

Key Figures

by Annika Eileen de Freitas, Oldenburg, 05 October 2023

Introduction:

On the following pages, one can find the biographies of several British politicians and naval officers who played a central role in the *War of the Austrian Succession* (1740-1748) associated with naval warfare and colonial conflicts. In selecting these "key-figures", care has been taken to include all important battles related to the subject, providing an overview of the warfare. The list of possible individuals who could have been mentioned is extensive and not fully considered here. The selection of these "key figures" shows a network, which makes the connections in the war more clearly understandable. In addition, numerous ships are mentioned, as many of them can be found in the Prize Papers Collection.

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Edward Boscawen (naval officer and politician, 1711-1761)

Participation in the War of the Austrian Succession: Expedition to Cartagena de Indias, Privateering, First Battle of Cape Finisterre, Siege of Pondicherry



Figure 1: Admiral Edward Boscawen (1711-1761) by Joshua Reynolds

Edward Boscawen, born on 19 August 1711, joined the British Navy as a young man in 1726, first serving on HMS *Superb* in the waters around the West Indies. After being promoted on 25 May 1732, he held a post as lieutenant on the HM Ships *Hector* and *Grafton* and was subsequently appointed to the command of the *Leopard* and *Shoreham*.¹ As part of the Spanish-British *War of Jenkins' Ear*, which commenced in 1739 and merged into the *War of the Austrian Succession* as early as 1740, he was a volunteer during the successful attack on Porto Bello in November 1739, during which the British captured the Spanish territory.² At the outset of 1741, he took part in the expedition to Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) led by Admiral Edward Vernon (1684-1757).³ Cartagena de Indias was the target of the attack, as the Spanish had their galleons carrying valuable cargo in this town. Vernon was aware that the expedition was fraught with risk due to the difficult sea conditions and the military strength of the Spanish, so it was not surprising that the British were unsuccessful in this battle.⁴ Despite the failure, Boscawen was promoted a short time later. As captain of the HM Ships *Prince Frederick*, *Royal Sovereign*, *Drednought* and *Deptford*, he captured at first only Spanish merchant ships as part of the trade war. However, since the official declaration of war with France in March 1744, clearing the sea of French ships also became part of his mission. In April 1744, he captured the French ship *Medée*, which was renamed Boscawen in recognition of his achievements and was henceforth used as a privateer for Great Britain.

After Boscawen was appointed to the HMS *Namur* in 1746 and joined a fleet led by George Anson (naval officer and politician, 1697-1762), he participated in the *First Battle of Cape Finisterre*, which

¹ cf. Wilkinson, Clive: Boscawen, Edward, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2931>.

² cf. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica: War of Jenkin's Ear, in: Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/War-of-Jenkins-Ear>.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica: The early Bourbons, 1700-53, in: Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Spain/The-early-Bourbons-1700-53>.

Oxford Dictionary: Boscawen [internet resource].

³ cf. Harding, Richard: Vernon, Edward, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28237>.

Oxford Dictionary: Boscawen [internet resource].

⁴ cf. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: Vernon, Edward [internet resource].

occurred on 14 May 1747, during which the British captured a French squadron.⁵ In this engagement, Boscawen earned the respect of Anson, who recommended him for the position of rear admiral as a result. His promotion followed shortly thereafter.⁶ In his new role, Boscawen was assigned by the Admiralty to join an expedition to India with the objective of dismantling French military power in the eastern part of the world.⁷ The expedition's targets included all major bases and forts, such as Mauritius, Pondicherry and Chandannagar of West Bengal. Boscawen carried out his orders and set sail towards Pondicherry with a force of approximately 4,500 men and a fleet comprising more than 30 ships, thirteen of which were warships. The fleet reached its destination on 29 July 1748, where they encountered Joseph François Dupleix (1697-1763) and an unexpectedly substantial garrison of about 4,800⁸ or 3,500⁹ soldiers.¹⁰ At the time, Boscawen was unaware that the *War of Austrian Succession* had already more or less concluded with a provisional peace agreement, before the *Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle* was decided on 18 October 1748; Consequently, Boscawen proceeded with the attack, which ultimately ended in failure.¹¹

He had no knowledge of soldiering and he lost his prime military advisors with the capture of Major Lawrence and the death of Major Goodere (the chief gunner) in an ill-conceived preliminary attack on a small fort outside Pondicherry. His engineers did not know their jobs – the ground broken for the siege batteries was too far away and in the wrong place to exploit the weaknesses of the French fortifications. Within a few days the monsoon broke unexpectedly early, swamped the trenches and spread disease. With 816 casualties (two-thirds from sickness), Boscawen was forced into a humiliating retreat. Two months later, before the monsoon was over when operations could have been resumed, news arrived of a provisional peace which, when confirmed, restored the situation to the status quo ante, except of course that the British Company was saddled with the cost of rebuilding Madras's defences and numerous houses, a process that took another three years to make it safe for them to return from fort St David.¹²

Nevertheless, Boscawen's career did not conclude with the *War of the Austrian Succession*. On 22 June 1751, he was appointed commissioner of the Admiralty. "He had been advanced to the rank of [vice admiral] on 6 February 1755 and had developed an unshakeable reputation that was about to see him become one of the most important naval officers of the time."¹³ Boscawen succumbed to fever on 10

⁵ cf. Rodger, Nicholas Andrew Martin: Anson, George, Baron Anson, 24.05.2008, in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/574>.

Oxford Dictionary: Boscawen, Edward [internet resource].

