the Schelde fleet. In 1811 he was appointed captain and commander of the brig Lolland in Norway, he participated with honor in various skirmishes and captured the English brig The Manly. In 1812 he led the frigate Najaden in the same place, whose presence gradually

became such a nuisance to the English that the liner Dictator was dispatched to destroy it.

When the Najaden and three brigs were off Sandøen in Norway on July 6, the attack was made. Holm retreated to the narrow Lyngør Harbour, but even here Dictator followed him, and a murderous battle ensued, during which the frigate was totally destroyed. With the brigs and gunboats approaching, Holm then continued the battle and forced the ship of the line to flee.

Holm, who strangely came out of the fire unscathed, drowned the same year with a boat in the Norwegian archipelago and was buried in the warrior's grave together with Najaden's fallen.

#### **Carl Wilhelm Jessen, (1764 - 1823)**

Jessen began as a cadet in 1776 and became a second lieutenant in the Navy in 1782.

Immediately after his officer's exam, Jessen was on a voyage with the nickname Lærken to the West Indies, where he took part in a lucky fight against 2 English privateers. 1784-86 in kuffard voyage with Vestindisk Kompagni's ships as chief mate.

First lieutenant 1789 and school officer at the Naval Academy and commander of a gunboat in Admiral Conrad von Schindel's squadron in the Baltic Sea



(Source National History Museum – Frederiksborg)

1790 commander of the royal boat Makrellen, reconnoitering for the dispatched squadron. In 1793-94 he was second in command on the brig Lougen again in the West Indies, where he also participated in battles against privateers. In 1795, second-in-command on the frigate Thetis and appointed captain-lieutenant in 1796.

Jessen was 1799-1800 second-in-command of the Naval Academy and then commander of a cutter on a voyage to Norway to protect neutrality

He was sent in 1800 as commander of the brig Louge again to the West Indies, where he also had two schooners, Iresine and Den Aarvaagne, under him. On 1 September, he captured the English privateer Eagle, which had been harassing the Danish merchant ships for a long time.

On March 3, 1801, he fought against a superior English force of two frigates, which, without Jessen knowing anything about the outbreak of war, ambushed him at the island of St. Thomas – The Battle of the Bird Cliff. When the islands were later surrendered, however, he had to hand over all three of his ships to the English, and he then traveled home with the crews, where the king honored him with a gold saber of honour.

In 1803-04 he was again in the West Indies, now as captain and commander of the frigate Frederikssteen. He was also tasked with taking a seat in the West Indies government in all matters relating to the islands' navy and naval defence.

In 1807 he became commander of the liner Prins Christian Frederik, which, together with the liner Louise Augusta and the brig Lovgen, stayed in Norwegian waters this year and thereby avoided being handed over to the English, when they took our entire other fleet. In December 1807 he came back to Øresund with 200 men of the crew on the sick list and with a ship that badly needed an overhaul, as it had been in the lake for a long time, but already in March 1808 he was ordered to go to the Great Belt to chase away an English frigate, because they wanted to be able to transfer the French (Spanish) troops from Funen to Zealand without hindrance.

In Copenhagen, however, it was learned that a superior English force had arrived off Hornbæk, and Admiral Bille therefore sent a letter to him asking him to return to the Sound south of Zealand. However, Jessen didn't get the message until it was too late. On March 22, he and his ship met two enemy frigates north of Zealand; to prevent these from entering the Belt he kept north; the English ships of the line at Hornbæk, however, had learned of his departure and set off the same morning in search of him.

At 2 two English ships of the line were discovered from Prince Christian Frederik coming from the east, and Jessen now realized that a decisive battle must follow. He did not want to flee from the enemy through the belt in order not to drag the enemy force down there, so he kept the north and east of Sjællands Reef and now hoped to be able to escape safely back to Øresund. However, as the wind ratcheted up more and more, this did not work either. At 19.30 on the east side of Sjællands Odde, the battle began, which was fought against the English liners Nassau and Stately as well as a further frigate and two corvettes (HMS Quebec, HMS Lynx and HMS Falcon). After nearly three hours of fighting, Jessen had to strike the flag, but by then had come so close to land that he could run the ship aground. Only narrowly did the enemy ships avoid sharing a fate with him. In this naval battle, Lieutenant Peter Willemoes and two other officers and 61 men fell, in addition 129 men were wounded. When the English could not pull the ship off the ground again, they set it on fire the next day.

The fallen were buried at Odden Kirkegård, where their grave with a suitable monument still exists.

Jessen, who had himself been wounded in the battle, was exchanged in Gothenburg, where the English ships were repaired.

For the rest of the war, he was in command of the battery Trekroner as well as a division of gunboats.

Appointed in 1810 as commanding captain and in 1815 as commander - in the same year, Jessen led a private ship to the West Indies. He retired from the navy as a rear admiral in 1822 and after his resignation was employed by the Maritime Administration as governor of St. Thomas in the West Indies, and he remained in the position until his death, March 30, 1823.



**Peter Greis Krabbe** (1755 – 1807),

Became a cadet in the Navy in 1771, second lieutenant 1776, first lieutenant 1781. In 1784 Krabbe was commander of the transport brig Postillon, 1788 commander of the galley Kragerø under Rear Admiral Jacob Arenfeldt's command and under him attacked the west coast of Sweden.

(source: Statens museum for art)

Captain lieutenant 1789, captain 1796 and 1801 member of the Norwegian Naval Defense Commission.

Krabbe became most famous when he led the frigate Freia on a convoy to the Mediterranean in 1800. On 25 July, he met with his convoy at the entrance to the English Channel a superior English force, which demanded to search his ships.

As this was contrary to Krabbe's order, he refused the request, but when the English disregarded vessels against the koffardi ships, a fierce battle ensued, in which his frigate was attacked by four English. After an hour of fencing, during which Freia almost drowned, Krabbe prevailed and was brought to the Downs. However, he was soon after released, the ship was repaired at Sheerness, and Krabbe then performed his duties

The episode later became known as the "Freya affair", and was a contributing factor to the English attack on Denmark on 2 April 1801.

