

International Journal of Naval History

August 2009

Volume 8 Number 2

Britain's Green Water Navy in the Revolutionary Chesapeake: Long-Range Asymmetric Warfare in the Littoral

C. Thomas Long
The George Washington University

Britain's Green Water Navy in the Revolutionary Chesapeake: Long-Range Asymmetric Warfare in the Littoral

Introduction

In the pre-dawn hours twenty armed sailors left their forty-eight foot boat, moving silently into the darkness. The men quickly covered about three miles into the interior of the hostile province. They entered a supposedly secure facility and seized fifteen containers of explosives before the enemy was even aware of their presence. This “special operation” could have been the SEALs’ effort to prevent the destruction of Iraq’s vital oil infrastructure at Umm Qasr on 20 March 2003. Or it could have been the opening phase of Operation Jackstay in Vietnam’s Rung Sat Special Zone on 26 March 1966. But it wasn’t. It was a surprise raid on the colonial magazine in Williamsburg – the opening engagement of the Revolutionary War in the southern Chesapeake theater.

The War for American Independence began in Virginia eight days before word of the fighting at Lexington and Concord even reached the Old Dominion. At three o’clock in the morning of 21 April 1775, seamen from His Majesty’s Schooner *Magdalen*, moored abreast Burwell’s ferry on the James River, went into the center of Williamsburg to remove the patriots’ gunpowder from the colonial magazine.¹ The men were acting on the orders of John Murray, fourth earl of Dunmore and the last royal governor of Virginia. An angry crowd of white citizens assembled upon hearing of the governor’s preemptive strike against the colonial militia. They protested that the powder belonged to the colony and insisted upon its return because of rumors of nearby slave unrest.² The seizure of the powder was just the first volley in a long, difficult campaign.

Despite the decisive impact of the siege of Yorktown and the naval battle of the Virginia Capes, few are aware that fighting persisted in that region from *Magdalen’s* first strike

until well after Lord Cornwallis' surrender. The fighting, although varying in nature and intensity, was virtually continuous.

The British high command sought to avoid committing troops to the region. The area, however, was vital to the conduct of the war and England was compelled to fight a long asymmetric, amphibious, counterinsurgency war in difficult terrain more than 3,500 miles across the North Atlantic.

Virginia and the contiguous waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its extensive tributaries constituted a distinct theater of operations - the southern Chesapeake theater - during the Revolutionary War. The demographic, geographic, economic, social, and political attributes of the area made it a strategic focus from beginning to end.

The population in Britain's thirteen rebellious North American colonies was concentrated in an area with the shape of an hourglass. The roads and communities clustered along the coast and the waterways. The vast majority of the population resided between the ocean and the first range of mountains. In northern Virginia, the Blue Ridge Mountains were the early boundary of white settlement. While migration to the Shenandoah Valley, between the Blue Ridge and the Allegheny Mountains, increased in the years before the war, most whites resided east of the Blue Ridge.³ The colonies to the north were settled farther inland. The New England colonies and Pennsylvania, for example, were relatively densely settled further to the west. Similarly, from Virginia, the settlement line runs away to the southwest, even as the coast extends eastward.

The narrowest point in the hourglass was in Virginia. Securing the Chesapeake Bay and Northern Virginia allowed a party to control both traffic between the northern and southern colonies and trade with foreign nations.

Virginia was the largest, most populous colony, and, because of its waterways, the most susceptible to control by a naval power.⁴ The southern Chesapeake theater contains the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the United States, stretching over 195 miles from the Virginia Capes – Cape Henry and Cape Charles – to its northernmost reaches, where the Susquehanna River broadens out to form the bay. It is navigable by ocean-going vessels throughout its length. It is as much as thirty miles wide, and at its narrowest point, opposite Annapolis, it is over four miles across.⁵ It has weak currents and a relatively small range of tides. It is a perfect haven for large naval forces and is today home to the largest naval base in the world at Norfolk.

Tidewater Virginia is crossed by four major rivers that are navigable for up to one hundred miles upstream from the Chesapeake Bay, often as far as the "fall line."⁶ The Potomac, Rappahannock, and James Rivers lead, respectively to Alexandria, Fredericksburg, and Richmond. The York River also extends far inland and is navigable by oceangoing ships.

The bay and its tributaries pose major obstacles for any military force attempting to move through the area without naval support. Paradoxically, during colonial times the

waterways provided the primary means of transportation through the region. The rivers effectively allowed warships to control the neck of the colonial hourglass, interdicting the north-south movement of men, materiel, and intelligence. Captain Andrew Snape Hamond of HMS *Roebuck* observed that “on account of the Navigable Rivers of this Country, there is no part of the continent where ships can assist land operations more.”⁷

In addition to being the geographical keystone to the colonies, the Chesapeake’s exports of tobacco and grain financed the revolution. That trade also maintained ties with the Dutch and French, encouraging their entry into the war on the side of the rebels.

Exports to England of “the vile weed” generally increased from 1700 to 1775, when they reached 100 million pounds per year. By the 1760s, exports of grain through the Chesapeake had also grown substantially, as northern Maryland converted to wheat and settlers moved into Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley. Between 1768 and 1772, the value of the average annual export of tobacco from the region exceeded £750,000, while grain products averaged nearly £200,000 and wood, iron, and all other products were approximately £91,000.⁸

Tobacco was critical to financing the conduct of the war. It has been suggested, “at the risk of exaggeration . . . that the Revolution might not have been won without that much-maligned staple, tobacco.”⁹ On 23 December 1776, when it became clear that Europeans would not accept continental currency in payment for war supplies, Congress authorized the Continental Agents in France, Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane, to negotiate a loan of £2,000,000 from the King of France. After that first loan, Europeans were not willing to extend more credit because of both the diplomatic and the economic implications. In March 1777, a quasi-private French organization agreed to advance another £2,000,000 against deliveries of tobacco.¹⁰

Virginia entered the foreign credit market directly. The state, relying on tobacco for collateral, obtained “secret funds” from a French agent. The state also arranged loans from the Dutch in 1781 and from the King of France in 1782. At the end of the war, only Virginia and South Carolina, the states with commodities valued by the Europeans, owed money to foreign powers.¹¹

The state exported tobacco, grain, and other goods, to the West Indies, to exchange for munitions and salt. That trade became “a principal means by which the revolution was financed.”¹² The commerce in tobacco and gunpowder was sufficiently critical that the Virginia Council of Safety, in September 1776, ordered seven of the state navy’s warships to defer their military duties to carry tobacco and grain to the West Indies to trade for salt, arms, and other materiel required by the army and navy.¹³ Subsequently, Governor Patrick Henry ordered ships of the state navy to carry tobacco to France where the ships and cargoes could be sold to purchase a “swift sailing armed Vessel” and war supplies.¹⁴

British leaders also understood the significance of the tobacco trade. Commodore George Collier, within days of assuming command of the Royal Navy’s North American Station

in 1779, advocated an attack on Virginia. “The way which seemed most feasible to end the Rebellion,” he wrote, “was cutting off the Resources by which the Enemy carried on the War; [and] these Resources were primarily drawn from Virginia, by her Trade in Tobacco, &c.”¹⁵ Two years later, Lord Cornwallis reflected the same awareness. When he ordered Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton to engage and defeat Baron von Steuben’s army, he also instructed his subordinate to destroy all the tobacco between the James and Dan Rivers.¹⁶ Tobacco was of critical importance to Virginia’s war effort and the British commanders knew it.

The social structure of Virginia also contributed to its strategic importance. Governor Dunmore and other officials believed that the southern colonies contained “a large and active body of loyalists.”¹⁷ The Tory strongholds in Norfolk, Portsmouth, and the eastern shore, were not, however, the most dangerous segment of the population to the rebels.

In 1775, approximately 466,200 people resided east of the mountains in Virginia. The population had grown very rapidly from 63,500 in 1700. The colony’s people were divided into several classes. The large landholders, comprising the gentry, constituted about 10 percent of the free population, although they controlled half of the property. The other white farmers, numbering about 225,000 or over 80 percent of the whites, tilled smaller plots they owned or rented. They formed a distinct group, as did white laborers and artisans, representing the remaining 10 percent. More important, an estimated 186,400 (40 percent of the population) were blacks, of whom the vast majority were slaves. In many central Virginia counties, slaves constituted between 50 and 71 percent of the population.¹⁸ Fear of a violent insurrection by the enslaved blacks had preoccupied Virginia’s white leaders since the early years of the settlement. It permeated the colony’s legal system. The first official mention of “riotous & rebellious conduct” by slaves appears in the colonial council records for 4 September 1644.¹⁹ Lord Dunmore sought to exploit the whites’ fears and capitalize on the hopes of the enslaved population by offering freedom in exchange for service in his forces.²⁰ That act caused the war in the southern Chesapeake theater to become a total civil war in which the white colonists perceived their economy and way of life to have been threatened.

Bostonians repeatedly and overtly protested against Britain’s effort to enhance its control over the American colonies after the French and Indian War. Actual fighting broke out at Lexington and Concord. Perhaps as a result, New England, and particularly Boston, has historically been regarded as the emotional and intellectual heart of the revolution.

Virginians, however, were sufficiently central to the intellectual and emotional core of the revolution to warrant greater British focus on Williamsburg. Patrick Henry advocated adoption of the Virginia Resolves. Peyton Randolph chaired the First and Second Continental Congresses. George Mason drafted the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Richard Henry Lee proposed the Declaration of Independence. The leadership roles of these Virginians exemplify the colony’s centrality to the rebellion. The plan, advanced by General Howe, to concentrate entirely on isolating New England substantially underestimated the role of the southern colonies.²¹ His mistake was perpetuated by General Clinton’s later single-minded focus on New York.

Virginia's physical and human characteristics dictated, in substantial ways, the course of the war in the southern Chesapeake theater. Because of those factors, the conflict fought on the waters and contiguous shores of the bay was an asymmetric, amphibious civil war. The British capacity to sustain such a campaign over extreme distances, in the face of other commitments, proved to be beyond the ability of even the Royal Navy.

It is useful, for analytical purposes, to divide the Revolutionary War in the southern Chesapeake theater into five phases. The first phase was Lord Dunmore's campaign to retain control of the colony and the rebel responses. From April 1775 through August 1776, the governor engaged in a series of amphibious attacks on Virginia positions, including Hampton, Norfolk, and Gwynn's Island. Seven relatively small ships of the Royal Navy provided the mobility and the firepower for his campaign.²² The actions of those warships (and one successor) – the Green Water Navy – were central to the war on the Chesapeake. One or more was involved in virtually every significant action. They were instrumental in shaping the campaign. The threat they posed led Virginia to create a navy of its own. They provide a convenient vehicle for analyzing the conflict.

The British blockaded the bay during the second phase of the war, which began when Governor Dunmore departed from the Chesapeake in August 1776. Initially, the British only assigned a few small ships to watch the region.²³ In February 1777, however, the Royal Navy imposed a close blockade on the bay. In addition, the British and their Loyalist supporters continued to attack shore establishments in Virginia.

During the third phase, from August 1777 to December 1780, elements of the Royal Navy and the British Army descended on the region in great force on three occasions. First, in August 1777, Lord Howe's entire fleet swept up the Chesapeake transporting the British army to attack Philadelphia. Then, in May 1779, Commodore George Collier and Brigadier General Edward Mathew conducted a massively destructive raid on Portsmouth, Virginia.²⁴ Finally, Major General Alexander Leslie, with fifty-four ships and 2,500 men, attacked the Hampton Roads area in October 1780.

In the fourth and best-known phase, the British began a full-scale invasion of the Virginia tidewater area and the strategic focus of the entire war shifted to the southern Chesapeake theater. Eleven ships of the Royal Navy conveyed British Brigadier General Benedict Arnold's troops to Virginia in December 1780. The large warships anchored in Hampton Roads, effectively trapping many of the Virginia Navy's vessels in the James River. Arnold rapidly ascended the river and attacked Richmond on 5 January 1781, destroying the state's naval facilities along the way. The turncoat general returned to Portsmouth for the winter, but in April, he moved up the James once again. This time he captured or destroyed twenty-nine ships of the Virginia Navy and destroyed its most important shipyard. Lord Cornwallis, marching to Virginia from Cape Fear, after the Battle at Guilford Courthouse, converged with Arnold's force at Petersburg. Together they raided central Virginia, driving the government out of Richmond and then out of Charlottesville. Then they retired upon Portsmouth and then moved to Yorktown, where French troops under General Rochambeau and George Washington's Continental Army laid siege to

their position. With their escape cut off by the French fleet under Comte de Grasse, Lord Cornwallis surrendered, ending major British operations in North America.

The war in the southern Chesapeake theater did not end with the British surrender at Yorktown. In the final phase of the conflict, loyalist privateers continued to operate in the bay. Virginia sought to rebuild a small naval force to oppose them. The last significant encounter, the so-called Battle of the Barges, took place on 30 November 1782, more than a year after the Royal Navy ceased to be active in the bay.

Phase I: Dunmore's Campaign and the Creation of the Green Water Navy - April 1775 - August 1776

Lord Dunmore arrived in Virginia on 25 September 1771 and quickly became a popular governor, at least in part because he supported the colonists' claims to land in Ohio River Valley that had been reserved for the Indians by the Proclamation of 1763. When the House of Burgesses declined to order out the state militia to support the claims, he mobilized men from the frontier counties and prepared to attack both the Shawnee and the Pennsylvanians, who also claimed the land.