⁶ cf. Oxford Dictionary: Boscawen, Edward [internet resource].

⁷ cf. Ibid.

Bryant, G. J.: *The Emergence of British Power in India 1600-1784. A Grand Strategic Interpretation* (Worlds of the East India Company 9), Woodbridge 2013, p. 43.

⁸ cf. Petersen, Sven: *Die belagerte Stadt. Alltag und Gewalt im Österreichischen Erbfolgekrieg (1740-1748)*, Frankfurt/ New York 2019, p. 344.

⁹ cf. *The Emergence of British Power in India 1600-1784*, p. 43.

¹⁰ cf. *Die belagerte Stadt*, p. 344.

¹¹ cf. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica: *Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle*, in: Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Aix-la-Chapelle>.

Die belagerte Stadt, p. 344.

¹² cf. *The Emergence of British Power in India 1600-1784*, p. 43.

¹³ cf. Oxford Dictionary: Boscawen, Edward [internet resource].

January 1761 in Hatchlands. He is considered one of the greatest naval officers in the history of the Royal Navy.¹⁴

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Edward Hawke (naval officer, politician, 1705-1781)

Participation in the War of the Austrian Succession: *Privateering (Mediterranean), Battle of Toulon, Second Battle of Cape Finisterre*



Figure 2: Portrait of British Admiral Edward Hawke, 1st Baron Hawke (1705-1781) by Francis Cotes

Edward Hawke, born in London in 1705, had a remarkably successful career in the Royal Navy. Not only did he reach the rank of admiral of the fleet, the highest officer rank in the Navy, on 15 January 1766, but he also served as the First Lord of the Admiralty from 11 December 1766 to January 1771 when he resigned from the office for health reasons.¹⁵

Hawke began his naval career on 10 February 1720 as a volunteer on HMS *Seahorse*. In 1725 he was promoted to lieutenant and in the following years served on the HM Ships *Kinsale*, *Portland*, *Leopard* and *Edinburgh*. When the *War of Austrian Succession* broke out in 1740, Hawke had already held the rank of captain for several years. In the early years of the war, which included a contemporary trade war, he mainly escorted British merchant ships until he assumed command of HMS *Berwick* on 14 June 1743. With this ship, he joined the fleet of Admiral Thomas Mathews

¹⁴ cf. Ibid.

¹⁵ cf. Mackay, Ruddock: Hawke, Edward, first Baron Hawke, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12651>.

and vice admiral Richard Lestock in the Mediterranean, participating in the unsuccessful *Battle of Toulon* on 11 February 1744 as a captain in the vanguard.¹⁶ Through the mistakes of his superiors “[...] Hawke had seen how important it was for an admiral to relate effectively to his captains and subordinate admirals, and provide them with clear and aggressive tactical guidance.”¹⁷ He also testified in the subsequent court cases in which he impressed King George II, whose support led to Hawke’s promotion to Rear Admiral of the White on 15 July 1744. On 5 August 1747, he rose to second-in-command in Peter Warren's fleet, and on 14 October, he commanded a squadron of that fleet from HMS *Devonshire* during the British-French *Second Battle of Cape Finisterre* on 25 October 1747.¹⁸ The accuracy of the battle’s name is debatable, because “[...]the battle was fought at an estimated distance of 300 miles west of Lorient and 350 miles north of Cape Finisterre.”¹⁹ Furthermore, the number of ships in the enemy convoy is also subject to dispute in the literature. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography cites the number as 150 merchant ships and eight ships of the line, whereas in his book *A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East*, Spencer Tucker describes a convoy of 250 merchant ships escorted by nine ships of the line and 14 frigates.²⁰ Nevertheless, there is agreement that the French were superior to Hawke's squadron, consisting of 14 ships of the line.²¹ “The French ships had large complements compared with the British and they could man their guns on both sides.”²² Despite this initial disadvantage, Hawke gave the order to attack and, after a battle lasting approximately eight hours, he achieved one of the most significant victories at sea during the *War of the Austrian Succession*.²³ With the exception of two ships of the line, including the flagship, all the French warships were captured in the battle. The merchant ships, however, continued sailing towards their destination port of Martinique. Their escape was not final, as Hawke, somehow aware of their destination, immediately informed the Admiralty. Another British squadron then managed to capture 35 or 38 (again, there is disagreement) of these French merchant ships.²⁴ On the other hand, it is worth noting that the British also suffered heavy losses and damage to their ships. Hawke himself was severely burned by an explosion of gunpowder.²⁵ The *Second Battle of Cape Finisterre* was Hawke's last

¹⁶ cf. *ibid.*

¹⁷ Mackay, Ruddock/ Duffy, Michael: *Hawke, Nelson, and British Naval Leadership, 1747-1805*, Woodbridge 2009, p. 23.

¹⁸ cf. *Hawke, Nelson, and British Naval Leadership*, p. 29.

Oxford Dictionary: *Hawke, Edward* [internet recourse].

¹⁹ *Hawke, Nelson, and British Naval Leadership*, p. 37.

²⁰ cf. Oxford Dictionary: *Hawke, Edward* [internet recourse].

Tucker, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): *A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I*, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 754.

²¹ cf. *ibid.*

²² *Hawke, Nelson, and British Naval Leadership*, p. 39.

²³ cf. *A Global Chronology of Conflict*, p. 754.

Hawke, Nelson, and British Naval Leadership, p. 37.

²⁴ cf. *Hawke, Nelson, and British Naval Leadership*, p. 37.