Commander captain 1803 and 1805, Krabbe became commander of the brig Nidelven in the evolution squadron.

### **Johan Cornelius Krieger** (1756 - 1824),

Already seven years old, he made his first trip as a volunteer. He became a cadet in 1767, and in the same year was with the frigate Havfruen to the Mediterranean. As such, he took part in Admiral Frederik Christian Kaas's ill-fated voyage to Algiers in 1770 on board the liner Sophie Magdalene.

(Source National History Museum – Frederiksborg)



The following year he was appointed second lieutenant, but remained in the Mediterranean until 1772. After some tours in a squadron and to Iceland, Krieger advanced to first lieutenant in 1776; two years later he was sent with seven other officers to France to serve in the navy and remained there until 1781.

Krieger took an active part in the many bloody and highly instructive naval battles fought in the West Indian waters during these years between Admirals d'Estaing, Count de Guichen and de Grasse on the French side, against Graves, Hood and Rodney on the English side.

He distinguished himself on several occasions, was wounded, decorated with the Ordre pour le mérite militaire.

Was offered an annual pension by the French government (which he declined), and was finally sent home with an exceedingly laudatory letter from his boss, the Marquis Joseph Bernard de Chabert.

Shortly before his return home, he was promoted to captain-lieutenant.

1781-83 Krieger led a ship for the West India trading company. At the end of this period he was appointed adjutant-general to the king.

During the tense conditions vis-à-vis Sweden in 1784, 1788 and 1789, he was assigned to the squadrons that operated together with Russian squadrons, for a time he was employed as a consultant to the Russian admiral. In 1789 he became a captain. 1791-98 Krieger served as crew master at Nyholm, but in addition to this he had several outing commands.

In the autumn of 1798, he went as commander of the frigate Najaden to the Mediterranean to, under the command of Steen Andersen Bille, protect the Danish merchant ships partly against the pirate states and partly against English visitations. From this duty, which was as arduous as it challenged both courage and tact, he distinguished himself with excellent skill.

1800, when relations with England had reached a dangerously tense state, all ships stationed in the Mediterranean were recalled. For which Krieger then took over command and was simultaneously appointed Commander-in-Chief.

At the end of April 1801, he arrived safely with his force in Norway. In 1801-03 he stayed in Norway as a member of a defense commission and then until 1807 had some short-term commands in our own waters.

In 1802 Krieger resigned from the Construction Commission. In whose meetings, due to his external commands, he had rarely participated, but in 1804 he became a member of the Regulation Commission and again in 1807-14 a member of the Construction Commission.

When the English attacked Copenhagen in 1807, Krieger was hurriedly given command of the mobile naval defences. By his tireless activity and courage, he also succeeded in thwarting the English fleet's attack from the sea side. Whereas, of course, he could not prevent the enemy's bombardment of the capital from the shore batteries.

In 1808 he was given the supreme command of the gunboat defenses in Øresund and along the east coast of Zealand. The same year he was promoted to commander. The force under his command, which in the course of the summer grew to 33 rocanon vessels, he used with excellent skill; in June he thus captured an English military brig and a number of Swedish cargo ships. In October of the same year, with his boats, he dislodged the blocking English ship of the line Africa, which had almost been captured by a hair's breadth. In 1810, his area of command was extended to the waters between Nakkehoved and Møn, and in 1812 he was also given command of the gunboats in the Great Belt.

Krieger, who advanced to rear admiral in 1812, remained in charge of this gunboat defense throughout the war until 1813, and then came to the end in a personal relationship with Frederik VI. There learned to value him so much that he even entrusted him with initiating negotiations in the last part of the war

on armistice with the English Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Hope. This attempt, however, failed for him; later he was with the king in Funen as commander-in-chief of the naval defence, while the peace negotiations were conducted in Kiel.

In May 1814, Krieger took over the responsible position as Holmen's crew chief (chief), after Admiral Kjerulff had retired. It soon became apparent that his administrative abilities were as excellent as his abilities as a warrior and sailor. With untiring zeal he worked gradually brought forward the new fleet, abolished many abuses, improved the conditions of the privates and treated them with great care. With his firm character, his tact and service, he really succeeded in evoking a new and better spirit in the shipyards. So that both superiors and subordinates set about the beautiful task of resurrecting the fallen marine with enthusiasm and freedom. In 1821 he had the grief of unexpectedly losing his son Hilmar Krieger in the West Indies; this blow gave his health a break which never healed; he died July 9, 1824.



**Jochum Nicolay Müller** (1775 - 1848),

Joined the navy as a volunteer sea cadet in 1789 and became a cadet four years later. He won the Gerner medal for excellence in mathematics in 1795 and retired as a junior lieutenant in 1796.

He was the second-in-command of the cutter Forsvar on the Norwegian coast before taking a trip to the Danish West Indies on the frigate Iris.

(source: Trondheim city archive)

In April 1801, when the war between Denmark and Great Britain approached, he was commander of the small gunboat Hajen

During the Battle of Copenhagen (1801), the little Hajen was stationed next to the blockship Dannebrog with its crew of 357 men. The Danish defenses withstood almost 4 hours of intense bombardment from the English fleet while they returned fire - Until Dannebrog had lost a third of her crew, was burned and exploded.