Before Dunmore left for the frontier, ripples from the wave of revolutionary sentiment that had inundated Boston reached Virginia. Parliament had reacted to the destruction of the East India Company's tea in Boston by enacting the Boston Port Act. The law, approved on 31 March 1774 closed the harbor, effective on 1 June 1774. The port was to be shut down until Boston made good the loss. When word of the parliamentary action reached Williamsburg, the Burgesses adopted a statement expressing "Infinite astonishment, and equal resentment."²⁵ Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Francis Lightfoot Lee, Richard Henry Lee, and George Mason secretly drafted a resolution calling for a day of "Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer" on 1 June in support of the residents of Boston.²⁶ Colonial Treasurer Robert Carter Nicholas introduced the resolution on 24 May 1774, and it passed by the House of Burgesses "without opposition."²⁷ Two days later, the governor summoned the Burgesses to the Council Chamber and summarily dissolved the legislature, even though important business remained.²⁸

Despite the governor's opposition to the radicals' effort, Williamsburg retained an air of civility. George Washington had spent the night with Dunmore's family in the palace and went riding with him in the morning before he prorogued the legislature.²⁹ Later that evening, the Burgesses held a ball in honor of Lady Dunmore, who had recently arrived from New York.³⁰ The governor wrote to General Gage, commander in chief of British troops in North America, on 11 June, in a manner that suggests that he did not appreciate the true depth of local dissatisfaction. "As you justly observe my good friends the Virginians have shewn themselves a little to High spirited by a late resolution," he wrote, "but I really hope, & believe, they were taken by surprise & I really think that most of them repent sincerely for what they did."³¹ As if to confirm Dunmore's sentiment, Washington again dined with the governor five days later.³²

Dunmore then left for the frontier. In “Dunmore’s War,” the Virginians defeated the Shawnee under Chief Cornstalk at the battle of Point Pleasant on 10 October 1774. The governor, ignoring the Proclamation of 1763, claimed that he had solidified Virginia’s claim to the Ohio River Valley. He returned triumphantly to a Williamsburg in turmoil on 4 December 1774.

While the governor had been on the frontier, the colony had become radicalized. During his absence, convened at the suggestion of the Virginians, the First Continental Congress had met and adjourned. At the urging of Patrick Henry, among others, the congress had adopted a plan to boycott British imports and agreed to meet again in May 1775. He did not report the events to London until 24 December, when he sent a fifty-page letter to Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs. The first forty pages addressed his successes on the frontier and countered Pennsylvania’s criticism of his aggression. He justified having remained incommunicado by observing that he had “been, for some months past, in the back parts of the Colony, on Business of a Publick and important nature.”³³ While the governor’s account to London concentrated on his adventures on the frontier, he did make one recommendation that had real military significance. He called for a strong and flexible naval force in the Chesapeake Bay and a close blockade to bring the Virginians to heel.

These undutiful people should be made to feel the distress and misery, of which they have themselves laid the foundation as soon as possible, and before they can have time to find out ways and means of supplying themselves. Their own schemes should be turned against them, and they should not be permitted to procure under hand, what they refuse to admit openly; and above all they should not be permitted to go to foreign ports to seek the things they want. Their ports should be blocked up, and their communication cut off by water even with their neighbouring Colonies; and this could be done effectually with only one ship of force, and a frigate and a couple of tenders. With this, and without any other force or expence, no vessel could stir out of the bay of Chesapeak or approach any port of Virginia.³⁴

Even General Thomas Gage, the British military commander in Boston, lacked Dunmore’s vigor. On 2 September 1774, Gage reported that Boston was in chaos -- courts were closed and royal officials under attack. The government had sent Gage, supported by four regiments of British regulars, to replace the civilian government and suppress the insurrection. He underestimated the seriousness of the situation and declined to act forcefully.³⁵ Despite his disturbing September report, Gage remained both passive and optimistic.³⁶

The Admiralty, responding to Gage’s report, ordered three larger warships to Boston on 17 October.³⁷ Lord Dartmouth issued two circular letters to colonial governors. The first, not received by Dunmore until 7 February 1775, directed the interdiction of the flow of munitions into the colonies, and the second ordered the governors to prevent the election of delegates to the Second Continental Congress.³⁸ It was on the strength of Dartmouth’s

directive and Dunmore's own aggressive nature that he not only cut off the flow of munitions into Virginia, but seized powder actually belonging to the colonial militia.

The initial action exhibited several attributes that characterized the war in the southern Chesapeake theater and determined the asymmetric, amphibious nature of the conflict. First, most places of strategic importance in Virginia, such as Williamsburg, were accessible by water. This was true of towns as far inland as Alexandria. Second, the ships of the British Royal Navy could dominate the region's waterways virtually at will. Finally, the society was deeply divided, with 40 percent of the population enslaved to cultivate tobacco, which was the most important product in the colony's economy. Virginia's tobacco-based economy, its highly stratified and divided society, Britain's naval dominance, and the Chesapeake's geography and climate combined to shape the campaign. They produced a campaign similar to the riverine war of the late 1960s. The Green Water Revolution provides an insight into the general nature of asymmetric amphibious warfare in the littoral.

It is constructive to pursue a bit further the events that followed the gunpowder incident. The protesting Williamsburg citizens were mollified and dispersed after Dunmore talked with the leaders. That evening, however, when rumors that the troops were returning spread through town, the mob reappeared. This time they only dispersed when Dunmore promised them he would return the powder once the magazine was secure. The governor was furious at the disrespect shown himself and the crown.³⁹

The next day, Dunmore made the first of a series of threats that led directly to the commencement of open hostilities in the area. That morning, he encountered Dr. William Pasteur, a Williamsburg alderman. Still outraged at the insult of the previous day, the irate earl unleashed his anger upon the man, threatening to raise the slaves against the colonists and reduce Williamsburg to ashes. "I have once fought for the Virginians, and by God I will let them see that I can fight against them." He ordered the arrest of the leaders of the local militia.⁴⁰

Around 1 o'clock in the afternoon, Lieutenant Henry Colins, ordered the thirty sailors of the *Magdalen's* crew to load her guns with round and grape shot and put the ship in a "state of defense." He had received intelligence that "the Inhabitants of Williamsburg were under arms and threatened to attack the schooner."⁴¹

Later in the day, the town fathers presented a formal petition to Dunmore requesting return of the powder to allow the arming of the militia. There was, they feared, "too much reason to believe that some wicked and designing persons have instilled the most diabolical notions into the minds of our slaves, therefore," they argued, "the utmost attention to our internal security is become the more necessary."⁴²

The colonial leaders immediately set about replacing the powder, notwithstanding London's ban on importing munitions into the colonies. On 24 April 1775, Richard Henry Lee wrote to Landon Carter that they proposed to send a pilot boat to the Caribbean for powder.⁴³

The same day, word of Dunmore's action reached Fredericksburg. The local militia, assembled in a previously planned muster, threatened to march, 600 strong, on

the capital. They were only dissuaded by messengers sent by Peyton Randolph, Speaker of the House of Burgesses.

The confrontation escalated still further on Tuesday, 25 April 1775. The other Royal Navy ship in the Chesapeake when the war broke out was HMS *Fowey*, an aging frigate of 24 guns.⁴⁴ She would be a factor in the war in the Chesapeake until Cornwallis surrendered. At 6:30 in the evening, the *Fowey* sailed up the York River and anchored one-half mile off Yorktown.

Three days later, on 28 April, news of the fighting at Lexington and Concord reached Virginia. That afternoon, the *Fowey's* crew conducted gunnery practice, exercising their "great guns," the ship's main battery of 9-pounders, and their small arms as well.⁴⁵ The message was clear to Dunmore and his opponents alike. The Virginians knew that they were at war and not engaged in a squabble over a few barrels of gunpowder.

On 30 April, the governor became concerned for his family's safety. He sent Lady Dunmore and their seven children aboard the *Fowey* for protection.⁴⁶ Two days later [2 May], Patrick Henry organized 150 men of the Hanover County militia to march on Williamsburg to force the governor to return the powder, or to pay for it. At the same time Dunmore was assuring local officials that he had removed the powder only to secure it, because he too had heard of the threat of slave uprisings.⁴⁷ In fact, Dunmore's own words belie his assurances. The previous day he had written to Lord Dartmouth, explaining that he "thought it prudent to remove some Gunpowder which was in the Magazine" to prevent it from being seized by the "Body of armed Men," being raised pursuant to the colonists' resolution to defend the colony.⁴⁸

On 3 May, Dunmore issued a proclamation urging restraint by the colonists and justifying his removal of the powder. He took the opportunity to reassert the threats he had made to Dr. Pasteur in a more genteel and slightly veiled manner. He reminded the white residents of Williamsburg of the "apprehensions which seemed to prevail throughout this whole country of an intended insurrection of the slaves, who had been seen in large numbers, in the night time, about the magazine."⁴⁹ He also excited the memories of the dangers of a frontier life by mentioning "a savage enemy . . . ready to renew their hostilities."⁵⁰

His more delicately phrased admonition still carried the threat of both slave rebellion and Indian onslaught. Word of Dunmore's threats spread rapidly. In less than two weeks, General Gage received word by a "private letter," of the Virginia governor's threat of "proclaiming all the Negroes free who should join him." Gage reported to Lord Dartmouth that the threats had "startled the Insurgents."⁵¹

Henry and his Hanover militia reached the capital on 4 May 1775. He forced the Receiver-General of the Colony to provide him a bill of exchange for £330 to pay for the powder.⁵²

Dunmore was incensed, but also apprehensive that Henry might attack. He sent to the *Fowey* and *Magdalen*, both now anchored off Yorktown, for troops to guard the palace. Early in the morning on Friday, 5 May, Lieutenant Sandys, first lieutenant of the frigate, and Captain Streich of her marine detachment, led the force into town. *Magdalen's* midshipman and several of her men also participated in the landing. Captain George Montagu of the *Fowey* threatened to fire on Yorktown if the troops were

molested on the way to the Palace. ⁵³ Things remained calm, as Henry, after collecting the money for the powder, sent his men home with warnings to remain alert.

On 6 May, Dunmore, secure behind the guns of the sailors and marines, issued another proclamation. He declared Patrick Henry an outlaw, and charged all persons, “to oppose [Henry and his deluded followers] and their Designs by every Means” possible. ⁵⁴ When no further incidents occurred, Lady Dunmore and the children returned to the palace on 12 May. The sailors and marines went back aboard ship three days later. ⁵⁵

Dunmore called a session of the General Assembly on 1 June 1774 to consider Lord North's conciliatory effort to avoid all-out revolution, by granting the colonies the right to control their own taxation as long as they met quotas established by Parliament and funded their own defense. During the third night of the session, a shotgun rigged as a trap in the Magazine went off and slightly wounded two young men who had broken in. Again the colonists became irate. Dunmore reported that the following day, 4 June 1775, the Virginia crowd plundered the magazine and, in the presence of “several of the Burgesses, took out the remainder of about 400 Stand of Arms.”⁵⁶

With Williamsburg occupied by angry, armed men, the governor understandably felt threatened. Lord and Lady Dunmore and their three sons and four daughters, including five-month-old Virginia, abandoned the palace in the pre-dawn hours of Thursday, 8 June 1775. He took his family and fled to the protection offered by the guns of the Royal Navy.

The *Magdalen* was anchored in Queen's Creek off the York River. Captain Colins welcomed his distinguished passengers at 5 a.m., with a thirteen-gun salute, weighed anchor, and sailed down the river to Yorktown, where the more powerful *Fowey* was waiting. The governor and his family transferred to the larger ship at 11:00 in the morning to another salute. ⁵⁷

HMS *Otter* (14 guns), commanded by Captain Mathew Squire, arrived at Yorktown later in the day and anchored near the *Fowey* and *Magdalen*.⁵⁸ Dunmore was beginning to assemble a squadron of Royal Navy ships to operate in the Chesapeake – his Green Water Navy.

Dunmore believed that the Chesapeake was vital to British success against the American rebels. He also believed that the Royal Navy was critical to maintaining control of the bay. He understood that a naval force made up of small but specialized vessels, sufficient to dominate the inshore waters, was essential to any effective operation in the littoral, including the southern Chesapeake theater. ⁵⁹

Dunmore had described his idea for imposing a close blockade on the Chesapeake in his Christmas Eve letter to Lord Dartmouth. Driven by the burgeoning insurrection, he reiterated his concept of an amphibious campaign to Admiral Graves on 1 May 1775. His plan depended on maintaining a viable naval force with a base in the Chesapeake Bay. “One of your large Ships,” he wrote, “having so considerable a body of Men On board . . . would strike Awe over the whole Country,” because the rivers were deep enough for ocean-going ships to travel “very high up.” He argued that even “a small Post Onshore under the Protection of the Guns of such a Ship would maintain itself against all the efforts which are in the power of an undisciplined Multitude.” Such a combination of naval and land forces “would afford Protection to the Well affected” citizens of the area,

who might then “be induced to declare themselves and unite” with us against the rebels. The “men of such a Ship might likewise be spared to cruise in Boats or the small Craft of this Country, about the mouths of all the Rivers, to prevent, effectually, all the Contraband Trade and particularly the Admission of Arms and Ammunition into the Colony.”⁶⁰

Dunmore also asked General Gage to send him the troops necessary to control the area. “Two or Three Hundred Men or even one Hundred,” he wrote, would allow him to establish a defensible position to which loyal supporters could rally. To make a credible showing of retaining control of the region, however, he would have to have “some Appearance of force.”⁶¹

The British leaders in Boston already recognized the importance of colonial waterways to the future of the insurrection. Admiral Graves requested that London send him a “few of the old Fifty Gun Ships . . . to serve in the Rivers on this Continent,” observing that much of the Royal Navy’s work had to be done by small boats.⁶² General Gage echoed Admiral Graves’ request for the craft to support an amphibious campaign in the colonial littoral, calling for “a Number of Frigates” and “flat-bottomed Boats, [such as were] used last War in landing Troops, big enough to hold sixty men including the Rowers.”⁶³

Graves and Gage were, however, preoccupied with events in Boston and did not send the Virginia governor the resources he requested. They believed that the rebellion could be suppressed by crushing the forces in Massachusetts. The Commander-in-Chief did, however, order the 14th Regiment of Foot to move from St. Augustine to Virginia to aid Dunmore.⁶⁴ The governor planned to turn his command into an amphibious strike force, reminiscent of Admiral Rickover’s aggressive use of riverine forces in Operation Sea Lords in 1968.