Oxford Dictionary: *Hawke, Edward* [internet recourse].

²⁵ *Hawke, Nelson, and British Naval Leadership*, p. 40.

major combat action during the *War of the Austrian Succession*, but it certainly enhanced his reputation for the period that followed. During the *Seven Years' War* (1756-1763) he was deployed to Minorca, Rochefort and the Basque Roads between 1756-1756, took part in the *Blockade of Brest* in 1759 and fought in the *Battle of Quiberon Bay* on 20 November 1759.²⁶

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MACKAY, Ruddock/ Duffy, Michael: *Hawke, Nelson, and British Naval Leadership, 1747-1805*, Woodbridge 2009.

MACKAY, Ruddock: *Hawke, Edward, first Baron Hawke*, 03.01.2008, in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12651>.

TUCKER, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): *A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I*, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 754.

Charles Knowles (naval officer, first baronet, d. 1777)

Participation in the War of the Austrian Succession: *Battle of Cartagena de Indias, Battle of La Guaira, Battle of Puerto Cabello, Battle of Havana*



Figure 3: *Portrait of the Honourable Charles Knowles Esq Vice Admiral of the Blue Squadron of His Majesty's fleet* by Thomas Hudson

Neither the childhood nor the first years of Charles Knowles' career are known with any certainty. His career can be traced back to 1718 when he first served on HMS *Buckingham* and then on HMS *Lennox*. The highest rank he attained in the Royal Navy was that of *Admiral of the White* in 1765. In 1770, he left the Royal Navy at his own request and, in 1774, he served as Chief of the Surveying Branch in the Russian Navy. Parallel to his career as a naval officer, he was also politically active. He was governor of Louisbourg, which was conquered in the War of the Austrian Succession in 1745, for almost two years from 1746. Then, between 1749 and 1752, he was a Member of Parliament for Gatton, Surrey, and from 1752 to 1756, he served as the governor of Jamaica.²⁷

Knowles is particularly known for several unsuccessful expeditions against Spanish territories in the region around the West Indies during the *War of the Austrian Succession*, or more precisely, the War of Jenkins' Ear. Having already participated as a captain under Vice Admiral Edward Vernon in the *Battle of Porto Bello* in November 1739, Knowles also joined Vernon's fleet in the expedition to Cartagena de Indias between March and Mai in 1741.²⁸ In this context, he wrote the

²⁶ cf. *Oxford Dictionary*: Hawke, Edward [internet recourse].

²⁷ cf. Laughton, John Knox: *Knowles, Sir Charles, first baronet*, 03.01.2008, in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15765>, access: 07.03.2022.

²⁸ cf. *ibid.*

book *An Account of the Expedition to Carthagera. With Explanatory Notes and Observations* (1743), providing valuable insights into the battle action.²⁹ Later, in the spring of 1743, he led a squadron into the *Battle of La Guaira* (2 to 6 March 1743) and shortly afterwards into the *Battle of Puerto Cabello* (26 April - 5 May). Both La Guaira and Puerto Cabello were important military ports for the Spanish, and their destruction would have been a major victory for Great Britain. However, the Spanish proved to be stronger, and Knowles was forced to retreat in both cases.³⁰ In a higher rank, Rear Admiral Knowles commanded "the British Caribbean squadron of 7 ships of the line"³¹ during the *Battle of Havana* on 12 October 1748, which was the last major sea battle in the *War of the Austrian Succession*. Knowles' squadron encountered a Spanish treasure fleet consisting of six ships of the line and a frigate near Havana. Only one Spanish ship was captured; the others managed to escaped.³² „The Spanish flagship *Africa* hast to anchor because of damage before reaching port. Discovered by the English several days later, the ship is burned by its crew to prevent capture."³³ As a result of the failure in the Battle of Havana, Knowles faced legal proceedings at Deptford in December 1749, which issued a reprimand for the disorganised attack.³⁴

Before the conclusion of his naval career in 1774, he took part in the *Seven Years' War* as a Vice Admiral in the failed expedition against Rochefort under Admiral Edward Hawke in 1757. Charles Knowles passed away in St Marylebone, Middlesex, Great Britain on 9 December 1777.³⁵

Literature:

LAUGHTON, John Knox: Knowles, Sir Charles, first baronet, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15765>, access: 07.03.2022.

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TUCKER, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 755.

Sources:

KNOWLES, Charles: An Account of the Expedition to Carthagera, with Explanatory Notes and Observations, London 1743.

²⁹ cf. Knowles, Charles: An Account of the Expedition to Carthagera, with Explanatory Notes and Observations, London 1743.

³⁰ Marley, David: Wars of the Americas. A Chronology of Armed Conflict in the New World, 1492 to the Present, Santa Barbara 1911, pp. 263-265.

³¹ Tucker, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 755.

³² cf. *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ cf. Oxford Dictionary: Knowles, Sir Charles [internet recourse].