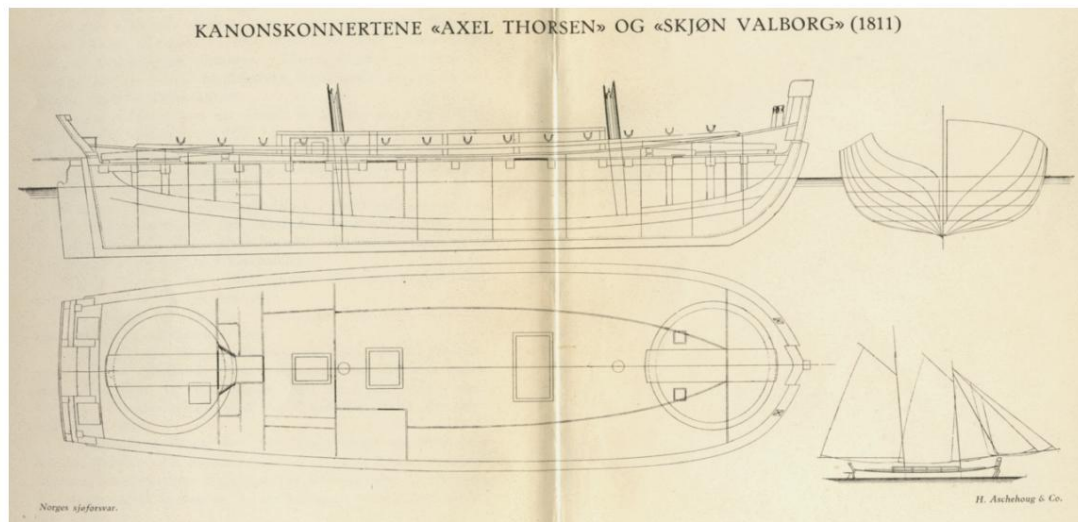
Hajen received a good number of shots aimed at Dannebrog and eventually had to pass the flag. Müller was captured and transported to Nelson's flagship HMS Elephant, where he came face to face with Horatio Nelson, the enemy himself.

Müller is probably the young naval officer to whom Nelson referred to the crown prince when he referred to the brave young naval officers - and therefore not Peter Willemoes. (This question occupied the minds of Norway and Denmark for years).

Later that year he served on the cadet training ship Fredericksværn and was promoted to senior lieutenant in 1802. In 1806, as captain of a pilot boat he sailed to Saint Petersburg, where the ship was donated to the Russian Navy. There, Müller met Czar Alexander I when the latter came aboard.

Müller was in command of the gunboat Flensburg in September 1807, when the British seized it and many other ships after the Danes capitulated after the Second Battle of Copenhagen. Flensburg did not make the trip to Great Britain but was lost in a storm in the Kattegat.

After a short period of time 1808 - 1810 when Müller was in command of a gunboat division on the Norwegian border with Sweden, he was promoted to captain and given command of the brig Lougen, which was to sail with HDMS Langeland to the North Cape together with three completed Norwegian gun schooners.



(Source: unknown)

As commander of the Finnmark flotilla, in 1810 he re-established Norway's control over the trade route to northern Russia to which British warships had prevented access. Just as he was responsible for rebuilding the harbor defenses at Hammerfest.

In the same year, Müller had almost lost his ship when Lougen ran aground on a reef south of Bodø while she was en route to Trondheim with eleven larger ships that had been taken as prizes in September.

In 1811, Müller was again in command of the Finnmark flotilla, which in that year included four Norwegian gun schooners and five other armed vessels.

As a result of his stay so far up north, Müller contracted rheumatic fever and was on sick leave for most of 1812. Returning to active duty in 1813, he was responsible for successfully escorting a regiment of foot soldiers across the Great Belt despite the British blockade.

A year after the Treaty of Kiel and the short war with Sweden, Müller applied to the king (Frederik VI) to be released from his obligations to the fleet. But the king was not keen on losing such an effective officer as Müller, so he instead allowed him to stay in Norway for a period of two years - a task which was later made permanent - and in 1841 Müller was appointed Vice-Admiral in the Norwegian Navy.



**Johan Christian von Schrødersee** (1754 – 1801),

He became a second lieutenant in the Navy in 1773. After making some expeditions with the navy's ships, he stayed for a long time at Frederiksværn and in 1777 led the schooner Støren. Went to Schrødersee 1778 in English military service. Where during 4 years he served in the West Indies under the famous admirals Rodney and Hood, who led many and – in naval terms – interesting battles against the French fleet.

(source: Norwegian State Museum of Art)

Was appointed first lieutenant 1781, captain lieutenant 1784. In 1785 he was in the exercise squadron. 1788 commander of the piece barge Nyborg, later of Agershus at the sea defense on Copenhagen Red, the following year on board the liner Den Prægtige and member of an artillery commission.

Appointed 1789 as adjutant general. In 1793 he convoyed as commander of the brig Glommen to Finisterre and in 1794 he was second in command of the frigate Thetis, which position he had to give up due to illness. This developed in such a way that 2 years later he had to resign from the service due to infirmity with the rank of captain 1796

During the battle at Reden on 2 April 1801, he stayed at Battery Sixtus near the crown prince; when information came that the commander of the blockship Indfødsretten, Captain Albert de Thurah, and his second-in-command, Lieutenant Cortsen, had fallen, the prince called on one of those present to take command of the ship. Schrødersee immediately volunteered, let himself be rowed out on the Nest, but had hardly set foot on the deck of the Indfødsretten before he was hit by a bullet and mortally wounded, so that he died the same day

**Peter Willemoes** (1783 – 1808),

Willemoes already became a student at the Naval Academy at the age of twelve. In 1800, when he was seventeen, he received his first officer rank as second lieutenant, after which he served on the liners Louise Augusta and Danmark.

Willemoes gained great fame in the Battle of the Nest on 2 April 1801. He was given command of Naval Battery No. 1, a 24-gun unsinkable fleet. It came to lie opposite the two large English liners Elephant (with the famous English admiral Horatio Nelson on board) and Ganges.

After just over 1½ hours of fighting, Willemoes had to give up and let the battery drift out of the battle zone.

Peter Willemoes was for a period in Russian service, but returned home after being robbed by the English the fleet in 1807.

22 March 1808 Peter Willemoes was on board the liner Prinds Christian Frederik with 68 guns and a crew of 576 men on their way to the Great Belt from Norway. In the Kattegat off Zealand Oddly they met an English naval unit consisting of two ships of the line, a frigate and two smaller ships. After a few hours of fighting, they had to give up when the ship ran aground. On board there were 132 injured and 69 killed, and among those killed was 24-year-old Peter Willemoes.