“I intend to keep . . . [the soldiers of the 14th Regiment] on board Ship, or in places on Shore difficult to be attacked and under the protection of the Men of War, always ready to reimimbark; and by being in that manner prepared to move expeditiously to any part of the Colony, as the great Rivers here admit, I shall be able, if not to quell Insurrections, to keep the Country in some Awe of Government.”⁶⁵

Lord Dartmouth agreed with Dunmore’s strategy for using the navy to suppress the rebels. On 1 July 1775, he ordered four frigates to North America. He directed that Admiral Graves, to the extent possible “without crippling” his force at Boston, to station ships in the Chesapeake and at three other locations on the coast.⁶⁶

Dunmore’s Green Water Navy was completely restructured as summer began. On 29 June 1775, Lady Dunmore and her children sailed for England aboard HMS *Magdalen*, which the governor had ordered to go home bearing his dispatches.⁶⁷ Twelve days later, HMS *Mercury* (20) arrived in the Chesapeake to replace the *Fowey*, which Admiral Graves had ordered to join his forces in besieged Boston.⁶⁸

On 15 July, the squadron moved from Yorktown to Hampton Roads, near the mouth of the bay, and six days later the *Fowey* sailed for Boston. Lord Dunmore commandeered three ships, the *William*, the *Eilbeck*, and the *Unicorn*, to augment his fleet. The *Eilbeck* was a new ship, designed for private use. She was often called a frigate

because she was capable of mounting twenty-two guns, more than any other ship in his squadron. The governor changed the ship's name to the *Dunmore* and transferred his headquarters aboard.⁶⁹ In September they were joined by HMS *Kingsfisher* (14), commanded by James Montagu, younger brother of the *Fowey's* Captain.

In August, Dunmore and John Connolly, a frontier firebrand who had aided the governor's campaign in Pennsylvania, concocted a plan to reconquer the colony in a pincer movement. Connolly, who had met with tribal leaders in late July, would lead the Indians and British troops of the 18th Regiment up the Ohio Valley and then down the Potomac to Virginia. At the same time Dunmore would advance up river, with troops of the 14th Regiment, loyalists, and freed slaves, to converge at Alexandria in April 1776.

Dunmore wrote letters of introduction to General Gage and sent his confederate off to request the commander-in-chief's approval. Connolly met with Gage in Boston in September. The general passed the recommendation on to Lord Dartmouth and to the officer commanding the 18th Regiment, observing that if Dunmore could do it, "the Project will be of great use."⁷⁰

William Cowley, one of Connolly's companions, defected and reported the plan to George Washington at Cambridge. Washington alerted the Congress and warned his friends in Virginia.⁷¹

Your good friend Ld Dunmore is endeavouring to raise all the powers on earth to demolish poor Virginia. We have advice, that at his earnest solicitation a fleet may be expected this fall to ravage our defenceless plantations & burn our little Towns, And we have lately discover'd a plot of his & [John] Connolly's, which is to be executed in the following manner. Conolly despairing of getting up the Country through Virga or the Carolina's, is to go to St Augustine from thence to the Creeks & Cherokees, and through all the tribes to Detroit, by general [Thomas] Gage's commission he is to have the Garrison & Cannon of that place, & the assistance of the French at that settlement with all these he is to form an army in the spring, & march to Pittsburgh, from thence to Alexandria, proclaiming freedom to all servants that will enlist; there he is to be joined by Dunmore with the fleet & troops from England & march through the Country.⁷²

With a fleet composed of *Mercury* (14), *Otter* (14), *Kingsfisher* (12), *Dunmore*, *Unicorn*, *William*, the dispossessed governor began a series of amphibious raids on suspected rebel troop concentrations and arms caches in the Hampton Roads area. He relied heavily on the ships' tenders, smaller craft manned by sailors from the larger ships. The boats, like the PBRs, Swift Boats, and modified landing craft used in Vietnam, were able to operate effectively in the shallow waters of the bay's maze of tributaries using larger ships as floating bases.

The little fleet also tried to protect the loyalists of the region. On 12 August Captain Macartney of the *Mercury* ordered Paul Loyall, the mayor of Norfolk, to provide protection to subjects who supported the Crown. Macartney threatened to institute martial law if the civil authorities could not protect loyal subjects like John Schaw, Dunmore's Deputy Commissary, responsible for provisioning troops at Norfolk. Schaw had recently been attacked and nearly tarred and feathered by a rebel mob.⁷³ The rebels had also

harassed loyalist Andrew Sprowle, conducting a mock trial and charging him with “having harboured His Majesty’s troops” at his shipyard in Gosport.” Sprowle’s yard was one of the best in all of North America and the ships of Dunmore’s squadron relied on it for support.⁷⁴

Captain Mathew Squire of the *Otter* was often in the forefront of the British campaign. A Norfolk publisher, John Holt, began to criticize the Governor and Captain Squire for their conduct in attacking the local population. On 16 August, Holt’s *Virginia Gazette and Norfolk Inquirer* accused Squire of “shamefully” concealing runaway slaves.⁷⁵ Both the governor and Squire became incensed. Holt ran two more articles critical of Squire on 6 September. The *Otter’s* captain threatened that, if Holt’s paper again cast aspersions on his character, he would “most assuredly seize [Holt’s] person, and take [him] on board his ship.⁷⁶ Holt, ignoring the warning, again attacked Captain Squire in print on 13 and 20 September.⁷⁷ On 30 September, a landing party seized the printing press and two of Holt’s assistants, but the publisher escaped. The sailors took the press aboard the *Dunmore* and the governor thereafter used it to print his own newspaper.

The severe storms that regularly struck the shallow waters of the Chesapeake were a hazard to any mariner. Captain Macartney’s *Mercury* was anchored in the Elizabeth River between Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia, in twenty-seven feet of water when one such storm hit.⁷⁸ About half-past twelve in the afternoon of Sunday, 3 September 1775, “violent hard squalls with heavy Rain,” struck the ship. The crew was able to attach a second line to the small bower anchor and get the ship back “into the stream.” They struck the top gallant and top masts down on deck and rigged the lower spars into a fore-and-aft configuration to reduce the area exposed to the wind and “made all as snug as possible,” but the storm persisted. The gale drove the *Mercury* hard aground on Portsmouth Point four hundred yards from her anchorage. The high winds caused the waves to break over her side, making it impossible for the crew to move her back into deep water. The crewmen struggled to save the ship. They tried everything. They threw casks of beer, rum, bread, flour, beef, butter, and pork overboard to lighten the ship. They emptied barrels of drinking water into the river. They dragged the heavy guns around the deck to change the ship’s trim. Nothing helped. When the tide ebbed, the ship lay stranded in three feet of water.⁷⁹ The storm had been “one of the severest gales within the memory of man and,” according to the *Virginia Gazette*, it had “continued with unabated violence for eight hours.”⁸⁰

The next day HMS *Otter* anchored nearby to help re-float the *Mercury*.⁸¹ Using the boats from the two ships, the crews carried everything moveable to the shore – ballast, guns, sails, cables, spare rigging, and anything else they could find. It was very hard work and went on for five days and nights. At each high tide, the men used the *Mercury’s* powerful capstan to drag the ship incrementally into deeper water. Finally, at 6 in the evening on 8 September, the *Mercury* broke free from the bottom and the crew got her “into the Stream and Moord.” Days of hard work still lay ahead of the men to reload the ballast, remount the guns, and replace the hardware, rigging, and provisions. HMS *Kingsfisher* arrived in Norfolk on 9 September, carrying Alexander Graeme, sent from Boston to relieve John Macartney as *Mercury’s* commanding officer.⁸² Mathew Squire became the senior naval officer in the theater.

The terrible storm of 3 September also drove the *Otter’s* tender, *Liberty*, ashore in Back River near Hampton. Local citizens looted the vessel, burned it, and captured six of

her crewmen. The *Otter* had also “swung on shore,” in the Elizabeth River near Norfolk, but managed to free herself.⁸³ Captain Squire, who had been aboard the tender, escaped in a canoe with the aid of a former slave, Joseph Harris.⁸⁴

Squire wrote to the Hampton Town Committee a week after the attack on his tender, demanding the immediate return of the sloop and of the stores and weapons, which included six swivel guns and five muskets. “The people of Hampton, who committed the outrage,” he threatened, would “be answerable for the consequence,” if they did not comply.⁸⁵ The Hampton Committee agreed to return Squire’s tender on three conditions. The captain would have to return Joseph Harris and all other slaves he had been harboring. He must return all vessels he had detained. Finally, he must agree not to “insult, molest, interrupt, or detain” individuals or property bound to or from Hampton.⁸⁶ Before sending its response, the town committee also called for volunteers “to protect the inhabitants of Hampton from any insult that might be offered them by capt. Squire.”⁸⁷

The rest of the Green Water Navy was not idle while Squire corresponded with the Hampton town elders. Dunmore directed four raids in the Norfolk area between 12 and 21 October 1775. Sailors and marines from his ships and troops of the 14th Regiment under the command of Captain Samuel Leslie conducted the operations using the fleet’s tenders. They sought the caches of arms being assembled by Virginia’s rebel forces. The raiders were highly successful, seizing or destroying seventy-seven cannons as well as small arms.⁸⁸

On 18 October 1775, ships of the Royal Navy, after warning residents to flee, had bombarded and burned the town of Falmouth, Massachusetts. By 24 October 1775, leaders in Virginia were aware of the deliberate destruction of “the largest part of the [New England] Town.”⁸⁹ News of the British attack on civilians was not lost on the Virginians. Colonel William Woodford was ordered to march toward Norfolk. The Second Virginia Regiment and five companies of militia from Culpeper were to use their “best endeavors for protecting and defending the persons and properties of all friends to the cause of America” against attacks by Lord Dunmore and the Navy.⁹⁰

During the night of 25 October, Squire sought to exact retribution against Hampton. He led parties from four British tenders and raided houses on Mill Creek, just outside the entrance to the Hampton River.⁹¹ The next day, the vessels tried to proceed up the river to attack the town but found their passage blocked by a barricade of ships sunk across the harbor mouth.⁹² The militia opened fire with muskets and the tenders responded with 4-pounders loaded with ball and grapeshot. The fighting continued for an hour before the tenders withdrew.⁹³ The next night it rained heavily, but Squire continued to press his attack. While the tenders were cutting a passage through the obstructed channel, Colonel William Woodford rode from Williamsburg with a party of Culpeper riflemen. He arrived between seven and eight in the morning to assume command of the Virginia forces.⁹⁴

The tenders opened fire on the town with a 4-pounder shortly after Woodford’s arrival. The riflemen, regulars of the 2nd Virginia Regiment, and militia returned fire from the second story windows of houses overlooking the harbor and from breastworks along the wharf. Captain James Barron led a company of Hampton militia in the action.⁹⁵ The rebel fire was accurate and effective. After an engagement lasting “more than an Hour and ¼,” the tenders slipped their anchor cables and towed out of the harbor.⁹⁶ The pilot-

boat *Hawke*, commanded by Lt. Wright, got too close to shore. The rebels, led by Richard Barron, boarded and captured the tender. Lt. Wright was wounded but jumped overboard with several other members of the crew. He managed to swim away with the aid of one of the blacks aboard.⁹⁷ The Virginians captured “the gunner and 7 men, 3 of whom were wounded, 2 mortally (both since dead), 1 white woman [whose presence is totally unexplained], and 2 negro men.”⁹⁸ Squire was forced to abandon his plans to burn Hampton.

Dunmore’s only major success ashore came on 14 November 1775. Upon hearing that North Carolina troops were approaching Norfolk to reinforce the rebels surrounding Norfolk, he led a party by boat to Great Bridge, looking for the rebel force. He had sent the *Kingsfisher* and her tenders up the James River to prevent rebel troops from crossing to the south bank to reinforce the enemy. He quickly encountered a force of Virginia militia. The Carolinians had not arrived, and he pursued the Virginians to Kemp’s Landing, where he soundly defeated the local unit. The British drove the militia from the field and pursued them for a mile, killing two, and capturing eight.⁹⁹

The victory had been made possible by the *Kingsfisher*. She had attacked rebel boats trying to cross the James River at Burwell’s ferry and prevented Colonel Woodford and the regular Virginia troops from arriving until the battle was over.¹⁰⁰

Following the engagement, Lord Dunmore withdrew to a defensible position at Great Bridge, a span over the Elizabeth River leading to a narrow causeway through an impassible swampy area. The route provided the only access to the city from the south. The governor established a fortified position at the north end of the bridge. Then, seizing the occasion of his victory, Dunmore “erected the King’s Standard,” the traditional signal for the commencement of a civil war.¹⁰¹

The day after the triumph at Kemp’s Landing, Lord Dunmore issued a proclamation he had prepared aboard ship and signed on 7 November. He had been awaiting just such an auspicious moment to promulgate it. Dunmore’s proclamation took four extraordinary steps. It declared martial law throughout the colony. It required “every Person capable of bearing Arms, to resort to His Majesty’s Standard, or be looked upon as Traitors,” subject not just to the forfeiture of property but also to execution. It directed landowners to withhold payment of their quitrents to the government until peace was restored and royal rule reinstated. Each of these steps was extreme but not without precedent in cases of civil strife. Dunmore’s final step was the most troublesome to the white Virginians. As he had threatened to do, he declared emancipated all slaves belonging to rebels if the freed men joined him in attempting to put down the rebellion. The proclamation was printed on John Holt’s press and was republished in the version of the *Virginia Gazette* issued from aboard ship by Lord Dunmore.¹⁰²

Dunmore’s victory greatly encouraged the large loyalist population of Norfolk. Over three thousand men of Norfolk came forward to sign loyalty oaths.¹⁰³ They believed the governor and his forces would protect them.