³⁵ cf. *ibid.*

Thomas Mathews (naval officer, 1676-1751)

Participation in the War of the Austrian Succession: Privateering (Mediterranean), Battle of Toulon



Figure 4: Portrait of Admiral Thomas Mathews (1676-1751) by Claude Arnulphy

Thomas Mathews, born in October 1676, joined the British Navy at the age of fourteen. After his promotion to lieutenant on the HMS *Boyne* in 1699 and on HMS *Deal Castle* in 1701, he participated in the successful expedition aboard the HMS *Chester* to the French-occupied Nova Scotia in 1710 as part of the *War of the Spanish Succession*.³⁶ With the signing of the *Peace of Utrecht* in 1713, which ended the *War of the Spanish Succession*, Nova Scotia came under British rule. However, it faced further disputes during the *War of the Austrian Succession*, starting with the *French Raid on Canso* in May 1744.³⁷ Following his involvement in the failed attack on Quebec under the command of Admiral Sir Hovenden Walker (naval officer, prob. 1666-1725) in 1711, Mathews took a brief career break; He returned to duty as captain of HMS *Kent* in 1718.³⁸ He rose to the rank of squadron commander, and in this role, he took action against piracy in the Indian Ocean. It is assumed that he willingly took on the task with the intention of increasing his wealth, as in 1724, the directors of the company charged him for receiving merchandise on board without permission, but the court case was dropped in 1728. Nevertheless, this did not mark the lowest point in his career: Having served as dockyard commissioner at Chatham since 1736, Mathews was called back to sea after the outbreak of the *War of the Austrian Succession in 1740*. „With Britain at war with Spain and war with France likely, Mathews [...] was promoted at one step on 13 March 1742 vice admiral of the red [...], and was also made commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, and plenipotentiary to the king of Sardinia and the states of Italy.“³⁹ Since Great Britain was allied with the Habsburg Maria Theresa, Mathews was tasked with taking action against Spain, which sought to assert its claim to the Habsburg territories in Italy with the support of its allies France and the Republic of Genoa. Mathews' area of operation was mainly focused on the coastal route between Marseille and Genoa. After an allied Spanish-French fleet set sail on 21 February 1744, the *Battle of Toulon* occurred the following day, triggering the dramatic end of Mathews' career. On the day before the battle, Mathews commanded his squadron to form a line with the aim of creating a blockade for the enemy

³⁶ Baugh, Daniel Albert: Mathews, Thomas, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18332>.

³⁷ cf. *ibid.*

The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica: War of the Spanish Succession summary, in: Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/War-of-the-Spanish-Succession>.

³⁸ Laughton, John Knox/ Davies, J. D.: Walker, Sir Hovendan, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28487>.

³⁹ Oxford Dictionary: Mathews, Thomas [internet recourse].

fleet, preventing it from continuing its journey. Rear Admiral William Rowley led the van of the squadron, Mathews commanded the centre and his personal rival Richard Lestock led the rear. While the van and the centre executed the order, the rear drifted several miles away from the squadron on 21 February, creating a gap that could not be closed even on the day of the battle on 22 February. When the Spanish fleet threatened to escape, Mathews reluctantly initiated the battle without waiting for the rear to close the gap. During the action, four Spanish ships unintentionally drifted to the point where Lestock's ships could have captured them, but Lestock allowed them to escape without engaging in hostilities. Lestock's actions during the battle led to a correspondence between him and Mathews, which began with Lestock's suspension and culminated in a significant court case, resulting in Mathews' career downfall. Mathews was found guilty as the main culprit for the battle's failure in October 1746 and was relieved of his post.⁴⁰ „As the result of the battle the blockade was fairly broken; reinforcements and supplies were sent to the Spanish army in Italy, and the course of the war was turned in favour of the allies. But what specially enraged the people of England was the too evident fact that the English fleet had met a Franco-Spanish fleet of inferior force, and had gained no decisive advantage over it, if, indeed, it had not been worsted.“⁴¹

Despite numerous voices claiming otherwise as a result of setbacks such as the naval *Battle of Toulon*, his career bears witness to diligence, commitment and success. From 1745, Mathews held a seat in the House of Commons as member of Parliament for Glamorgan, which he resigned at the end of the court case but resumed in 1747, representing the Borough of Caranthen. He held this office until his death in London on 2 October 1751.⁴²

Literature:

BAUGH, Daniel Albert: Lestock, Richard, 23.09.2004, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16506>, access: 09.03.2022.

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THE EDITORS OF ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA: War of the Spanish Succession summary, in: Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/summary/War-of-the-Spanish-Succession>.

⁴⁰ cf. Oxford Dictionary: Mathews, Thomas [internet recourse].

Baugh, Daniel Albert: Lestock, Richard, 23.09.2004, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16506>, access: 09.03.2022.

Tucker, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 743.

The literature gives different dates for the Battle of Havana (T. C. Spencer, p 743: 22. February 1744), which could be attributed to the switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar.

⁴¹ Laughton, John Knox: Mathews, Thomas, in: Leslie Stephen/ Sidney Lee: Dictionary of National Biography 37, London 1894, p. 45.

⁴² cf. Oxford Dictionary: Mathews, Thomas [internet recourse].

Richard Lestock (naval officer, approx. 1679-1746)

Participation in the War of the Austrian Succession: Privateering (Mediterranean), Battle of Toulon, Raid on Lorient

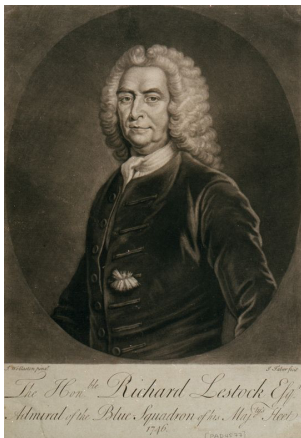


Figure 5: Portrait of the Honble Richard Lestock Esq. Admiral of the Blue Squadron of his Majesty's Fleet 1746 by John Faber Junio