(Source: KGB digital collections)

## The prelude to the "Battle of the Nest" on Maundy Thursday, 2 April 1801

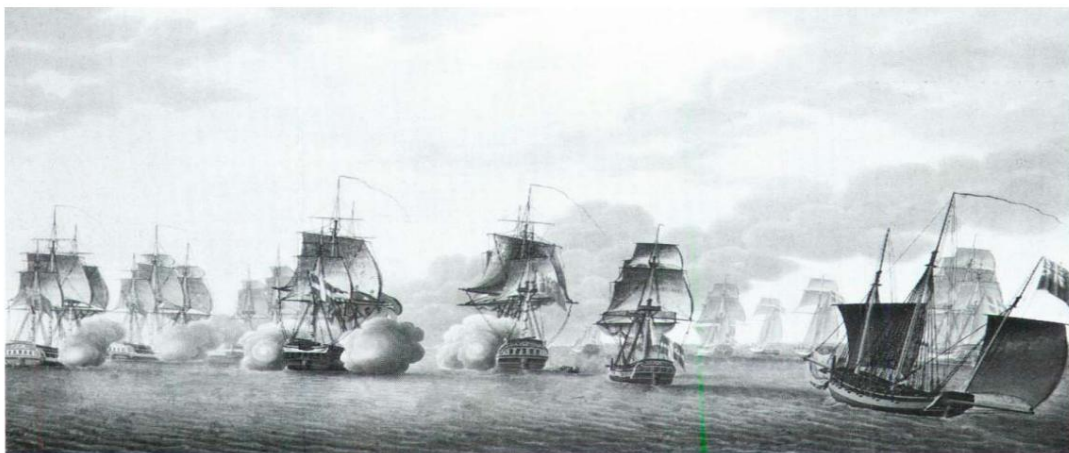
Denmark-Norway had a fairly strong and modern navy, which could put power behind the chosen foreign policy.

The navy had created excellent opportunities for the merchant navy - and thus for the country's earnings - and at the same time also created respect for the Danish demands. In relation to England, there was talk of a slow escalation of the situation, where Denmark might not have made all the consequences clear, but where the immediate earnings - and pressure from the shipowners, large merchants and industry - perhaps blinded the political decision-makers.

In the summer of 1800 came the confrontation, and then events began to gather pace. Denmark suddenly found itself in a very complicated foreign policy situation with no easy solutions.

From 1800 the English demanded that neutral ships should be searched, and if they opposed it, both convoy and escort should be brought up and taken to an English port. At the same time, the requirements regarding ship loads were tightened. You were not allowed to sail with "*contraband*", i.e. goods that could be used in warfare, but the English extended this concept to also include food and raw materials.

The first confrontation occurred when the English met a Danish convoy in the Channel on its way from Kristiansand to the Mediterranean. The escort consisted of the frigate *Freya* with Captain Peter Krabbe as commander. He had strict instructions not to join. After a short but brave battle on 25 July 1800, Krabbe had to surrender to four English frigates and go to an English port with the convoy.



(Source: unknown)

Denmark had to give in and let the English search the Danish merchant ships. This brought Denmark into conflict with Russia, which at the time was among England's enemies. Russia was the strongest proponent of the Armed Neutrality Alliance between Russia, Denmark-Norway and Sweden. From the Danish side, they wanted to add the English, but at the same time it was also important to get the Russians involved in an armed neutrality alliance, so that Denmark could continue its profitable activities on the world's seas without English interference.

It did not take long for the English to see through the Danish double game. In January 1801, they seized all Danish ships in English harbor and sent troops to occupy the Danish colonies in Trankebar and the West Indies.

After this, the English prepared a naval force which was to go on a "tour de force" around the Baltic Sea and convince the alliance not to stand in the way of the English fleet. This was to happen as the ice loosened its grip on the fleets in the Baltic Sea. They would first attack the Danish fleet in Copenhagen, then the Swedish fleet in Karlskrona and finally the Russian fleet in Reval (Tallinn), Saint Petersburg and Kronshtadt.

In March, Admiral Sir Hyde Parker sailed with an English naval force of 53 ships, including 21 ships of the line, towards Danish waters. He had strict diplomatic instructions, and he was prudent and reserved. If the use of force was needed, his squadron commanders, Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson and Rear-Admiral Thomas Graves, could attack the Danish-Norwegian fleet, which was being fitted out on Copenhagen's red.

From the Danish side, it was clear that something was amiss. On the one hand, the capital had to be protected, and on the other hand, the fleet had to be prevented from being lost.



(Source: KGB digital collections)

Therefore, the Danish defense decided to put the navy's old ships out on a "sea defense line".

This means that the decommissioned ships were anchored as "block ships", provided with a number of guns and a crew.

The fleet's modern ships remained on Holmen, and the ships in the sea defense line had to keep the enemy ships at a distance, so that their guns and mortars could not bombard Holmen and the town itself. They had long had plans to develop "Trekroner" into a strong fort, but it never really came to fruition, and before the battle they only managed to make some simple timber constructions and fill them with earth. Even so, it became a very strong fort, provided with 24-pounder guns, and it came to form the core of the defense on 2 April. The fleet provided approx. 3,000 men, and the remaining 2,000 men consisted mostly of volunteers who had to learn how to operate cannons in a hurry. Finally, there were some who were forced to take part in the fights.