The Virginians essentially besieged the Loyalists in Norfolk, creating an entrenched position opposite Dunmore’s fort. When the governor again feared the arrival of North Carolina troops with artillery, he decided to take the offensive against the Virginia troops. Colonel William Woodford reported that “a servant belonging to [Washington’s close friend] major [Thomas] Marshall” deserted and informed Dunmore

that, “not more than 300 shirtmen [rebel soldiers] were” at Great Bridge.¹⁰⁴ In fact, there were more than seven hundred Virginians in the trenches facing Dunmore,

Dunmore, perhaps overconfident after his easy victory at Kemp’s Landing, decided to give up his defensive posture at Great Bridge and drive the rebels out of their siege works. Captain Leslie led the two hundred men of the 14th Regiment out of Norfolk after dark on 8 December 1775. They arrived at the fort about three o’clock in the morning. The regulars were supported by about three hundred volunteers and “black and white slaves,” who laid planking on the bridge. Captain Squire sent the gunner, a midshipman, and a detachment of men from the *Otter* to handle the two cannon which were to open the attack.¹⁰⁵ Dunmore ordered Leslie to send two companies of freed slaves by a circuitous route “a little before the break of day . . . to fall upon the rear of the Rebels.” Only after the flanking attack had drawn forces from the breastwork was the main attack to proceed.¹⁰⁶

The diversionary assault never happened. The elite British grenadiers, commanded by Captain Charles Fordyce, attacked over the long causeway and were met with a deadly hail of shot.¹⁰⁷ “They marched up to our breastwork with fixed bayonets,” reported Colonel Woodford, “and perhaps a hotter fire never happened, or a greater carnage, for the number of troops.”¹⁰⁸ The British and loyalists suffered over fifty casualties, including Fordyce and two other officers killed and another wounded and captured. They retreated, and the Virginians took Dunmore’s fort, capturing several cannon, small arms and supplies.¹⁰⁹

Preserving for now the remnants of military courtesy, Woodford buried Fordyce with full military honors. Leslie wrote to thank the Colonel for his “kind treatment of the prisoners.”¹¹⁰ The Virginia troops entered Norfolk about dusk on 14 December 1775. In Woodford’s words, “the victory was complete.”¹¹¹

Between 30 November and 6 December 1775, Lord Dunmore wrote four letters to the British commanders in Boston. His dispatches detailed his plans for campaigning in Virginia and the south and his effort to “to raise two Regiments, one of White People (Called the Queen's Own Loyal Virginia Regiment) the other of Negroes (Called Lord Dunmore's Ethiopian Regiment).”¹¹²

Dunmore sent his messages for Graves and Howe to Boston in the sloop *Betsy*, manned by six men and an officer from the *Otter*. The little packet boat was intercepted off Boston on 18 December 1775, by Captain John Manley in the armed schooner *Lee*.¹¹³ Manley commanded one of several small vessels chartered by General George Washington to harass British ships attempting to enter the besieged city. (Ironically, the *Fowey*, patrolling off Cape Cod, had been the first to capture one of the continental warships, the *Washington*, commanded by Captain Sion Martindale, two weeks earlier, on 4 December.)

George Washington read Dunmore’s letters, realized their import and forwarded them to Congress. On 26 December, he described them in a letter to Richard Henry Lee.

Lord Dunmore’s letters to General Howe which very fortunately fell into my hands, and were enclosed by me to Congress, will let you pretty fully into his diabolical schemes. If, my dear Sir, that man is not crushed before spring, he will become the most formidable enemy America has, his strength will increase as a snow ball by rolling; and faster, if some

expedient cannot be hit upon to convince the slaves and servants of the impotency of his designs. You will see by his letters, what pains he is taking to invite a reinforcement at all events there, and to transplant the war to the southern colonies. I do not think, that forcing his lordship on shipboard is sufficient; nothing less than depriving him of life or liberty will secure peace to Virginia, as motives of resentment actuate his conduct, to a degree equal to the total destruction of the colony.¹¹⁴

Dunmore's fleet was strengthened when HMS *Liverpool* (28) and the ordinance brig *Maria* reached Virginia from England on 18 December 1775. Four days later, with snow squalls and fresh gales blowing, Captain Henry Bellew shifted the *Liverpool's* anchorage into the Elizabeth River opposite Norfolk, just as the loyalists were evacuating the city after the Battle of Great Bridge.¹¹⁵

When the rebels occupying the town harassed the sailors seeking water and provisions for the ships of Dunmore's fleet (and the refugees, which came to be known as the floating town), Captain Bellew issued a warning to the local commander on 24 December. The men corresponded until 30 December, each professing a desire to avoid needless bloodshed.¹¹⁶

Upon seeing rebel troops under arms on the Norfolk waterfront, Bellew ordered that they withdraw from view, as he held "it incompatible with the Honor of my Commission to suffer Men in Arms against their Sovereign and the Laws, to appear before His Majestys Ships." He even suggested that "it would not be imprudent" for the women and children "to leave the Town," if his demands were not met.¹¹⁷ Bellew's threat, after the attack on Falmouth, was most ominous. Howe replied that the rebel troops had been ordered not "to offer insult or injury to your Boats or People or to any others that are not landing in a hostile Manner." Nevertheless, Howe continued, he "should be unworthy [of] the respect of a person of your Character," if he failed to do his own duty.¹¹⁸

On the morning of 1 January 1776, the Virginia sentinels "were parading before" the British, according to a Midshipman aboard the *Liverpool*, "with their Hats fixed on their Bayonets, and every other menacing Action they could think of."¹¹⁹ Bellew opened fire and the other ships followed suit. Dunmore sent a party ashore to burn "some detached Warehouses on the lower part of the Wharfs" from which the rebels had fired at British boats. Since the wind was blowing offshore, he reasoned, the fire would not spread. "But the Rebels . . . put the finishing Stroke to it, by setting fire to every House." The fire burned for several days.¹²⁰ By 4 January 1776, the seventh largest city in British North America had been burned to the ground.¹²¹ Although rebel forces had done most of the damage, Dunmore was blamed.¹²² His attack on Norfolk reverberated throughout the tidewater and beyond. For example, Purdie's *Virginia Gazette* of 5 January 1776 reported that troops had been deployed at Yorktown to "prevent any of Dunmore's hell-hounds from landing to set fire to the houses."¹²³

The Battle of Norfolk destroyed the most active of Virginia's ports and its largest town. On 3 January 1776, Colonel Howe, commander of the Virginia forces, wrote that his men

were still taking casualties and that “at least seven eighths of the Town is reduced to ashes.”¹²⁴ After renewing the debate about the utility and defensibility of a position at Norfolk that had preceded the Battle of Great Bridge, the Virginia Committee of Safety decided to destroy the structures remaining in the town. Altogether 1,331 buildings were destroyed between New Years’ Day and 15 January 1776. Dunmore’s forces demolished nineteen during the initial bombardment and thirty-two in all, having a value of £1,616. The rebels razed 863 structures, worth £110,807.¹²⁵

Virginians recognized the need for a naval force to defend their vulnerable and extensive coastline. On the evening of 18 December 1775, when Colonel Patrick Henry arrived at Hampton, Virginia, on a routine inspection of his troops, he learned of a suspicious large ship and a sloop fifteen miles out in the Chesapeake Bay. The unknown craft appeared to be bound to aid Lord Dunmore’s campaign to suppress Virginia’s incipient rebellion.

Henry could not wait for help from the newly created Continental Navy. He took matters into his own hands. The next morning he ordered Captain James Barron, his brother Richard Barron, and twenty soldiers of the local militia to commandeer a “swift Sailing Vessel” to intercept the ships. They took the sloop and escorted it into Hampton harbor. Henry directed the men to go back to “attempt something” with the ship early the next morning. Henry then ordered the boat used by the Barrons to be hired “into the Service” as it was “indispensably necessary for the Safety of” Hampton.¹²⁶

On 22 December 1775, the Barrons captured two additional vessels. Among the captured boats was “a Vessel of the Govr. Bound to the Eastern shore for provisions commanded by Captain [John] Collett & manned with 16 Negroes,” suggesting a level of success for Dunmore’s effort to recruit slaves and the maritime skills the former slaves brought with them. “Another Vessel of the same sort was Yesterday pursued by our people,” according to Patrick Henry, and “little doubt remained of taking her also. A third Vessel with 2400 Bushels Salt is also taken but not quite brot. into the Harbor the Tide failing.” Henry reported that British captives had said that the governor’s forces were threatening vengeance against Hampton.¹²⁷

While James and Richard Barron were attacking loyalist ships in Hampton Roads, the Virginia Convention was at work formally creating a Virginia Navy. On 9 December 1775, the Committee of Safety for Fairfax County, Virginia, called for action by to defend the Potomac. The committeemen directed George Mason and Charles Broadwater, their representatives in Williamsburg, to call not only for the creation and deployment of more regular army units, but also a naval force. They were to promote “the fitting out a few Vessells of War, to protect the Bay & Rivers, from Lord Dunmore’s Pirates,” being assured that “such Vessels are attainable, can be mann’d & equipp’d.”¹²⁸ The letter from Fairfax County was read to the full Convention on 18 December 1775.¹²⁹ At the same time the delegates listened to Fairfax County’s proposal, four hundred miles to the north, John Manley was capturing the sloop *Betsey*, bearing Lord Dunmore’s dispatches, revealing his plans.

On 21 December 1775, Archibald Cary introduced a resolution to increase dramatically Virginia’s military strength.¹³⁰ The Convention debated the complex bill almost daily for two weeks and enacted it on Thursday 11 January 1776.¹³¹ The Virginia Convention was

almost certainly spurred by the combination of the news of the attack on Falmouth, awareness of Dunmore's plan, and the attack on Norfolk. The legislation authorized the Committee of Safety, which effectively acted as the executive branch of government after Dunmore fled, "to provide from time to time such and so many armed vessels as they may judge necessary for the protection of the several rivers in this colony; and to raise and take into pay a sufficient number of officers and men, as well as sailors and marines." It also increased Virginia's land forces from two regiments to eight.¹³²

Between 19 December 1775, when Patrick Henry commandeered the *Patriot*, and mid-August 1776, Virginia had legally created a navy and built, purchased, or ordered twenty-six warships and one tobacco brig, while contracting for other trading vessels. Twelve of the craft were purpose-built warships, designed as galleys, although they could be sailed as well. Two galleys were assigned to defend each of the state's four major rivers, with two more on the eastern shore and two based in Ocrackoke Sound, North Carolina to help protect Virginia's back door to the Caribbean.¹³³

The other fourteen vessels had been purchased and converted into small men-of-war. They were to operate more flexibly, as cruisers, to harass the British tenders that roamed the southern Chesapeake theater under Lord Dunmore's leadership. They were also to protect Virginia's trade, attack enemy shipping when the opportunity arose, conduct reconnaissance, and transport men and material throughout the theater.

The first twenty-six ships of the Virginia Navy had the greatest success in attacking enemy vessels. They combined to capture at least twenty-five British and loyalist ships. The Barron brothers' *Liberty* and *Patriot* alone accounted for sixteen, including the tenders *Dreadnought* and *Fortunatus*, commanded by officers of the Royal Navy.

Ultimately, fifty-two vessels served in the Virginia Navy, without considering those impressed in March 1781 to resist the final invasion or the barges used to transport troops.¹³⁴ There were eight ships, seven brigs or brigantines, fourteen schooners, six sloops, thirteen galleys, and four identified only as an "armed boat" or "pilot boat."¹³⁵ They carried out many missions, from attacking the tenders of the Green Water Navy to carrying trade goods to the Caribbean and France.

The Virginia Navy was roughly equivalent to three regiments of ground troops.¹³⁶ At least 1,767 men served in the navy at some time during the Revolution.¹³⁷ An additional 122 were members of the Virginia Marines.¹³⁸ Unlike the other states, Virginia also created a substantial shore establishment for its navy, with shipyards at Gosport, Suffolk, and Chickahominy, a ropewalk, a foundry, and magazines on each of the rivers.

After the Battle of Norfolk, Lord Dunmore's forces remained aboard ships anchored in the Elizabeth River and Hampton Roads. Dunmore's fleet included fifty to seventy-five refugee vessels housing the loyalists who formerly resided in the seaport town. Supporters of the royal government had lost their last stronghold in the tidewater area. The king's emissary was, however, determined to carry on the fight to reassert his authority.

Dunmore's hopes for reinforcements to execute the campaign he had designed appeared answered on 10 February 1777. HMS *Roebuck* (44 guns), a powerful new ship,

commanded by Captain Andrew Snape Hamond anchored at Point Comfort, near Hampton, Virginia. Hamond went up the Elizabeth River to Norfolk in the *Kingsfisher's* tender and found the governor. He was aboard the *Dunmore*, in company with the *Liverpool*, and the *Otter*, with “two companies of the 14th Regt in Transports, and about 50 Sail of Vessels containing some of the late Inhabitants of Norfolk.”¹³⁹ Hamond assumed command of the naval forces in the bay and became the primary advisor to Lord Dunmore.

The governor's forces needed “a place to put the sick,” where they could safely get good water. In addition to the casualties incurred at the battles at Great Bridge and Norfolk, the people aboard the ships of Dunmore's fleet had increasingly to contend with disease. There were “30 Sick men” on the *Otter*, “a great many” aboard the *Liverpool*, and “several on board the *Roebuck*.” Hamond ordered “Mr. Fletcher, the Surgeon of the *Roebuck* . . . to fit up a sort of Hospital ashore, and receive the sick Men of the squadron.”¹⁴⁰

Dunmore and Hamond selected Tucker's Mill Point, a peninsula of about four acres on the west bank of the river, across from Norfolk. The area had been the site of a “considerable manufactory of corn.” Hamond ordered Captain Bellew of the *Liverpool* to seize the place using men from his ship and the *Otter*. The area became known as “hospital point.” Dunmore required “every Person in the fleet” to assist in fortifying the position by making “a ditch 15 feet wide & 6 feet deep,” all the way across the 285 yard-wide peninsula.¹⁴¹ Although the rebels had destroyed the mill, the British were able to make use of bake ovens and other facilities on the point.¹⁴²

The tenders were very active, capturing several prizes during the last few days of February and the first days of March.¹⁴³ When Hamond learned that the sloop *Hornet* and schooner *Wasp* of the Continental Navy had been fitted out at Baltimore, he decided to attack the apparent source of his enemy's vessels. On 26 February 1776, he sent one of his lieutenants and thirty men to serve in the *Otter*, which was short-handed due to illness. He ordered the fourteen-gun sloop to sail “up the Chesapeake Bay in quest of” the Continental Navy vessels, not knowing that they had already sailed to Delaware Bay to meet Esek Hopkins' Continental Navy squadron.¹⁴⁴

The *Otter*, with two tenders, sailed into the Patapsco River, leading to Baltimore where she was turned back, in treacherously shallow waters and fog, by the Maryland Navy's ship *Defense* (18) and the state militia. Squire returned to Norfolk in the evening on Sunday, 17 March, having captured five prizes.¹⁴⁵

Hopkins' flotilla of seven Continental vessels had been ordered to proceed to the Chesapeake, conduct a reconnaissance and “search out and attack, take or destroy all the Naval force of our Enemies.”¹⁴⁶ Relying on a clause that allowed him to change his destination if an “unforeseen accident or disaster” made it unwise to enter the bay, Hopkins led his force in an attack on New Providence in the Bahamas.¹⁴⁷ The Continental Navy never challenged Dunmore's Green Water Navy in the Chesapeake.