The exact date of birth for Richard Lestock is uncertain, but there are indications pointing to 22 February 1679. A career as a naval officer seemed to be in his blood, as his father, bearing the same name, was not only a magistrate for Middlesex but also a captain in the British Navy. In 1701, Lestock commenced his service as a lieutenant on HMS *Cambridge*, under the command of his father. He later served in this role on the ships *Solebay*, *Exeter* and *Barfleur* before being promoted to captain of the fireship *Vulture* in 1705. As captain, or at least second captain, he also commanded the HM Ships *Fowey*, *Weymouth*, *Barfleur*, *Princess Amelia*, *Royal Oak*, *Somerset*, *Grafton Nore*, *Boyne* and *Princess Carolona* until 1741.⁴³ With these ships, he not only took action against piracy but patrolled British merchant ships and captured numerous enemy merchant vessels. With the outbreak of the

War of the Austrian Succession, Lestock was dispatched to the Mediterranean as commander of HMS *Neptune*. This was followed by a promotion to rear admiral on 13 March 1742, and shortly afterward, he assumed the role of acting commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean. However, despite his hopes, Lestock did not rise to the rank of the first commander. His personal rival, Thomas Mathews, rose to that position and demanded Lestock's recall shortly after his own arrival. Whether Lestock was indeed recalled remains a matter of dispute. What is certain is that on 29 November 1743, he was promoted to vice admiral and appointed second in command behind Mathews. In this capacity, he took part in the naval *Battle of Toulon* on 22 February 1744 as commander of the squadron's rear. In the subsequent court case, Lestock was not only acquitted despite numerous accusations through the help of his political friends and his eloquence, but he was also promoted to admiral of the blue two days after the judge's verdict of 3 June 1746.⁴⁴ In this position, he commanded a large squadron alongside James St. Clair, with which he led the *Raid on Lorient* between September and October 1746. Lorient was

⁴³ cf. Oxford Dictionary: Mathews, Thomas [internet recourse].

⁴⁴ cf. Oxford Dictionary: Mathews, Thomas [internet recourse].
Oxford Dictionary: Lestock, Richard [internet recourse].

chosen as the target of Lestock's and St Clair's expedition, because the French East India Company had stored provisions there, and their ships were docked in the harbour.⁴⁵ However, the attack more or less failed: Although the British managed to destroy the fort of Quiberon, a bay near Lorient, the fighting conditions were unfavorable due to numerous illnesses among the British forces. In addition, the French had successfully received military reinforcements, leading to the British force's withdrawal to England on 17 October 1746. This marked the last known military engagement of Lestock, who died on 13 December 1746 due to a stomach.⁴⁶

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TUCKER, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I, Santa Barbara 2010.

The enemy between Thomas Mathews and Richard Lestock

One reason for the failure of the *Battle of Toulon* on 22 February 1744 can certainly be attributed to the negative personal relationship between Thomas Mathews and Richard Lestock, which was reflected in their disagreements during this act of war. The strained relationship began around 1736 when Mathews served as commissioner at Chatham, and Lestock was in charge of the local guardships.⁴⁷ For Lestock, who was then acting as commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean and harbored aspirations of becoming commander-in-chief, it must have been sobering when Mathews, of all people, was promoted to this position in 1743. Conversely, Mathews was not particularly enthusiastic about his vice admiral and attempted to have him recalled, citing issues with performance and health conditions. Following the events of the *Battle of Toulon*, a conflict developed between Mathews and Lestock that not only entailed a long-running court case but also divided the general public. Mathews accused Lestock of disregarding the order for line positioning, creating a gap in the blockade, and also of prematurely withdrawing from the action of the war, despite having a real opportunity to capture Spanish ships. Lestock, on the other side, defended himself by accusing Mathews of unclear commands and exhibiting poor leadership. Opponents of Lestock, however, claimed that he deliberately left the battle because of the personal enmity and wanted to see Mathews fail.

⁴⁵ cf. Spain, Jonathan: Sinclair [St Clair], James, 23.09.2004, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25622>, access: 09.03.2022.

⁴⁶ cf. *ibid.*

Oxford Dictionary: Lestock, Richard [internet recourse].

⁴⁷ Oxford Dictionary: Lestock, Richard [internet recourse].

Hundreds of witnesses were brought home from the Mediterranean for the courts martial. Seven captains and four lieutenants were tried in 1745 at Chatham, where the trials of the admirals were feverishly anticipated. For two days in October the yard was at a standstill as the workers 'assembled at the dock gate, to the number of about eight hundred, and examined everyone that went in or out whether for Mathews or Lestock, and were all strong for Mr Mathews'. The Board of Admiralty, pondering whether there might be riots 'if upon the courts martial it should appear that Mr Lestock has not been so much to blame as thought and Mr Mathews should be found guilty', ordered the venue changed to Deptford.⁴⁸

In the history of admiralty courts, there have rarely been cases of such magnitude. Moreover, the outcome of the several years of legal proceedings in the summer of 1746 must be considered surprising. While Mathews was found guilty, Lestock was acquitted of all charges – a fact that might not have been pleasing to Mathews in many respects.⁴⁹

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Edward Peyton (naval officer, d. 1749)

Participation in the War of Austrian Succession: Privateering (Mediterranean, East Indies), Battle of Negapatam

Edward Peyton, about whose early years little is known, joined the Royal Navy as a volunteer in 1707. From 1727 onwards, he served as a lieutenant on several ships, including the HM Ships *Dursley Galley*, *Chatham* and *Somerset*, before being promoted to captain aboard the *Grampus* on 27 June 1739.⁵⁰ As captain of HMS *Kennington*, he sailed to the West Indies in 1741, narrowly missing the *Battle of Cartagena de Indias* in 1741, which was led by Vice Admiral Edward Vernon (1784-1747).⁵¹ Moreover, Peyton made the acquaintance of Thomas Mathews, who promoted him to the Mediterranean fleet as captain on HMS *Rochester* on 10 June 1743. However, Mathews assigned him the task of conveying messages to the King in Hanover and to the ministry and admiralty in London. As a result, his time on

⁴⁸ cf. Oxford Dictionary: Mathews, Thomas [internet recourse].