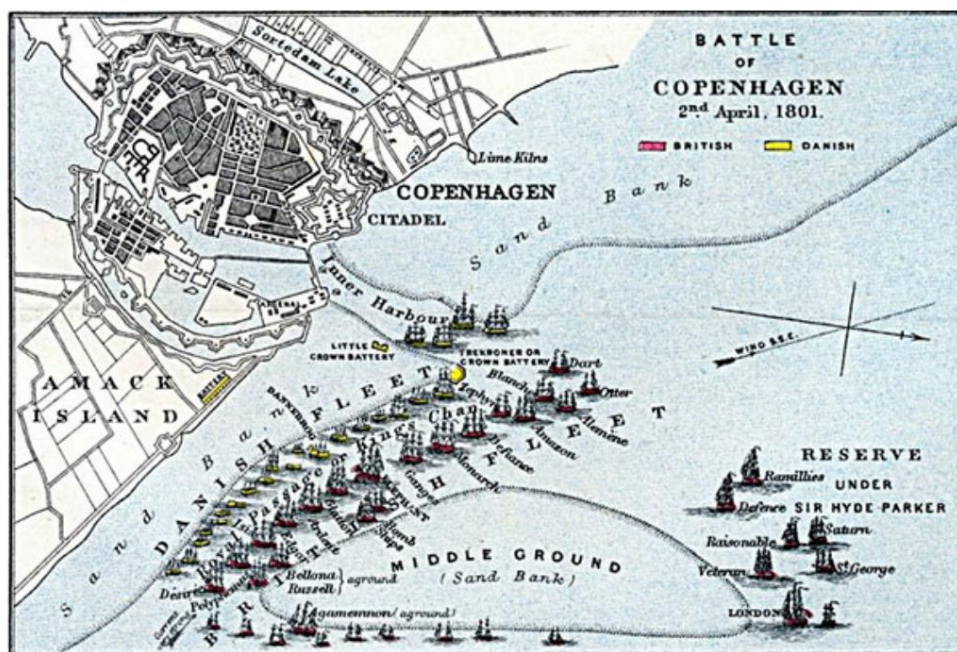
(source: The National Museum's digital collections)

After passing by Kronborg, from which a great distance was kept, the English fleet anchored off Tårnbæk, where Sir Hyde Parker held a meeting with the commanders.

He surrendered a force of 12 ships of the line and 7 frigates to Vice-Admiral Nelson, who sailed south through the Dutch Deep (that is, east of the Middle Ground). Here they anchored south of the site on 1 April 1801.

At night, the English carried out a survey of the waters and laid out markings. Next morning at 10.00 the English ships stood up north through Kongedybet (west of Middelgrunden).

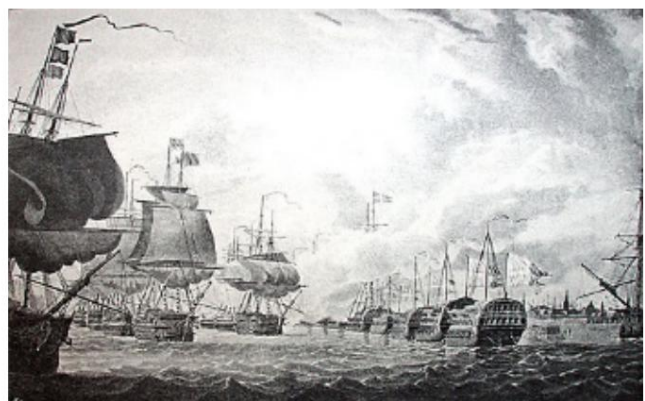
The Danish line was approx. 500 meters outside the fixed batteries at *Trekroner*, *Lynetten*, *Sixtus*, *Quintus*, *Prøvestenen* and *Strickersbatterie*.



(Source: unknown)

Most of the Danish ships lay at four anchors, some only at two. Nelson had instructed his ship commanders to anchor the ships of the line off each of the important Danish ships, and the English line lay approx. 500 meters east of the Danish.

It is estimated that Nelson's force was 8,885 men and carried 1,206 guns and 14 heavy mortars. The Danish force managed to place between 700 and 900 guns in the entire line before the attack.



(source: Royal Museums Greenwich)

It turned out to be a far more violent fight than Nelson and Parker had imagined. Nelson had expected to defeat all resistance in an hour, but only after five hours did the fighting stop.



Even though in the high school songbook we can read about the heroes "who won at Kongedybet",

then it was a clear English victory, but it was Nelson's hardest fight, and many of his ships were badly equipped. His boss was worried and ordered him back to the anchorage at Tårnbæk, but Nelson, as you know, put the binoculars to the blind eye and "couldn't see the flag signal".

(source: Odense Museum)

On the Danish side there were 367 dead and 635 wounded, while on the English side there were 254 dead and 689 wounded. In addition, 1,779 Danes were captured on the captured ships.

The truce was obtained under threats that Nelson would burn the captured ships, during which the lives of the crews would be in danger. By mistake, the English parliamentarian was sent to the crown prince and not to the commanding officer, because Olfert Fischer did not have his command insignia visibly waving from Three Crowns at this time. It was therefore the Crown Prince, and not Olfert Fischer, who decided to interrupt the match. During the subsequent negotiations, the news of the assassination of the Russian tsar came in, and with this the remainder of the English Baltic expedition was cancelled. The peace terms required that Denmark-Norway leave the armed neutrality alliance.



(source: Orlogsmuseet)

### **The bombardment of Copenhagen and the "Robbery of the Navy" in 1807**

When, after the Battle of Friedland in June 1807 and the subsequent Peace of Tilsit, Napoleon eliminated Russia and Prussia as enemies. Could he turn to England and prepare an invasion there.

It would require a considerable naval force and transport ships, and he could probably get that from Russia, Denmark-Norway and Portugal.

If the said fleets were in any way united against England, the country would be seriously threatened.

For the English it was a struggle for existence. And that required resolute and swift action. At the same time, they had to evacuate British troops in Swedish Pomerania (from Rügen) before they were cut off by Napoleon's forces. What would be more natural than to bring in the troops, block the access roads to Zealand, primarily by blocking the Great Belt, and then take Denmark's fleet before Napoleon himself came and took it?

With this, the stage was set for the events of the summer of 1807, when the crown prince and the foreign minister still had sympathy for England, with whom they did not want to engage in war under any circumstances.