Andrew Snape Hamond dashed Dunmore's hopes of mounting a larger offensive in the southern Chesapeake theater, when he told the governor that he was going to leave the bay to institute a blockade on the Delaware Bay. Dunmore persuaded him to leave *Otter* and *Liverpool*, contrary to Hamond's original plans. The dispossessed official complained to General Henry Clinton, the new Commander-in-Chief, and to advocate the creation of a permanent naval station at Norfolk, "a Safe Harbour both for access and Rideing in." ¹⁴⁸

Hamond sailed out of the Chesapeake on 21 March 1776, yielding to the manifold demands on the small ships of Royal Navy on the American Station.¹⁴⁹ The *Roebuck* remained in the Delaware Bay until 16 May 1776, when she sailed south to join Sir Peter Parker's fleet off the Carolinas for the attack on Charleston.¹⁵⁰ A pilot boat from Virginia intercepted Hamond that night with news from Lord Dunmore of an impending rebel attack on Tucker's Mill Point.

Reliable intelligence reports indicated that the Virginians were prepared to mount an attack on Dunmore's fleet, using fireships. In addition, the British force had been weakened by an outbreak of small pox among the black troops.¹⁵¹ Hamond advised the governor to move their base up the Chesapeake Bay about forty miles to Gwynn's Island, not just because it was "reported to be inhabited by many Friends of Government," but also because "it formed an excellent Harbour, had plenty of fresh water on it, and could easily be defended from the Enemy."¹⁵²

At daybreak on 22 May 1776, "the troops evacuated the entrenchments and embarked onboard the Transports." Many of the refugees' ships had no competent seamen aboard and could only move with assistance from the men of the Royal Navy, again including the *Fowey*, which had returned on 12 May. It took three days to move the ninety vessels as far as Hampton Roads. The *Otter*, which served as rear guard, destroyed a few of the small craft that could not be moved.¹⁵³ Hamond placed the *Fowey* on the landward side and two tenders in the sound to the south. The troops erected a fort at each end of the island. He sent the *Otter* and her tender to cruise off the Virginia Capes, "to prevent any of the Rebels Vessels from getting in or out, and to give notice to Vessels coming to us of Our removal from Norfolk."¹⁵⁴ Hamond recommended to Commodore Sir Peter Parker that the British establish a permanent naval base at Gwynn's Island.¹⁵⁵

The tenders were a primary line of defense because the governor was perilously short of troops. Despite having inoculated the members of Dunmore's Ethiopian Legion, smallpox and fever continued to ravage the troops, leaving only 150 men able to serve, even though new recruits arrived daily. The little warships were successful in capturing "several of the Enemy Vessels."¹⁵⁶

The fledgling Virginia Navy struck a blow that might have made the difference in Lord Dunmore's effort to sustain his campaign in the Chesapeake. In April 1776, a convoy of thirty-three ships had sailed from Scotland with regular British troops for the American theater. Two of the ships, the transports *Oxford* and *Crawford* were captured in mid-ocean by Nicholas Biddle's *Andrew Doria* (14) of the Continental Navy. Biddle put 217

members of the 42nd Regiment of Foot, the Royal Highlanders (and no officers), without arms, aboard the *Oxford* and sent her off to a friendly port under a prize crew. The *Oxford's* carpenter led the prisoners in an attack on the prize crew and they recaptured the ship.¹⁵⁷ The men then sailed for the Chesapeake to aid Dunmore (instead of Boston, their original destination, which had fallen to Washington's army). Upon approaching the bay, the men were apprehensive because none was familiar with local waters and they feared going aground in the shallow waters. Near sundown on 19 June, they anchored in the mouth of the bay.

Two swift schooners of the type used in America as pilot boats approached the *Oxford*. The crews of the pilot boats advised the men from the *Oxford* that Governor Dunmore had moved his forces from Norfolk about forty miles up the bay to a more secure location at Gwynn's Island. The men on the *Oxford* gave three cheers and weighed anchor.¹⁵⁸ Men from the boats boarded the transport offering to navigate it up the bay. The pilot boats were, in fact, the state navy's schooners *Liberty* and *Patriot*, commanded by James and Richard Barron. Working with the men of the *Andrew Doria's* prize crew, they contrived a plan to retake the ship. At daylight, they struck. The Americans ordered the British seamen forward, allowing only the women and children to remain on the quarterdeck. After taking control of the *Oxford*, they sailed the ship about thirty miles up the James River to Jamestown, where she was securely in rebel hands.¹⁵⁹

The capture of the *Oxford* was a severe blow to Governor Dunmore. The 217 British regulars, captured without a shot, would have answered one of Lord Dunmore's pleas for help. On 1 May 1775, he had written to General Gage requesting reinforcements, claiming that he could retain control of Virginia if he had two hundred men and another warship.¹⁶⁰ The capture of the *Oxford* was not the only success of the Virginia Navy. During late April, Richard Taylor, in the Virginia Navy's schooner *Hornet*, captured four prizes in the Rappahannock.

The *Fowey* undertook a number of missions that characterized the problems that confronted the Royal Navy in the remote asymmetric, amphibious conflict. In June, her men were employed in digging wells on the island to provide fresh water to the fleet in the heat of the Chesapeake summer. On 8 July, however, the wells went dry, increasing the suffering.¹⁶¹ The ship also ventured to the eastern shore, where she delivered ammunition to loyalists on the Nanticoke River and carried back "upwards of 100 volunteers for the Army," as well as "several small vessels laden with cattle," from Tangier Island.¹⁶²

At about half-past five in the afternoon on 22 June, the *Fowey* left the fleet at Gwynn's Island and sailed north toward Annapolis. The Maryland convention had ordered Governor, Robert Eden, to "leave this province," and he had requested the Royal Navy's assistance in withdrawing from his colonial capital.¹⁶³ Montagu hoisted a flag of truce and sent a boat ashore to offer Eden "every accommodation the *Fowey* can afford."¹⁶⁴ The governor accepted the invitation and, at six o'clock in the evening on Sunday, 23 June, the warship fired a thirteen-gun salute as he went aboard.¹⁶⁵ She

returned to Gwynn's Island with Governor Eden aboard and anchored near the *Roebuck* on the morning of 29 June.

Virginia forces immediately began to converge on the nearby mainland to prevent Dunmore from expanding off his small island base. The rebels began moving artillery to Gwynn's Island in June. The rebel artillery boasted two large guns, 18-pounders, which the Virginians had been able to maneuver into position without detection. It also included several smaller cannons and a large experimental wooden mortar.¹⁶⁶ They opened fire about eight o'clock in the morning of 9 July 1776. The *Dunmore* took several hits from the powerful guns, killing the first lieutenant and slightly wounding the governor.¹⁶⁷ The British position, weakened by disease, was untenable.

Hamond advised Dunmore to abandon the bay. Under the cover of darkness, all of the troops, except "thirty black soldiers too ill to move," withdrew to the ships.¹⁶⁸ Thrown into "distress & confusion, Dunmore's "Floating Town" sailed toward the mouth of the Potomac River, leaving behind one spiked cannon and "7 fine Cables & Anchors."¹⁶⁹ They also left at least 135 shallow graves.¹⁷⁰ Among the dead left on Gwynn's Island was Dunmore's old friend and supporter from Gosport, Andrew Sprowle.¹⁷¹ On 11 July 1776, the fleet, including the refugees withdrew from Gwynn's Island and encountered a storm that drove three ships ashore in the mouth of the Potomac. The remainder anchored at St. George's Island off the mouth of the St. Mary's River on the evening of 13 July.

The entire fleet was very short of water and certainly did not have enough for voyages to Florida or England. Like the naval commanders in the Mekong Delta, Hamond needed more firepower in his small boats. He configured an "armored" barge to hold a six-pound cannon. It had high wooden sides and a roof to protect the fourteen oarsmen. Hamond in the *Roebuck* left St. George's Island on 20 July 1776 and led the *Dunmore*, two transports, and the armored galley up the Potomac to secure a supply of fresh water for the entire force. The *Fowey* remained with the fleet, while the *Otter* cruised the bay looking for rebel vessels.¹⁷²

The *Roebuck's* captain did not plan to miss an opportunity to "harass & annoy the Enemy by landing at different places" during the ascent of the river.¹⁷³ Hamond used an armored boat and other small boats to make landings on both shores to attack militia assemblies. They also captured three ferry boats. They sailed as far north as George Mason's home, near the mouth of Quantico Creek, where they filled casks for the entire fleet.¹⁷⁴ They returned to St. George's on 27 July just in time to foil an attack on the fleet by craft from the Virginia and Maryland navies.

It took three days for the ships of the fleet to load the water that Dunmore and Hamond had obtained for them. The same period was spent consolidating the party and destroying twenty of the less seaworthy ships. At eight in the morning of 2 August 1776, "the *Fowey* & the *Otter* with Part of the Fleet Weigh'd & made sail," heading for the Virginia Capes. The *Roebuck's* crew "Burnt Several unserviceable Vessels." Then they too sailed away from St. George's Island.¹⁷⁵

The fleet separated into three divisions as it prepared to depart from the southern Chesapeake theater. The *Otter* left first. She sailed on Sunday, 4 August 1776, escorting about fifty vessels bound for the British station at St. Augustine, East Florida.¹⁷⁶ The next day, the *Fowey* sailed through the capes with seven ships in company, including one bearing Governor Eden. These ships were bound directly for England.¹⁷⁷ The *Fowey* escorted the ships twenty leagues (sixty miles) to sea and returned to cruise off the mouth of the Chesapeake. On the seventh, the third division departed for New York, with the *Roebuck* escorting the remaining ships of Lord Dunmore's fleet, the *Dunmore*, 5 Sail of Transports, two Vessels laden with Rum sugars & dry goods, and 5 Small Tenders & Pilot boats."¹⁷⁸

Dunmore described his rebel attackers as having "become so formidable, even by Water in this Bay, that they have actually drove all our Tenders up to the Fleet, and Captn Hamond does not think it safe to trust one of His Majesty's Sloops alone in the Bay."¹⁷⁹

Lord Dunmore and his able naval commander arrived at New York and anchored off Sandy Hook on 13 August 1776. In the end, the last Royal Governor of Virginia had been driven out by a combination of natural and military forces. Hamond's journal describes the diseased condition of the force.

A violent bilious intermitting fever, together with a most inveterate scurvy had for these two months past raged with g[rea]t violence both in the men of war & Transports, and was so mortal that the *Roebuck* had lost 30 of her best seamen, and had 76 on the Surgeon's sick list. The *Fowey* had 35 Men sick, and Lord Dunmore's Army was reduced to about 150 Rank & File, one third of which was incapable of duty.¹⁸⁰

Dunmore believed the war could have been won with the commitment of a relatively small additional naval force and a few hundred soldiers. He called for the creation of a naval base with a shore facility and the commitment of troops. Hamond had independently endorsed the governor's idea of employing ships to transport men along Virginia's rivers to dominate the region. "Whenever a Thousand Men can be spared, properly equipt, for the service of this Colony, with eight or 10 sail of small Ships to act with them," he wrote to a friend, "they may distress the Colonys of Maryland & Virginia to the greatest degree, and employ more than ten times their numbers to watch them."¹⁸¹ Together Hamond and Dunmore had conducted a campaign that was strikingly similar to modern amphibious, asymmetric operations.

Dunmore would, however, never again be a threat to Virginia.

Phase II: Blockade - August 1776 – July 1777

Lord Dunmore's naval forces had effectively imposed a tight blockade within the Chesapeake Bay until August 1776.¹⁸² They generally remained on station, trying to obtain provisions, water, and wood locally, either from friends or by foraging. Their presence had dramatically limited rebel use of Virginia's waterways. They had created great shortages of salt and other provisions.¹⁸³

While briefly away from the Chesapeake, the *Roebuck* began a reconnaissance in force of Delaware Bay, on 5 May 1776.¹⁸⁴ She was short of water Hamond sailed toward Philadelphia to refill his casks. This was the first time any British vessel had approached the rebel capital.¹⁸⁵ The information he gathered would influence General Howe's decision to attack Philadelphia via the Chesapeake. Hamond found the bay to be a maze of narrow, shifting channels with a strong tidal current that made it difficult for the large ships to maneuver. He also learned that the Pennsylvania rebels had built a fleet of thirteen galleys, constructed forts on islands in the bay, and placed floating batteries in position to command the channels. They also placed chivaux-de-frise – sharpened stakes with metal tips – in the channel to force ships to pass under the forts' guns. After a sharp engagement with the galleys, Hamond retired down the bay. Based on this trip, Hamond would advise General Howe that there was strong loyalist support in the area and that an attack on Philadelphia was viable, but he was convinced that “nothing could be done in the River Delaware without more ships, a Bomb vessel, and a body of troops to act with them.”¹⁸⁶

The *Roebuck* had returned to New York just in time to participate in General Howe's attack on New York. She took part in the invasion of Long Island, an attack on a rebel fort at Red Hook, the capture of Governor's Island, the bombardment of forts at Hell's Gate as a diversion for the landing at Kip's Bay, and an assault at Paulus Hook on the west side of the Hudson. On 9 October, the *Roebuck* and two other cruisers forced their way past Forts Washington and Lee, effectively closing the rebel supply route across the Hudson River and capturing several vessels carrying stores to the American camps.¹⁸⁷ The ship continued to blockade the Hudson, near Tappan Zee, until late November 1776. He returned to Delaware Bay in December 1776 as commander of the blockading flotilla. While ashore under a flag of truce on several occasions, he again found that the local people “were at least three to one in favor of [the British] Government.”¹⁸⁸ *Roebuck* then sailed to English Harbour, Antigua, for the winter. When the ship returned from the Caribbean in March 1777, Admiral Howe invited Captain Hamond to participate in a meeting with General Howe to plan the attack on Philadelphia. He gave “the Admiral & General the fullest information,” on the likely local support.¹⁸⁹ It is impossible to know how much his report about support and the defenses in the Delaware Bay influenced the Howe brothers' remarkable decision to attack Philadelphia via the Chesapeake.