⁴⁹ cf. *ibid.*

Oxford Dictionary: Lestock, Richard [internet recourse].

⁵⁰ cf. Harding, Richard: Peyton, Edward, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22078>.

⁵¹ cf. *ibid.*

Harding, Richard: Vernon, Edward, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28237>.

the *Rochester* ended on 3 August. Thus, he missed the *Battle of Toulon* in February 1744 but became involved in another fateful event shortly thereafter:⁵²

Immediately following the official declaration of war between Britain and France in the *War of the Austrian Succession*, which also marked the beginning of the *First Carnatic War*, Peyton sailed to the East Indies in March 1744 as captain of HMS *Medway* in a squadron commanded by Curtis Barnett (naval officer, d. 1746).⁵³ With the intention of weakening the French economy, Britain employed strategic privateering against the enemies' overseas trade.⁵⁴ This mission was extremely successful, at least until 1746, when French Admiral Bertrand François Mahé de La Bourdonnais implemented counter-measures. “[He] secures seven armed merchantmen to add to his single of the line *Achille* (70 guns). [La Bourdonnais] has the ship painted and armed with numerous cannon to mask their weakness, and in July 1746 he sets sail for the Coromandel coast with 1,200 troops.”⁵⁵ In the course of this campaign, the *Battle of Negapatam* took place on 25 July, when the French ships encountered the British squadron of seven ships of the line, which had been under the command of Peyton since the death of Barnett on 29 April 1746. The result of the encounter was a gun battle which not only killed 14 British and 27 French sailors but also caused damage to the masts of some Royal Navy ships.⁵⁶ Peyton, in consultation with his war council, therefore decided to withdraw from the battle and retire to Tricomales for repairs. “The following day, as the two squadrons closed, Peyton believed that the French were now considerably reinforced and decided not to pursue the action.”⁵⁷ He intended to wait until reinforcements arrived from England, a decision that proved to be fatal because, on 10 September, La Bourdonnais conquered Madras. After this news reached the mother country in 1747, Peyton was arrested and brought back as a prisoner to Great Britain, arriving at Spithead on 6 July 1749. Peyton, who was in poor health, was allowed to return to London and await his court case; however, he passed away before his fate could be adjudicated on 26 October 1749.

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⁵² cf. Oxford Dictionary: Peyton, Edward [internet recourse].

Baugh, Daniel Albert: Mathews, Thomas, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18332>.

⁵³ cf. *ibid.*

Laughton, John Knox/ Harding, Richard: Barnett, Curtis, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1477>.

⁵⁴ cf. Bryant, G. J.: *The Emergence of British Power in India 1600-1784. A Grand Strategic Interpretation* (Worlds of the East India Company 9), Woodbridge 2013, p. 38.

⁵⁵ cf. Tucker, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): *A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I*, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 752.

⁵⁶ cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Oxford Dictionary: Peyton, Edward [internet recourse].

HARDING, Richard: Peyton, Edward, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22078>.

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TUCKER, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I, Santa Barbara 2010.

William Shirley (British colonial governor, 1694-1771)

Participation in the War of Austrian Succession: reinforcement of naval power (North America), Siege of Louisbourg



Figure 6: Portrait of William Shirley (1694-1771) by Thomas Hudson

William Shirley was born in Preston, Sussex on 2 December 1694.⁵⁸ Although the Shirley line had maintained good relations with noble families for several generations, which helped them achieve a respectable social position, they were not particularly wealthy.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Shirley received an excellent education, which included studies at Cambridge before he pursued a legal career at the Inner Temple.⁶⁰ For the first eleven years of his professional career, Shirley worked as a lawyer in England. However, in 1731, on the recommendation of some influential political figures, including Jonathan Belcher (Governor of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, 1730-1741), he migrated to Boston with hopes of finding success and wealth.⁶¹ Indeed, Shirley was able to advance his career in the New World.

Initially, he also practiced law in Boston, but in 1733, he was appointed as Admiralty judge, and then in 1734, he became the king's attorney general. Shirley reached the peak of his career on 6 May 1741 when he replaced Belcher as the colonial governor of Massachusetts.⁶² In this role, Shirley soon found

⁵⁸ cf. Wood, George Arthur: Shirley. Governor of Massachusetts, 1741-1756 (Studies in History, Economics and Public Law 92), London 1920, pp. 11-13.

The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica: William Shirley. British colonial governor, in: Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shirley>.

⁵⁹ cf. Shirley. Governor of Massachusetts, pp. 11.

⁶⁰ cf. *ibid.* p. 13.

⁶¹ cf. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica: Jonathan Belcher. British colonial governor, in: Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jonathan-Belcher>.

Allen, William: The American Biographical Dictionary. Containing an account of the lives, characters, and writings of the most eminent persons deceased in North America from its first settlement, Third Ed., Boston 1857, p. 736. Shirley. Governor of Massachusetts, pp. 14.