Since January 1807, however, there had been problems with the English, who, in response to Napoleon's "mainland blockade" (blockade), prohibited neutral trade in the ports of the belligerent countries. It hit Danish-Norwegian shipping hard, and it embittered the negotiations with the English leading up to the fateful summer of 1807. The Danish-Norwegian fleet was well equipped and had war-experienced and skilled leaders, but the fleet was not prepared, precisely so as not to provoke the English. In return, the English received an erroneous message in May 1807 that the Danes were now equipping the fleet!

Some Danish naval officers, who had been in Portsmouth on their way home from the colonies, were able to announce that the English were planning precautions against the Danish-Norwegian fleet. They brought the warning home with them, but were told that they were naval officers and that they should not engage in politics! - a political approach to the defence, which would prove to be repeated 133 years later !!!!!

Napoleon's forces were now south of Holstein. The Danish army was therefore stationed in Holstein in the event that Napoleon wanted to move up into Jutland. If they had been afraid of an English attack on Copenhagen, they would have been transferred there.

The threatening prospect that the Danish fleet could fall into the wrong hands led the new English foreign minister, George Canning, to make a series of quick decisions in July 1807 – admittedly on a faulty basis.

Admiral James Gambier was ordered on 18 July to equip a naval force to protect a convoy of 153 transport ships carrying an invasion force. Gambier left Yarmouth on 26 July and appeared in Danish waters at the beginning of August.



The first task for the English fleet was to isolate Zealand by cutting off Danish traffic across the Great Belt: the Danish army of 20,000 men in Holstein could not be transferred to Copenhagen.

At the same time, the English troops on Rügen had to be evacuated before Napoleon could cut them off. They could conveniently be transferred from Stralsund and landed in Køge Bugt. A British diplomat visited the crown prince in Kiel to present the English demands to get the Danish-Norwegian fleet under English command, so that Denmark thereby became an ally. Alternatively, you could pledge the fleet and get it back after the war. You could not talk about actual negotiations. Denmark-Norway had to choose a side now.

The negotiations broke down on 13 August, and on 16 August a large-scale landing began in Vedbæk and later also from Skovshoved. With rowing vessels, the English landed 20,000 men with associated equipment and 3,000 horses.

The troops marched towards the capital and lined up in a semi-circle around the city from Kalvebod Strand to Svanemølle Bay. On 21 August, the troops from Swedish Pomerania began landing at Køge.



(Source: KGB digital collections)

Copenhagen was well defended, especially from the sea side, and the English knew this well from 1801. From the English side, they wanted to avoid a repetition of the fierce battles of 1801, and therefore they bet on achieving their maritime goal – to have the Danish fleet handed over – in an effort with large army forces.

Now the city's defenses were divided into four areas: "Københavns Vold" and "Christianshavns Vold", which respectively covered the city north and south of the harbor. The navy manned the "Lake Fortification", which covered the city from the lake side. Finally, there were the cannons in "Citadel Frederikshavn" (Kastellet), which supported the sea fortification and at the same time could cover the city against attacks from the north over the small land area, "Classens Have", between Lake Sortedamssøen and Svanemølle Bay.

The sea fortification could be supported by a large number of gunboats, which were engaged in fierce battles on the flanks at Kalveboderne and in Svanemølle Bay, respectively. Several English ships were sunk or brought up, and the gunboat *Stubbekøbing* had a full hit, so that all but 17 men perished. There were up to 79 men on board in the largest gunboats. The fleet's commander, Commander Bille, was commander of *the Sea Fortification* and also appointed to be one of the two deputies for the commander of Copenhagen's defence.



(source: Trade and Maritime Museum)

The English plan naturally involved attacking Copenhagen at its weakest point, and that was from the land side. The city was to be surrounded, subjected to a bombardment and set on fire. There was thus no question of beating Danish forces in battle, but of a terrorist bombardment aimed at the capital.

This should ensure a quick negotiated solution. Partly Napoleon's forces had to be unable to come to Copenhagen's rescue, and partly the English had to be able to prepare the Danish fleet and sail away with it before the ice closed the waters. The bombardment lasted for three nights and then the city surrendered.

The Crown Prince was furious when he received the announcement in Kiel about the surrender.

Who also got angry was the fleet's commander, Commander Bille. He would have fought longer and made sure to destroy the fleet on Holmen so that it did not fall to the English. He could not get through to his boss, the German (source: Statens museum for art)



speaking General Peymann. The crown prince had otherwise issued an instruction to destroy the fleet in the event of capitulation, but it never reached Copenhagen, because his couriers were intercepted by the English while passing through the Langeland Belt.

This was followed by the "robbery of the fleet", which was the real purpose of the English effort. The English went to work thoroughly on Holmen. They took 18 ships of the line, 15 frigates, 7 brigs (smaller, fast-sailing warships with a battery deck), 23 gunboats and 5 piece barges (special ships with heavy artillery). Ships under construction were destroyed. Everything of value that could be transported was taken. The English filled 92 merchant ships with goods from Holmen. It was about everything from timber, sails, tools, ropes, weapons and ammunition to office furniture and the craftsmen's private tools.

To this day, you can see that the original brass handles are missing from the doors of the finer offices on Holmen. They are in England. The English made good use of the ships, most of which were in good condition. Admiral Gambier was very pleased, and the rigging of the fleet had taken him considerably less time than expected. On 20 October 1807, the Danish fleet left Holmen under the English flag.



All ships that could not be transported away were destroyed, including those that were lying on the bed.

(source: The National Museum's digital collections)

### The period after 1807 and the "gunboat war 1807 – 1813"

The Napoleonic wars led to a French demand that the navy should provide manning for two ships of the line on the Scheldt river at Vlissingen.

From 1809 to 1813, the ships of the line *Pultusk* and *Danzig* were manned with Danish-Norwegian crews under commanding captain, later admiral, CE van Dockum.