When the Green Water Navy sailed away with Dunmore's refugees, only the *Fowey* was left behind to blockade the bay. The crew of the old frigate was weakened by disease and exhaustion. Since rescuing Dunmore from Williamsburg, the ship had participated in the evacuation from Boston to Halifax and returned to the Chesapeake with no break in service.¹⁹⁰ Within a month, the ship was low on water and had to sail to New York to replenish her stores. She anchored off Staten Island on 7 September 1776.¹⁹¹

She arrived sixteen days after the invasion of Long Island, but took an active part in General Howe's invasion of Manhattan on 15 September, firing her guns as she moved up the East River.¹⁹² The *Fowey* sailed for England on 12 November 1776 and made the crossing to Spithead in thirty-seven days. She spent twenty days undergoing repairs in the dry dock at Sheerness in May 1777, and then spent the summer fitting for sea and

assembling a convoy. The ship reached Sandy Hook on 24 November 1777 after a seventy-three day passage. The slow difficult passage through strong gales took a toll on the crew and the ship. One man died on the passage and, within two days of mooring, Captain Henry Colins sent fifty-eight men of a crew of 138 to the hospital. Three of them later died.¹⁹³ Commodore Hotham ordered the ship surveyed in January and the examination revealed open seams in her decking and a sprung main mast, almost certainly the result of the Atlantic winter storms. The surveyors concluded that “the Ship might be fit to keep the Sea in the Summer-Season,” after some repairs.¹⁹⁴ Since the *Fowey* could not return to the dockyard, she continued to operate.

From the time the *Fowey* sailed away from the Virginia Capes, there was effectively no blockade of Virginia and Maryland until the middle of January 1777. Unlike the famous blockade of Brest during the Napoleonic Wars, when, according to the song, “from Ushant to Scilly is thirty-five leagues,” and resupply and provisioning were close at hand, maintaining even a distant blockade of the remote Chesapeake was very difficult.¹⁹⁵

By the end of 1776, Admiral Howe’s fleet had grown to seventy ships. He assigned an average of fifteen to blockade American ports during 1776.¹⁹⁶ His forces generally remained offshore, conducting a remote blockade and returning to New York for shelter and supplies and all the way to Halifax or Antigua for repairs. Ships ordered to the Middle Atlantic states were generally required to guard both Delaware and Chesapeake Bays. *Roebuck* and her squadron blockaded the Delaware Bay until it froze for the winter of 1776 and then sailed to English Harbour in Antigua for refitting.¹⁹⁷

At times, there was no ship on station. At other times there were as many as six.¹⁹⁸ During the first five months of 1777, Howe’s cruisers captured a total of 218 ships on the North American station, including fifteen vessels recaptured from the rebels. In that period, they captured at least twenty-four ships from Virginia and Maryland. There may have been others that were not readily identifiable as being from the bay states. Still others may have been destroyed without being claimed as prizes.¹⁹⁹

While the blockade intercepted many ships bound for the Chesapeake, many got through. It was most effective whenever they sent a ship into the mouth of the bay. In addition to privately owned craft, Virginia Navy ships made at least thirteen voyages to the West Indies and to France carrying grain and tobacco to sell in an effort to acquire salt, arms and other critical war materiel. They also attacked enemy shipping in remote waters.²⁰⁰ Things were relatively quiet in the southern Chesapeake theater during phase II, as the action shifted offshore.

Remote Operations and Untimely Ends

Seven small warships (and their tenders), none a ship of the line, had represented the Royal Navy in the southern Chesapeake theater. They were particularly effective in blockading the bay and harassing the rebels during the first phase of the war. They were just the type of specialized craft required to carry on the asymmetric, amphibious guerilla campaign Dunmore envisioned. They provide a useful vehicle to examine the diverse

roles such vessels were called upon to play throughout the war. It was very hard duty. Of the seven ships that had waged Dunmore's campaign, five had been lost before the end of August 1778.

HMS *Magdalen* was the first member of the governor's Green Water Navy and, because of her size, one of the best suited to the restricted waters of the southern Chesapeake theater. Ironically, she was the first to depart from Virginia waters. *Magdalen's* subsequent service epitomizes the problems confronting Dunmore and Graves. After a brief stay in the shipyard at Spithead in England, the *Magdalen* returned to North America, arriving at Quebec on 11 November 1775. Soon after her arrival, rebel forces led by Benedict Arnold and Richard Montgomery threatened the city. The ship's company served as foot soldiers until the siege was lifted, missing a critical period in the southern Chesapeake theater as the governor's forces were driven out of Hampton Roads.²⁰¹ After the crew returned to the *Magdalen* she operated in the St Lawrence River until 24 November 1776. She never sailed again, sitting at the dock until the silt built up around her. On 23 September 1777, the *Magdalen* was condemned and ordered to be sold.²⁰² The little schooner that had carried out Lord Dunmore's raid on Virginia's gunpowder supply and then rescued the governor was sold out of the service two years later.

HMS *Mercury* left the Chesapeake in September 1775, when Lord Dunmore had demanded the relief of her commanding officer, whom he considered disloyal. She did not participate in further action in the southern Chesapeake theater. Dunmore's demand for the relief of her captain had effectively resulted in the replacement of the *Mercury* by the smaller *Kingsfisher*, costing him another of the ships he desperately needed for his amphibious campaign in Virginia. James Montagu assumed command of *Mercury*, when she called at Norfolk in February 1776. The ship was carrying troops to Cape Fear to participate in General Clinton's abortive attack on Charleston. From Cape Fear the ship sailed to Halifax. She served off New York and Rhode Island from August until 11 December 1776, when she sailed for England, returning with a convoy in April 1777.

Captain Montagu and the *Mercury* operated in the Hudson River in the summer and fall of 1777 in support of General Clinton's attack on Forts Montgomery and Clinton, just below West Point. On 24 December 1777, when the ice floes "began to drive about the river," Captain Montagu tried to move his ship to a safer location. She "struck on the Chevaux de Frize off Fort Knyphausen (the British name for Fort Washington), [and] . . . the "water [began] to pour in fast." The *Mercury* sank in the frigid Hudson. Three marines were drowned when the ship went down, but the rest of the crew survived.²⁰³

Following the attack on Norfolk, HMS *Liverpool's* tenders attacked rebel shipping throughout the southern Chesapeake theater. On 30 April 1776, Captain Bellew, who had initiated the firing at Norfolk, sailed out of the bay for the last time. *Liverpool* next participated in the blockade of the Delaware Bay and in June she sailed to Halifax by way of Sandy Hook. After spending several months in Canada, she left for England on 2 February 1777, returning in June as part of the escort for a convoy from Plymouth to New York (a fifty-seven day crossing). She arrived in time to participate with the

Roebuck and other Royal Navy ships in clearing Delaware Bay of rebel defenses as part of General Howe's campaign against Philadelphia, first patrolling off the bay and then engaging in the heavy fighting to capture the Pennsylvanians' fortifications during October and November.²⁰⁴

Liverpool remained at Philadelphia until 6 January 1778, when she sailed north, bound for Halifax. On 11 February, she encountered "fresh gales & Hazy [weather] with Rain & Sleet" off the south shore of Long Island. When Bellew suddenly sighted land at 4 in the morning, he quickly ordered the sails shortened. Despite a sounding of 15 fathoms of water at 5 a. m., the ship was soon driven hard aground on Rockaway Beach by the high wind. Bellew ordered the crewmen to abandon the ship. The men worked for six days unloading the ship. The ship was a total loss, imbedded in "four feet of sand," but the crew was saved. On 1 May, the captain was acquitted by a court martial of any wrongdoing in the loss of the *Liverpool*.²⁰⁵

HMS *Kingsfisher* left the Chesapeake for Halifax in March 1776. She participated in the British capture and defense of Newport, Rhode Island and then operated in Long Island Sound through December 1776. She spent most of the sixteen months from February 1777 through July 1778 anchored in the Seakonnet Passage at Rhode Island, guarding the channel between Newport and the mainland and serving as a floating battery to prevent an attack by enemy forces. When French Admiral Comte d'Estaing attacked Rhode Island, two French frigates and a brig headed for the *Kingsfisher's* position. Faced by an overwhelming force, the crew began to move their stores, provisions and guns ashore. On 30 July 1778, as the enemy warships approached, the *Kingfisher's* company "set Fire to the Ship when they were just within Random Shot." The crew erected tents on shore and, leaving their scuttled sloop, went to offer their services to other British ships at Newport.²⁰⁶

Mathew Squire and the *Otter*, perhaps the most active of Dunmore's ships, escorted the Norfolk refugees to St. Augustine. She continued to operate in Florida and never returned to the Chesapeake. She was driven ashore on Cape Canaveral by a hurricane on 25 August 1778. Lieutenant John Wright, who had been wounded at Hampton, was in command because Captain Squire was ashore, ill. On 18 November, Wright was acquitted by a court martial for the "loss of His Majesty's sloop the *Otter*." The court found that the loss was wholly unavoidable and commended Wright for leading the crew safely over 120 miles to St. Augustine, under very difficult conditions.²⁰⁷

The seven ships of Green Water Navy had been called upon to participate in diverse operations far from the southern Chesapeake theater, where they had been needed. They took part in invasions from Newport to Savannah, the evacuation of Boston, convoying of troops, transporting provisions, and carrying passengers and dispatches. They had been compelled to return to Nova Scotia, Antigua, or England for repairs. Their assignments had subjected them to grave risks and hardships. Only two survived to the end of August 1778.

Phase III: Attacks on Virginia - August 1777 – November 1780

Between August 1777 and November 1780, the Royal Navy entered the southern Chesapeake theater in force on three occasions. When General John Burgoyne surrendered his army at Saratoga, the British began to change their strategy. They stopped offensive operations in the north, sent troops from North America to the Caribbean, and ordered a maritime strategy combined with an effort to retake the southern colonies.²⁰⁸

The two remaining ships of the Green Water Navy, the *Roebuck* and the *Fowey*, participated in several important operations during the next three phases of the war. In addition, the Royal Navy acquired another ship named HMS *Otter* in New York at approximately the time the original was lost.²⁰⁹ The second *Otter*, which was roughly the same size as her namesake, fulfilled much the same role as her predecessor. A brief review of the activities of those three ships indicates the nature of the competing demands placed on the types of smaller warships required for by the asymmetric, amphibious warfare of the southern Chesapeake theater.

On 23 July 1777, initiating the first major action of the third phase, Admiral Howe sailed from Sandy Hook to attack Philadelphia with an armada of 267 ships.²¹⁰ The Chesapeake Bay was overwhelmed by British ships. *Roebuck* was chosen to lead the entire fleet up the bay. Because Captain Hamond, “had acquired a very correct Knowledge of the Navigation,” he was, “charged with the Care of stationing proper Pilot Vessels to mark out the Channel up the Chesapeak Bay.”²¹¹ The Royal Navy sailed up the bay without any significant deviations or incursions ashore. The fleet advanced to the Head of Elk at the northern end of Chesapeake, where, on 25 August, thirty-one regiments disembarked using flat-bottomed boats to go ashore.²¹²

After successfully putting General Howe’s troops ashore, the *Roebuck* sailed back down the Chesapeake on 31 August. The general had ordered Hamond to escort three victualers to Newcastle, Pennsylvania, to establish a depot for the army as it advanced on Philadelphia. The ship, however, went aground on 2 September off Worton Point in the upper Chesapeake, and it took two days to free her.²¹³ The *Roebuck* reached Newcastle with the provisions on 10 September, in time to assist wounded soldiers from the Battle of Brandywine. She then played a leading role in the British effort to clear the Delaware River of obstructions, forts, and rebel vessels, in a series of fights that lasted from 2 October until 23 November. In a battle with galleys of the Pennsylvania state navy, HMS *Augusta* (64) and *Merlin* went aground on 22 October. The *Merlin* was burned to prevent her being captured by the rebels and the *Augusta* caught fire and exploded. She was the largest ship of the Royal Navy lost in action against the rebels during the entire war. The British flotilla persevered and drove the Continental frigate *Delaware* (32) upstream to the fort on Mud Island, where she was captured when British infantry occupied the island. Hamond sent Lt. Webb and fifty sailors from the *Roebuck* to man the prize.²¹⁴

Admiral Howe began to move south from the Head of Elk on 14 September 1777.²¹⁵ Eight days later, he ordered Captain Hyde Parker, Jr., of HMS *Phoenix* to reinstitute the

blockade as the invasion fleet withdrew. Parker was to deploy the *Emerald* (32), *Solebay* (14), and the new *Otter* (14), commanded by Captain Richard Creyk, “at and near to the Entrance of Chesapeak Bay . . . to intercept all Supplies and Military Stores attempted to be introduced.”²¹⁶ The type of close blockade called for by Lord Dunmore again proved effective. “The trade of this state is almost annihilated,” wrote Governor Patrick Henry.²¹⁷ The blockade persisted into the spring of 1778. “Chesapeake Bay is guarded by one English 64 Gun Ship & four 36 gun Frigates. They lord it here at present,” Henry advised Benjamin Franklin.²¹⁸

The most remarkable thing about the massive incursion into the bay was the lack of damage to Virginia. The ships had passed up and down the bay without attacking the shore.