⁶² cf. Encyclopedia Britannica: William Shirley [internet resource]. The American Biographical Dictionary, p. 736.

himself embroiled in the the Anglo-French conflict of *King George's War* (1744-1748), which was subordinate to the *War of the Austrian Succession*.⁶³ Shortly after England officially declared war on France in March 1744, the French attacked and burned down a fishing village in Canso, Nova Scotia, taking fifty English families as prisoners.⁶⁴ Although this combat action caught the British colonialists unprepared, as the British government had failed to inform the colonies about the start of the war with France, Shirley reacted quickly and strategically to secure the borders of the British colonial territories.⁶⁵ In this context, he sought to renew the friendship with the native *Iroquois*, who were allied with England, and to maintain the neutrality of all nearby native tribes living along the eastern borders.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Shirley focused on reinforcing naval power, not only by requesting guard ships to protect the British fishing interests but also by implementing laws supporting privateering.⁶⁷ „Before fall [1744] there were in the provincial service a snow, a brigantine and a sloop serving as guard ships. These, with eight or nine privateers fitted out at Boston, had taken by September 22d more than forty French vessels, besides greatly disturbing French fishery.”⁶⁸ In addition to these defensive strategies, Shirley also achieved Britain's only significant victory during King George's War when he dispatched a force commanded by Peter Warren (naval officer and politician, 1703/4-1752) at sea and by William Pepperrell (army officer and merchant, 1696-1759) on land to capture the fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in the summer of 1745.⁶⁹ In his *Memoirs of the principal transactions of the last war between the English and the French in North-America*, published in 1758, he describes, among other things, the importance of Louisbourg, which had been built by the French after the *Peace of Utrecht* in 1713.⁷⁰ In addition to disrupting the French fishery and weakening their economy, Shirley recognized the advantage that French merchant ships would be at the mercy of British privateers.

France has not one Sea Port for the Relief and Shelter of her trading Ships either to, or from the East or West Indies open to them any where in North America, to the Northward of the River Mississippi, except Louisbourg; and of consequence, that whole Trade would be expos'd to the English Privateers from the Northern Colonies in time of War, without any Place to retreat to [...]. To all this must be added, that the

⁶³ cf. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica: King George's War. United States history, in: Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/King-Georges-War>.

⁶⁴ cf. Shirley. Governor of Massachusetts, p. 182.

The American Biographical Dictionary, p. 736.

⁶⁵ cf. Shirley. Governor of Massachusetts, pp. 182, 197-200

⁶⁶ cf. Shirley. Governor of Massachusetts, pp. 197-200.

⁶⁷ cf. *ibid.* pp. 202-204

⁶⁸ cf. Shirley. Governor of Massachusetts, p. 203.

⁶⁹ cf. Encyclopedia Britannica: William Shirley [internet resource].

Simbert, John: Pepperrell, Sir William, first baronet, 23.09.2004, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21899>.

Gwyn, Julian: Warren, Sir Peter, 23.09.2004, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28786>.

⁷⁰ cf. William Shirley. British colonial governor [internet resource].

The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica: Louisbourg, in: Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Louisbourg>.

*Possession of this Island puts it into their Power to annoy the Trade of the British Northern Colonies in time of War with their Privateers from this Harbour [...].*⁷¹

Based on this rationale, Shirley organized the expedition to Louisbourg with the support of the New England Colonies, including Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. However, other colonies, such as Pennsylvania and New York, abstained from participating in the action. They considered Shirley's plan risky not only because Louisbourg was militarily superior but also due to his decision to send a force without any military experience to besiege the fortress.⁷² Despite these initial concerns, the expedition succeeded in capturing Louisbourg after a siege lasting six weeks, culminating by the end of June 1745.⁷³ Although Louisbourg had to be returned to France under the terms of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, the siege of Louisbourg was not only the greatest victory for the British in King George's War, but also the greatest military success of William Shirley's career.⁷⁴

In 1756, Shirley faced charges of high treason after the British lost Oswego to the French during the *Seven Years' War*, leading to his replacement as governor of Massachusetts. However, the charges against him were dropped, and Shirley was appointed Governor of the Bahamas in 1761. He held this office until 1770 and returned then to Roxbury, Massachusetts, where he finally passed in a luxurious home on 24 March 1771.⁷⁵

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⁷¹ Shirley, William: *Memoirs of the principal transactions of the last war between the English and French in North-America from the commencement of it in 1744, to conclusion of the Treaty at Aix la Chapelle*, Boston 1758, p. 15.

⁷² cf. *The American Biographical Dictionary*, p. 736.

⁷³ cf. Tucker, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): *A Global Chronology of Conflict*. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 747.

Encyclopedia Britannica: King George's War [internet resource].

⁷⁴ cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica*: Louisbourg [internet resource].

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⁷⁵ cf. *The American Biographical Dictionary*, p. 736.