When the war broke out in 1807, the frigate *Diana* was on her way to the Mediterranean to continue on to the West Indies. The ship ended up being seized by Spain, England's ally, in Cartagena in 1809.



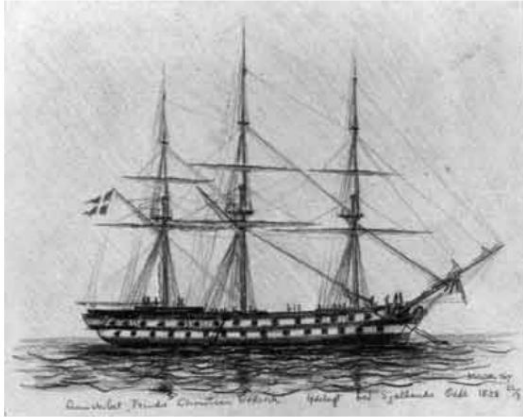
(source: Orlogsmuseet)

Finally, the so-called "cape war" must be mentioned. The government gave permission for private individuals to obtain "privateer letters" and thus carry out "authorized piracy" against the country's enemies.

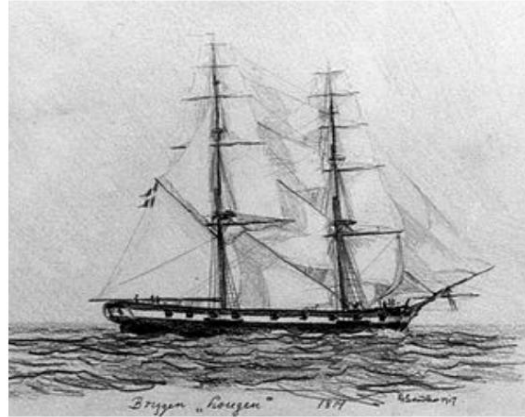
With this, all English shipping became legitimate targets. And the privateers got prize money when they brought English ships into port.

Norway was on the brink of starvation, and part of the fleet's operations in Jutland consisted of sending food from North Jutland, past the English ships, to needy Norway.

After 1807, the "gunboat war" followed until the turn of the year 1813/1814. Where the fleet with a large number of newly built gunboats attacked English convoys and warships that passed Danish and Norwegian waters. The liner "*Prince Christian Frederik*" and the brig "*Lougen*" were in Norwegian waters and avoided extradition.



The liner *Prins Christian Frederik* (source: Orlogsmuseet)



The brig *Lougen* (source: Orlogsmuseet)

The liner *Prinsesse Lovisa Augusta* also came to Norway, but was in such poor condition that it had to be laid up. The other two came to form the core of the new fleet, which immediately went to war with England.



(source: Orlogsmuseet)

"*Prince Christian Frederik*" was shot down by three English warships during the battle at Sjøellands Odde on 22 March 1808, where, among others, the young lieutenant Peter Willemoes fell.

The liner had 64 killed and 129 injured.

It was important for the English to keep the sea route to the Baltic Sea open. England was at that time the one

undisputed largest maritime nation in the world. England's large navy and large merchant fleet required access to a wide range of resources that the country did not have at its disposal. The raw materials, i.e. tar, flax for the sails, hemp for the ropes, timber for the ship's hulls and especially the large trees for the masts, were purchased along the Baltic Sea coast. If the Baltic Sea was closed to the English, they had to obtain the materials by sailing north of Norway and using the much more expensive route via Arkangelsk.

One of the tasks of the English navy was to survey the oceans and produce nautical charts. From 1800 – 1806, the English had carried out a survey of the stretch from the Kattegat to the Fehmarn Belt via the Great Belt. Almost all sea trade through the Danish straits had hitherto gone via Øresund, but now the English could use the new route. With this, they could also send their largest warships with three battery decks into the Baltic Sea. Drogden in Øresund could normally only be passed by liners with two battery decks.

During the gunboat war after 1807, many daring operations were carried out by the crews of the many gunboats scattered all over Denmark and along the Norwegian coast. The gunboats had just been introduced into the navy shortly before 1807, and in 1808 alone 96 gunboats were built,

16 mortar chalupes and 13 gunboats. In total, approx. 250 gunboats. Some of the cannon boats were built for collected funds, and this explains the strange ship names such as *Urtekrämmerlauget* and *Borgersamfundet*.

The naval officers' own gunboat for collected funds was called *Victory or Death*. The tactic behind the use of the gunboats was to take advantage of situations with little or no wind. Then an opponent in a large warship could not maneuver, while the small gunboats could save the sails and be rowed by the large crew of up to 79 men, equipped with long and heavy oars.

With this, you could lie down in a position either starboard or starboard and shoot longboard into a ship that does not (source: Marine Museum, Norway) could even benefit from launching his "broadside". With one a lucky longship's shot towards the enemy could clear half of a battery deck of men and guns.

The gunboats operated in larger groups, and it was a kind of guerilla warfare at sea.



(source: Orlogsmuseet)

The most famous skirmishes were the capture of the brig *HMS Tickler* in the Langeland Belt on 4 June 1808 with gunboats from Langeland and Tårs.

The capture of the brig *HMS Turbulent* and 11 merchant ships in Flinterenden on 9 June 1808 and the capture of the brig *HMS Seagull* off Kristiansand on 19 June 1808.

On 1 August 1808, an English brig, *HMS Tigress*, captured at Agersø.

The most famous action was the battle against the English ship of the line *HMS Africa* off Dragør on 20 October 1808.

In June 1810, he succeeded in luring an escort away from an English convoy and capturing all 50 ships of the convoy and taking them to Kristiansand. The conquest was valued at 7.5 million Riksdaler.

In May 1809, the English attacked Anholt, as the lighthouse was important for the safe navigation of the English fleet and merchant fleet.

The lighthouse was converted into a fort named "*Fort Yorke*", and a larger garrison was located here.

In March 1811, it was decided from the Danish side to recapture the lighthouse by an effort from 12 gunboats and 12 transport vessels, which were to bring 650 soldiers to the island.