Virginia’s luck could not last forever. On 8 May 1779, the combined forces of the Royal Navy and the British army struck the first serious blow at the tidewater area. Commodore Sir George Collier and Brigadier General Edward Mathew led a force of six warships, twenty-eight transports, and almost two-thousand British regulars in a combined operation against Hampton Roads. For Collier, the raid was not a mere harassment or diversion. He intended to “end the rebellion,” by “cutting off the Resources by which the Enemy carried on the War” and “shutting up the Navigation of the Chesapeake.”²¹⁹

The commodore transferred his command from the *Raisnable* (64) to the *Rainbow* (44) to lead the assault. The larger ship drew too much water to operate in Virginia’s smaller rivers. Collier “led the Fleet as high up Elizabeth River as the Tide would admit,” until the failing wind forced the ships to anchor. Early on the morning of 10 May 1779, he boarded a still smaller armed schooner to reconnoiter his first objective, Fort Nelson, the bastion built to defend Portsmouth and the Gosport shipyard.²²⁰

Collier ordered the attack to commence after learning from local inhabitants that there were “very few Troops in that Neighborhood, the present visit being totally unexpected.” The first division transferred to flat-bottomed boats designed to serve as landing craft. The commodore and General Mathew led the assault in the *Rainbow*’s barge. The flanks of the invasion force were protected by “the *Cornwallis* Galley & several Gun Boats carrying a Six or Nine Pounder in their Prows.” According to Collier, the invasion flotilla was a beautiful sight and “formed the finest Regatta in the World.” The leading boats advanced to “within less than Musket Shot of the intended Place,” and then the “Galley & Gun Boats” moved into position and “kept up a warm Cannonade towards the shore for several Minutes.” As soon as the bombardment ceased, the first troops went ashore near Fort Nelson, “without the least Opposition.” The landing craft returned to the transports and, by evening, the second wave, “together with the Artillery Horses & some Baggage were Safely landed.”²²¹

Fort Nelson was an installation of “astonishing strength,” designed to mount forty-eight cannons. The fort’s appearance was, however, misleading. The garrison had been reduced to fewer than one hundred fifty men, too few to man the guns.²²² Major Thomas Matthews, the post’s commanding officer, upon realizing the size of the approaching

British force, decided to withdraw. Reportedly, the only occupant of Fort Nelson on the Elizabeth River when the British forces arrived was Lieutenant Dickey of the Royal Navy. Captain Richard Barron in the Virginia schooner *Liberty* had captured Dickey's ship, the *Fortunatus*, in March. Placed on parole, Dickey was free to move about the Portsmouth area. He had walked out to the fort the morning of the attack and, on entering, found it abandoned. As the troops approached, "he mounted the ramparts, and hauled down the American colours," welcoming the invaders.²²³

The new *Otter* performed with the same zeal and effectiveness as had her namesake under Squire. Collier ordered Captain Richard Creyk to lead a raiding force up the Chesapeake Bay. The squadron included four privateers owned by the Goodrich family. The flotilla proceeded up the York River as far as Yorktown and then up the bay to Gwinn's Island. The *Otter's* cruise was effective. She captured at least seven vessels. The small warships also attacked the harbors at Milford Haven, Cherrystone, and Pungoteague.²²⁴

Commodore Collier became convinced that the Royal Navy should establish a base at Portsmouth. He wrote to General Clinton, urging that his mission be converted from a raid into a full scale invasion to seize and hold the area. Collier argued, "in very strong Terms," that an installation at Portsmouth would have several advantages. It would stop the rebels' "water communication by the Chesapeake," disrupting the flow of provisions to Washington's army and put an end to their foreign trade. The "natural strength of the Place was singularly great both by Land & Sea & might be maintaiend with a small Force against a very superior one." The shipyard was "the most considerable in America." It would provide a very large "quantity of seasond Oak Timber," which could be sent to England, where it was needed to support the ship-building program undertaken to offset the French threat. Finally, it would show "the King's faithful Subjects in Virginia that they were not abandond but woud be encouraged & protected."²²⁵ Secretary of State, Lord George Germain concurred with Collier's suggestion. In September 1779, the secretary "recommended" that Clinton establish a permanent facility at Portsmouth and conduct an active campaign in the Chesapeake.²²⁶

General Mathews would not wait for a reply to Collier's request and the fleet sailed out of the Chesapeake Bay on 26 May. The ships' departure left the newly declared loyalists defenseless.

The entire operation lasted just twenty-four days. Collier estimated that it had inflicted over one million pounds in losses on the rebels.²²⁷ He reported that his men had taken an "astonishing" quantity of naval stores. They captured or destroyed 137 vessels, including a 36-gun warship, another of 18-, three of 16- and three of 14-guns and a large part of Virginia's merchant fleet. The raiders also took a "great deal of Tobacco, Tar & other Commodities." In Norfolk, they burned "Nine Thousand Barrels of Salted Pork which were Stord there for Washingtons Army, Eight Thousand Barrels of Pitch, Tar & Turpentine with a vast quantity of other Stores & Merchandise."²²⁸ The attack had wrecked much of tidewater Virginia's infrastructure.

Collier's recommendation for the establishment of a permanent naval base was added to Dunmore's and Hamond's. Slowly they were beginning to have an effect in London if not on Sir Henry Clinton in New York.

The operations of HMS *Fowey* and *Roebuck*, as well as the new *Otter*, exemplify the new British strategy. They were heavily involved in missions that shifted the focus of the war from the north to the south.

From May through October 1778, the *Fowey* served with Lord Howe's fleet. She participated in the successful defense of Newport, Rhode Island against the attack led by French Admiral d'Estaing, in which the *Kingsfisher* was scuttled.²²⁹ In November, she sailed for Georgia as part of the escort for Lieutenant Colonel Archibald Campbell's three thousand troops who would capture Savannah.²³⁰

The *Fowey* was still at Savannah on 4 September 1779, when the French fleet, commanded by d'Estaing arrived on the coast to participate in a joint attack on the British outpost. General Benjamin Lincoln commanded the American troops. The allied forces laid siege to the city and the *Fowey's* captain sent her "Seamen and Marines to reinforce the Garrison of Savannah besieged by the French & Rebels."²³¹ The defense prevailed when the French admiral announced he was returning to the West Indies and called for an ill-conceived frontal assault on 9 October 1779, resulting in a bloody repulse for Lincoln's men. The *Fowey* remained near Savannah for six more months, capturing at least one prize. On 1 April 1780, she sailed, with forty-four ships, to support General Clinton's attack on Charleston, South Carolina, but she did not play a major role in the attack.

The *Roebuck* had a similarly varied campaign. On 1 December 1778, she sailed from New York, carrying Lord Cornwallis home on leave. Also aboard were the English peace negotiators, Lord Carlisle and Mr. William Eden. The voyage, which deprived the North American Station of one of its most valuable ships, was uneventful and she reached England on 20 December.²³²

Hamond and the *Roebuck* returned to American waters in June 1779. During the summer and autumn, the ship participated in blockading the coast.²³³ On 26 December 1779, she sailed from Sandy Hook with Lord Cornwallis aboard again. She was part of a force of ninety-eight warships and transports bound for Savannah, Georgia and then Charleston (then called Charles Town), South Carolina to initiate the British southern offensive. The *Roebuck* played a central role in the attack on Charleston, leading four ships past the rebel batteries at Fort Sullivan on 9 April.²³⁴ Her action, coupled with Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton's seizure of the last bridge, completed the encirclement and isolation of the Charleston garrison.²³⁵ On 11 May 1780, General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered the city and the southern Continental Army to Sir Henry Clinton.

The *Roebuck* did not neglect the Chesapeake entirely. She sailed north on 8 June 1780, bound for Sandy Hook. Twenty days later, Captain Hamond spoke with four privateers from New York who were operating off the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.²³⁶ Based on

the privateers' intelligence, Hamond's squadron, including HMS *Romulus*, *Camilla*, and *Blonde*, staged another raid on Virginia waters. On Friday, 30 June 1780, the squadron attacked the shipping in the mouth of the bay. They sighted twenty-three ships near Cape Henry and pursued them into the bay. Both the *Roebuck* and the *Blonde* went aground chasing rebel vessels up the Elizabeth River while other rebel craft fled up the James River. The British ships cruised near the Virginia capes for the next week.²³⁷

On 10 October, Clinton ordered Major-General Alexander Leslie to lead a force of 2,500 men on an invasion of the Chesapeake in support of Cornwallis's operations in the Carolinas.²³⁸ The general's aggressive campaign had, virtually unilaterally, moved the focus of the war to the southern Chesapeake theater.

Leslie's assault on the southern Chesapeake theater was not intended to be a mere raid. It was to be part of an occupation. His orders, however, required him to accomplish three different, arguably inconsistent, missions. He was to communicate with Cornwallis and follow his directives. He was also to ascend the James River "to seize and destroy any magazines the Enemy may have at Petersburg [or] Richmond." In addition, he was to "establish a post on the Elizabeth River," Germain's much-desired base at Portsmouth.²³⁹

Leslie's troops, aboard forty-three transports, sailed from Sandy Hook on 17 October 1780.²⁴⁰ Captain George Gayton, of HMS *Romulus*, commanded the eight ships assigned to support the operation.²⁴¹ The squadron was well suited for action in the shallow, confined waters of the Chesapeake. It included four vessels the size of HMS *Otter* or smaller and two galleys. One of the ships, HMS *Halifax*, was the former Virginia Navy brig, *Mosquito*. She had been purchased for service by the Royal Navy after being captured by the *Ariadne* off Barbados in 1777. At least one of the Goodriches' privateers again accompanied the fleet.²⁴² The ships reached the Virginia Capes on 20 October and by 8 o'clock the next evening, a party of troops had landed at Portsmouth.²⁴³

Unlike the aggressive Collier, Leslie simply waited at Portsmouth for orders from Cornwallis. Captain Creyk of HMS *Otter* again directed an attack on rebel positions throughout the tidewater area. After helping to land troops at Portsmouth, he escorted "several transports and troops [and] stood over towards Hampton." The town did not put up the vigorous resistance it had five years earlier. At noon on 24 October, a party of townspeople boarded the *Otter*, under a flag of truce, seeking "to Surrender the Town upon Terms." On 25 October, the troops withdrew from Hampton and, the following morning, began to ascend the Nansemond River toward Suffolk. After putting troops ashore on either side of the river during the evening of 27 October, Creyk led several armed boats and the galley *Cornwallis* against the town. After attacking Hampton and Suffolk, the *Otter* returned to Portsmouth on 3 November with the transports and her prizes, "three sloops loaded with Tobacco – and a ship." Leslie's troops had begun to build fortifications around the city.²⁴⁴

When Major Patrick Ferguson's force of British loyalists was virtually wiped out in the Battle of King's Mountain on 7 October 1780, Cornwallis summoned Leslie's forces to replace the troops lost in the back country. The orders reached Portsmouth on 12 November and Leslie immediately withdrew from Virginia. The *Otter* sailed south with the fleet on 22 November, passing Cape Fear on 3 December and anchoring off the bar at

Charleston at nine in the morning of 13 December.²⁴⁵ After a rough passage, the fleet of fifty ships anchored off the bar at Charleston at 9 p. m. on 13 December 1780.²⁴⁶

The *Otter* never returned to Virginia. She served in the Carolinas and Florida until July 1782. She then returned to New York. On 9 October 1783, the navy sold the little ship that had been one of the offensive leaders of both Collier's and Leslie's attacks.²⁴⁷

Leslie and Gayton's force had operated without substantial opposition in the Hampton Roads area for twenty-three days before Cornwallis called them to Carolina. They had dominated the tidewater area, but had not inflicted damage comparable to Collier's raid. Even so, the mere presence of the Royal Navy in the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay had suppressed operations by the Virginia Navy and stalled efforts to restore the infrastructure destroyed by Collier. Any sense of relief that Virginians might have felt on their departure was, however, illusory.

When Germain learned that British troops had again failed to maintain a base in the Chesapeake, he wrote Clinton a scathing letter. He asserted that the king had "commanded [him] to acquaint you that it is his pleasure [that] you do carry" out the Chesapeake project "whenever the King's service will admit of it." Germain's "opinion of the Importance" of the mission, made him "repeatedly press its Execution."²⁴⁸

Cornwallis also became convinced that the Chesapeake was the key to winning the war. The vigor of his advocacy increased steadily. In August 1780, he asserted that an operation in the Chesapeake was of the "utmost importance," contending that, after the security of Clinton's position at New York, the bay was "one of the most important objects of the War."²⁴⁹ By April 1781, he stridently urged "that the Chesapeake may become the Seat of the War, even (if necessary) at the expense of abandoning New York."²⁵⁰

Phase IV: Invasion! - December 1780 – October 1781

On 14 December 1780, the day Leslie's ships crossed the bar at Charleston, Clinton ordered Brigadier General Benedict Arnold to mount an expedition to Virginia. Arnold's orders gave him the same three tasks that had been assigned to Leslie. The emphasis was, however, different. He was "at liberty" to attack "any of the Enemy's Magazines," if it could be "done without much risque. . . . [He was,] as soon as possible to Establish a Post at Portsmouth on Elizabeth River in Virginia, [and make known his] Intention of remaining there." Finally, if requested, he was to assist Cornwallis, although he was not to "undertake any operation with the least risque to that important Station [at Portsmouth] unless Lieutenant Colonels Simcoe and Dundas, the officers Clinton had designated to proctor the turncoat general, agreed that there was sufficient justification for an action or "Earl Cornwallis should positively direct."²⁵¹

If the orders for the two expeditions were similar, their commanders were not. Leslie had been unwilling to venture beyond Hampton Roads. Arnold's men had begun embarking on the thirty-three transports even before his formal orders were written. On 21 December, eleven warships, including HMS *Fowey*, sailed with the invasion fleet, commanded by Captain Thomas Symonds.²⁵² After a rough passage, the first of Arnold's

two thousand troops arrived in the Chesapeake on 30 December 1780. Early the next morning, he began his first ascent of the James River to attack Virginia's interior, "with incomparable activity and dispatch."²⁵³

The Queen's Rangers, under the command of Lt. Col. John Graves Simcoe, were heavily involved in Arnold's campaign. They boarded small vessels captured by a Royal Navy frigate, and advanced toward the first Virginia defensive position, the fortified naval storehouse at Hood's on the south bank of the river about eighteen miles above Jamestown.²⁵⁴ Fort Eustace, built on the recommendation of General Lafayette, mounted ten guns to command the river and defend the anchorage.²⁵⁵ On 3 January 1781, Arnold sent Simcoe ashore with 130 men about a mile below the fort. They approached the redoubt from the flank and its defenders fled, abandoning their guns and the ships moored at the station. The next morning, after they had "dismounted the battery," the first naval facility to fall to Arnold, the men re-embarked and hurried toward Richmond.²⁵⁶

The rangers reached the colony's capital just twenty-three hours after landing, surprising Governor Thomas Jefferson and the Virginia establishment. Arnold entered Richmond on 5 January 1781 and captured "300 Muskets, about 5 Tons of Powder, some Sulphur, 5 field pieces, four pounders and some inferior articles of no great account," and destroyed "the greater part" of "the letters and records" of the executive branch of state government, including records of the navy.²⁵⁷ Before retiring on Portsmouth for the winter, Arnold's men also destroyed the Virginia navy's foundry at Westham, destroying "a quantity of small arms and a great variety of military stores." They dumped large quantities of powder into the river and burned the "warehouses and mills."²⁵⁸ The damage was irreparable.