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Edward Vernon (naval officer, 1684-1757)

Participation in the War of the Austrian Succession: *Battle of Porto Bello (War of Jenkin's Ear, shortly before the outbreak of war), Expedition to Cartagena de Indias*

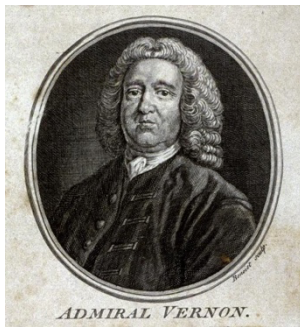


Figure 7: Portrait of Edward 'Old Grog' Vernon (1684-1757) by an unknown artist

Edward Vernon, born at Westminster on 12 November 1684 and died at Nacton on 30 October 1757, was a naval officer who rose through the ranks of the British Navy to admiral of the white. Shortly before the outbreak of the *War of the Austrian Succession* in 1740, he captured the Spanish town of Porto Bello (Panama) as part of the *War of Jenkins' Ear* on 20 and 21 November 1739. This achievement made him a national hero, which means that he was honoured as a freeman and his birthday became a British day of celebration.⁷⁶ He himself also seemed to be proud of his success, as in 1740 his poem *A new Ballad on the taking of Porto-Bello* was published, in which Vernon praised himself. In the first of the eleven stanzas he wrote: *"Come attend British Boys, / I'll make you rejoice, / I will tell you, how Vernon did scare, / PORTO-BELLO the Strong, / Lay'd it's Castle along, / And all this, with but six Men of War."*⁷⁷ The eighth stanza continues: *"Now their Castle of Glory / You have levell'd before you, / To its Title yourself may pretend, / It is made your own Prize, / And where e're your Sail flies, / Shall on you, noble, Vernon attend."*⁷⁸ Undoubtedly, this degree of self-confidence also contributed to the end of Vernon's career in the Royal Navy, as determined by the Admiralty on 11 April 1746. Prior to his dismissal, he had not only frequently complained about his rank, bad treatment and discrimination, but also published numerous correspondences with the Admiralty.

A few years before his dismissal from the Navy, Vernon took part in the *War of the Austrian Succession*, or more precisely, the already subsiding *War of Jenkins' Ear*. During this time, he commanded an expedition against Cartagena de Indias in cooperation with the army commander Lord

⁷⁶ cf. Harding, Richard: Vernon, Edward, 03.01.2008, in: Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28237>.

⁷⁷ Vernon, Edward: *A new Ballad on the taking of Porto-Bello*, London 1740, p. 3.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 8.

Cathcart and attacked the fortress unsuccessfully on 10 April 1741.⁷⁹ In whole, the expedition lasted from March to May 1741.⁸⁰ Further attacks against Cuba and Panama in the same year were also unsuccessful. Vernon received his last great contract in the Navy on 8 August 1745, when he was sent to the downs, now already in the position of an admiral of the white, “where the latest intelligence suggested French invasion forces were assembling to support the Jacobite rising in Scotland.”⁸¹ In addition to his work in the Royal Navy, he also held the post of Member of Parliament for Ipswich from 1741 until his death.⁸²

Transcribed poem: A new Ballad on the taking of Porto-Bello by Admiral Vernon

<p>I. <i>Come attend British Boys, I'll make you rejoice, I will tell you, how Vernon did scare, PORTO-BELLO the Strong, Lay'd it's Castle along, And all this, with but six Men of War.</i></p>	<p>V. <i>"Then my Lads, have no dread Of this Hectoring Blade, For I'm certain, tho' sent from, so far, He Introductions has none, To let Fly one poor Gun, Neither he, nor his six Men of War."</i></p>	<p>IX. <i>Of this Victory rare You secur'd the best Share For the Spanish King's Dollars and Pels, You most gallantly gave To your Mariners Brave And with the Glory rewarded yourself.</i></p>
<p>II. <i>When he first came in Sight Cries the Governour "Shite! From this Fellow what have we to fear? Did not Hosier the Brave, Hither fail to his Grave, Tho's with more than Thrice six Men of war"</i></p>	<p>VI. <i>But soon Vernon's hot Fire Prov'd the Spaniard at Liar, To Capitulate, soon is his Story; And to save his Retreat, Sees his Castles of iron and Glory.</i></p>	<p>X. <i>Now, old England, tho' long Thou hast been but a Song Of Reproach to the meanest of Na- tions, Tho' thy Flag has been sham'd, And thy Strength has been maim'd By our Depts and our Negotiations;</i></p>
<p>III. <i>"Thirteen Captains outright, Subalterns, a damn'd Sight, And of Sailors each one a stout Fellow, Full three Thousand and odd Perish'd, Rotten by G- -d. Without firing against PORTO-BELLO.</i></p>	<p>VII. <i>Whence these Fortresses came Such high Titles to claim I forbear to recite in this Place, Tho' our swaggering Foes, One might fairly suppose. Did assume them on Hosier's Dis- grace</i></p>	<p>XI. <i>Be no more in the Dumps Thou may'st still stir thy Stumps, And recover, for this Contention, I may venture to swear, Thou hast nothing to fear, By St. George, but another Convention.</i></p>
<p>IV. <i>"Hence our Queen did declare The blue string'd Cavalier Her good Friend, since he serv'd her for well; And did kindly incline His Convention to sign, For his Care to preserve PORTO-BELL."</i></p>	<p>VIII. <i>Now their Castle of Glory You have levell'd before you, To its Title yourself may pretend, It is made your own Prize, And where e're your Sail flies, Shall on you, noble, Vernon attend.</i></p>	

Vernon, Edward: A new Ballad on the taking of Porto-Bello by Admiral Vernon, (British Library), London 1740.

⁷⁹ Oxford Dictionary: Vernon: Edward [internet recourse].

⁸⁰ Tucker, Spencer Coakley (Ed.): A Global Chronology of Conflict. From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East Vol. I, Santa Barbara 2010, p. 737.

⁸¹ Oxford Dictionary: Vernon: Edward [internet recourse].

⁸² cf. *ibid.*

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