(Source: unknown)

The operation was well planned, but ended in total chaos and failure when British warships unexpectedly appeared. Almost 400 men were captured, and the gunboat crews, who came from Mols, had to row on to Hundested after a long day at the oars and a defeat! Anholt remained in English hands for the rest of the war.

The battle at Lyngør in southern Norway on 6 - 7 July 1812 was between the English ship of the line *HMS Dictator* and three naval brigs against the newly built Danish-Norwegian frigate *Najaden* and the three Danish-Norwegian naval brigs *Kiel*, *Lolland* and *Samsøe*. In addition, a number of local Norwegian gunboats, gunboats and sloops took part.

*Samsøe* escaped, while *Kiel* and *Lolland* were conquered by the English. *The Najad* lay a burning wreck, but her commander and crew continued the fight from the gunboats, and the people recaptured *Kiel* and *Lolland*. The intensity of the battle can be seen from the casualty figures.

Of *the Najaden's* crew of 315 men, 133 died during the battle, while 102 were wounded and four men taken prisoner.



(Source: unknown)

The Danish-Norwegian naval effort meant that the English had to devote very large resources to convoy protection. On the other hand, it is also part of history that the English maritime trade was not affected to any significant extent by the effort. The English were simply too strong and too numerous.

The Danish-Norwegian fleet could not prevent or reduce the English presence, convoying and maritime trade in the Baltic Sea.

A good Danish sailor, who had been with both in 1801 and in 1807, was given the following epitaph:

*"In 1801 he stood and remained standing,  
in 1807 he fell and remained bedridden".*

This laconic epitaph could perhaps also be used to denote the navy's situation during the wars between England. 1801 was an accident, but 1807 was a disaster from which the navy and Denmark never recovered! In 1813 state bankruptcy followed and in 1814 the loss of Norway to Sweden.

The Swedish negotiating delegation in 1814 demanded that Norway, i.e. "Mainland Norway", be placed under the Swedish crown. The treaty expressly excluded the old so-called "Norwegian tax countries" in the North Atlantic: the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland.

This clarification later played a decisive role when, in the 1930s, the Danish government had a dispute with Norway over Northeast Greenland, which came before the International Court of Justice.

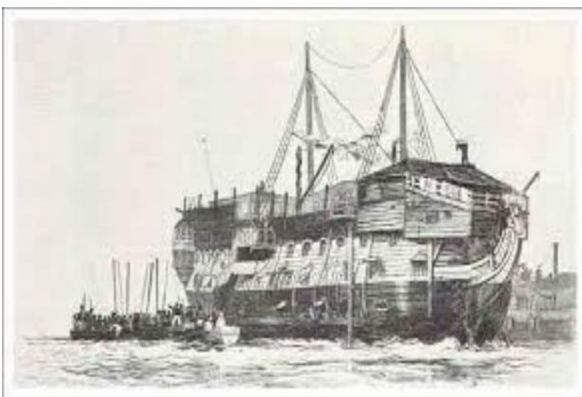
In 1815, the Napoleonic Wars left Denmark as a small, poor country without a significant navy and with a greatly reduced maritime trade. On the other hand, national pride did not fail. The reason we had lost to Nelson in 1801 was his villainous stratagem of threatening to burn the ships with the wounded on board. Similarly, we had lost the fleet due to the not very gentlemanly English behavior of bombarding the capital until the fleet was handed over. The navy had fought bravely against the superior power and claimed the honor of the war flag and the nation.

The navy had earned respect among the population.

#### A "Black" chapter in the navy's proud history.

But with the loss of the fleet also followed a black chapter in the fleet's history, as many of the decommissioned ships were used by the English as floating prisoner ships - the *prisonen* - which were anchored off the English naval towns, e.g. Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham.

These were, among other things, used for the 7,000 Danish and Norwegian sailors who became prisoners of war in England from 1807-14 during the war between Denmark and England.



(Source: unknown)

The prisoners were divided between 2,000 Danish and 5,000 Norwegian sailors, some of whom had already become prisoners before the "robbing of the fleet" in 1807.

During the war of 1814, the English fleet captured peaceful Danish merchant ships and the sailors on board became prisoners of war. Orlogsgaster from the Danish navy's gunboats and privateers – a kind of state-authorized pirates – also ended up in "Prisonen" if they were caught.

At Chatham, where most of the Danes and Norwegians were located, the prisoners were subjected to a bit of humiliation. They became a local tourist attraction, and every day countless tourists sailed out in rowing boats to see the prisoners up close. It was almost like a trip to the zoo.

The seamen's officers, unlike the sailors, could live quite a free life ashore in the town of Reading. They simply had to give their word of honor not to flee. Therefore, they participated in the social life of the region with balls and fine dinners with English naval officers. It was a war for gentlemen.

But for the vast majority of ordinary sailors, the conditions were quite different. Many accounts from prisoners tell of the struggle for survival on the decommissioned warships. The prisoners were, for the most part, housed like herring in a barrel, crammed together on decommissioned, unanchored, black-tarred liners exposed to disease, hunger and enervating idleness - often under miserable conditions that meant hunger, disease and death for many. Added to this are interesting accounts of those who gave up and, to escape the terrible conditions, joined the English service and were therefore labeled as traitors.

Were the harsh conditions not just a reflection of contemporary custom towards prisoners of war?

No, documents in a number of sources from both the Danish and English sides tell about the fine humane treatment corresponding to British prisoners of war received in Denmark, where local for example. risked the lives of castaways and generally received captured Englishmen more as guests than enemies.

LEK

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Notes:

[1] The word "red" usually denotes a suitable, natural anchorage off a harbour, here the waters immediately east and south of the entrance to Copenhagen harbour.

[2] Note that contemporaries referred to Great Britain as England. The enemy was therefore consistently referred to in contemporary times as England and the English, and the wars 1801 – 1814 were therefore called the English Wars.