Unlike Collier and Leslie, Arnold did not destroy the naval facilities at Portsmouth and Gosport. He intended to occupy them permanently. He drew a map depicting the fortifications that would be necessary to defend Portsmouth. He ordered Simcoe to seize and fortify the post at Great Bridge, which still controlled access to Norfolk from the south. The rangers erected a star-shaped fort, prepared a moat, destroyed the ancillary bridges, and occupied the post that guarded access to the harbors on the Elizabeth River.²⁵⁹

The Virginians prepared to attack Arnold's position, despite the difficult, swampy terrain to the south. Governor Thomas Jefferson ordered the impressment of armed ships and the construction of small boats to ferry men and equipment to Portsmouth for the planned attack.²⁶⁰

Arnold was not passive while the Americans prepared to attack him. On 6 March 1781, Simcoe and Dundas led an effective water-borne raid on Hampton.²⁶¹ The next night, they took to the boats again for a raid on Williamsburg, but the "night became so very dark and tempestuous, as to render the attempt totally impracticable."²⁶² Arnold called for reinforcements.

Clinton, however reluctantly, finally moved to reinforce Arnold's position on 10 March 1781. He ordered Major General William Phillips to lead a force of two thousand

men to Virginia.²⁶³ They departed from New York ten days later in thirty-one transports, escorted by eight small warships, including the *Roebuck*, which served as Phillips' flagship.²⁶⁴ The arrival of the additional warships trapped the remaining ships of the Virginia Navy up the James River. On 7 April, the *Roebuck* sailed back to New York escorting a convoy of twenty-five ships.

On 18 April, Generals Phillips and Arnold began the second ascent of the James River. Their troops boarded nine transports at Portsmouth and, escorted by the *Fowey*, sailed as far as Burwell's Ferry, near Williamsburg.²⁶⁵ Phillips had ordered that the ships were not to move, "till the shores are cleared of the enemy."²⁶⁶ On 20 April 1781, Phillips and Arnold began the process of clearing the north bank of American forces. They sent a unit of light infantry under Lieutenant Colonel Abercrombie up the Chickahominy River in boats, while Lieutenant Colonel Dundas's detachment landed at the confluence of that river with the James. The main force advanced on Williamsburg, while the Queen's Rangers rode to Yorktown before advancing toward the Chickahominy River.²⁶⁷

On 21 April, Abercrombie's light infantry attacked the Virginia Navy's most important installation, the shipyard at Chickahominy. Dundas's light infantry, landing at the mouth of the Chickahominy, cut off any avenue of escape, while Abercrombie's men moved up the river in boats to attack the yard. They found the newly constructed, 20-gun ship *Thetis*, which was burned on the stocks. The state galleys *Safeguard* and *Lewis* were still involved in moving stores out of the yard when they were forced further up the Chickahominy and wrecked.²⁶⁸ Arnold reported that the troops "destroyed several armed ships, the state ship yards, warehouses, &c. &c," however, neither he nor the Virginians identify other ships.²⁶⁹ The *Tempest* and the *Jefferson*, among others, had escaped up the James and anchored at Osborne's, a large bay about ten miles south of Richmond.

Phillips and Arnold did not stop after destroying the shipyard. They pressed on toward Richmond, crossing the James River to capture the incomplete fortification at Hoods. The ships assembled there had fled up river and the defenders apparently did not put up any resistance.²⁷⁰ On 24 April, British troops landed at City Point and marched for Petersburg.²⁷¹ General Steuben opposed their advance with about one thousand militia, but eventually retreated, allowing the enemy to burn "all the Tobacco in the Warehouses at Petersburg and it's Neighbourhood," before they advanced on Osborne's.²⁷²

At least twenty-one ships, including vessels of the Virginia Navy and merchant ships impressed by Jefferson, had anchored "about four miles above Osborne's" when Arnold arrived about noon on 27 April 1781. Observing that the rebels "had very considerable force of ships . . . drawn up in a line to oppose us," Arnold "sent a flag to the commodore, proposing to treat with him for the surrender of his fleet."²⁷³ According to Simcoe, the general offered the rebels "half the contents of their cargoes" if they surrendered without destroying any of the ships. The Virginian, presumably Commodore Maxwell of the state navy, refused. He asserted "that he was determined to defend it [his fleet] to the last extremity."²⁷⁴ Arnold's force included "the 76th and 80th regiments, Queen's rangers, part of the yagers, and American legion," as well as four field guns. The Virginians might have been a match for these units had the ships been well manned; however, they were woefully short-handed.²⁷⁵

Arnold positioned his forces to take advantage of the terrain, placing two brass three-pounders and two six-pounders on a point from which they would have a clear field of fire against the vessels. The Jägers, which included expert riflemen, took stations on the riverbank within thirty yards of the ships.²⁷⁶ The twenty-gun *Tempest*, “began immediately to fire upon” them, Arnold reported, “as did the *Renown*, of twenty-six guns, the *Jefferson*, a state brigantine of fourteen guns, and several other armed ships and brigantines; about two or three hundred militia on the opposite shore at the same time kept up a heavy fire of musketry.”²⁷⁷ The Virginians had loaded their guns with round shot, expecting an attack by British ships, rather than grape shot, which would have been more effective against infantry. As Simcoe’s rangers took up position near the Jägers, “a most fortunate shot cut a spring [anchor] cable and threw the ship [*Tempest*] round,” exposing her to cannon and rifle fire along the length of her deck. “Lt. Fitzpatrick, with volunteer Armstrong, and twelve of the Queen’s Rangers, leaped into the boat and rowed” to the *Tempest* and took possession of the ship. Simcoe’s men proceeded to board other rebel vessels. In short order, the remainder of the Virginia ships either surrendered or were scuttled.²⁷⁸

Arnold wrote that he had captured “two ships, three brigantines, five sloops, and two schooners,” by five in the afternoon. In addition, “four ships, five brigantines, and a number of small vessels, were sunk and burnt: On board the whole fleet (none of which escaped) were taken and destroyed about two thousand hogsheads of tobacco.” Arnold’s troops had suffered no casualties in capturing or destroying most of the ships of the Virginia Navy.²⁷⁹

On 2 May, the transports began to embark the soldiers to return to Portsmouth. Two days later, as the *Fowey* returned to the Elizabeth River, one of her ship’s boats was cut in two by the Virginia Navy’s 20-gun ship *Tempest*, being manned by a prize crew after her capture at Osborne’s.²⁸⁰

The *Fowey* remained near Hampton Roads and Norfolk until 23 August 1781, when she moved into the York River, anchoring “abreast of York Town.” By 31 August, the British ships were trapped in the York by “a french fleet Consisting of 27 sail.” As she had done in the siege of Savannah, the *Fowey* took an active part in the defense of the besieged town. She sent her tender to reconnoiter the enemy fleet while her men took the ship’s stores and went ashore to aid the garrison. She sent a “Lieut^{nt} and 30 men to the Batteries Glouster side” and moved her guns into the fortifications defending Yorktown.

When it was obvious that the siege would succeed, Captain Symonds ordered the *Fowey* scuttled to prevent her being captured by the enemy. Her master reported that the crew “bored holes [in the hull] under the Starboard fore chains to Sink the Ship.” She lay within yards of the location she had occupied when Lord Dunmore first boarded her in 1775.²⁸¹ Lord Cornwallis wrote that he had “great obligations to Captain Aplin [of the *Fowey*] and the officers of the navy and seamen for their great exertions.”²⁸²

On 17 October 1781, the French kept up a “constant fire of shells” on the entrenchments manned by the men of the *Fowey*. The next day James Stringnell, the *Fowey*’s sailing master, observed as Lord Cornwallis “sent out a Flag to Capitulate.”²⁸³

The schooner *Liberty* was the only survivor of the Virginia Navy’s campaign against Dunmore to appear at the siege of Yorktown. By the same token, HMS *Fowey* was the only member of Lord Dunmore’s green water navy that remained in the southern Chesapeake theater during the final battle. Of the eight ships of the Green Water Navy, only the *Roebuck* remained on active duty by the end of 1783.

The fighting between loyalists and rebels continued in the southern Chesapeake theater even after the surrender at Yorktown. The last significant naval engagement on the bay occurred on 30 November 1782 in the Battle of Kedges Strait. The Royal Navy took no part in operations after October 1781.

Conclusion

As Lord Dunmore had anticipated, Virginia and the southern Chesapeake theater were strategically vital to the war. The demography, geography, economy, social structure, and politics of the region combined to make it a focus. The governor’s pleas for a major commitment to an amphibious war waged from a secure naval base were taken up by Hamond, Collier, Cornwallis, Germain, and even King George III. Resistance, primarily from Generals Howe and Clinton, prevented the early concentration of sufficient forces in the theater to hold it.

The British failure in the southern Chesapeake theater provides some insights about the successful conduct of asymmetric, amphibious warfare. They appear sufficiently universal to remain valid in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

First, it is critical to protect local supporters. The force opposing an insurgency must seize and occupy the region and not withdraw its troops once the area appears secure. That effort requires large numbers of troops. Dunmore and Cornwallis both called for more troops to no avail. The British tactics encouraged loyalists to come forward to aid the regular forces. The local supporters were then abandoned when the military moved on. That practice assured that people who might have been supporters would not reveal their loyalties for fear of retribution, as had happened to Andrew Sprowle and the other Norfolk loyalists. The support of the citizenry would have reduced the logistical and security burdens on the forces in the Chesapeake. The British experience in Virginia demonstrates the importance of committing sufficient force early in the conflict to retain the confidence of the loyalists and deter the undecided from joining or supporting the rebels. While mobility was essential, it could not be exercised at the expense of providing security for the regime’s supporters.

The second observation is that it is critical to employ craft suited to the theater and mariners with local knowledge. The *Fowey* ascending the James with Arnold, the two *Otters*’ repeated forays throughout the region, the raids made by the tenders, and even the

attacks by Hamond's "armored galley" on the Potomac show that they were ideally suited to the shallow waters of the region. Although only a few were ever present at one time, the little vessels of the Green Water Navy could dominate the theater. The burning of the sixty-four gun *Augusta* by Pennsylvania galleys dramatically confirmed the effectiveness of small and seemingly obsolete and ineffectual craft in appropriate circumstances.

A third lesson also emerged from the conflict in the Chesapeake. It is essential for a naval power, even one that is arguably the most powerful in the world, to have secure local bases of operation. As Commodore Collier, Admiral Graves, and Secretary Germain observed, it was impossible to conduct an effective naval campaign when the nearest base was over seven hundred nautical miles to the north. A base at Portsmouth, Norfolk, Hampton, or Yorktown would have sheltered the entire British fleet, assured them an all-weather port, and provided access to produce and naval stores, as Collier argued. Even in the age of steam, when ships are somewhat less vulnerable to the weather, it is critical to have secure facilities within a reasonable range of the action. John Montagu, Earl of Sandwich and First Lord of the Admiralty, articulated the need in a letter to Lord North on 8 December 1777. He asserted that for two years, Lord Howe had not made effective use of the ninety ships made available to him, at least in part because they were spread too thin, "convoying, embarking and disembarking the troops, and attending the operations of the army." He conceded that it would never be possible to seal the entire American coastline, because the rebels could take "advantage of their knowledge of the coast, of dark and long nights, and events of wind and weather" to evade any blockade.

However, we may certainly distress them infinitely more than has hitherto been done . . . But in order to be able to employ the naval force in America effectually to this purpose, it is absolutely necessary that the army should secure the possession of several places along the coast which hare tenable (independent of a fleet to defend them) against any force the American can bring against them. These places must be such as the King's ships can resort to at all times and seasons, and which will give them shelter and refreshments for their men; and it is necessary that one of them at least (exclusive of Halifax) should afford complete and secure conveniences for careening and refitting the ships, without which both the ships and men will soon become unfit for cruising, which it is to be feared is already the case of many of Lord Howe's squadron.²⁸⁴

As we have seen, the lack of a base rendered it impossible for the *Fowey* to conduct the blockade off the Chesapeake in August 1776. That deficiency required her to make an ocean crossing that sent many of her men to the hospital in 1777 and nearly disabled the old frigate. It drove the *Roebuck* all the way to English Harbour, Antigua for the winter. The health of the men was adversely affected by the lack of repair facilities and sources of provisions. The ships were exhausted by the extended passages required to reach duty stations. The fighting ability of the force was substantially degraded.

Finally, in order to conduct an effective asymmetric, amphibious campaign in the littoral, it is essential that the remote power preserve at least local naval (and in modern times

aerial) superiority. The theater must be isolated to allow the smaller units to operate. The First Lord might have been correct in claiming that the larger elements of the fleet were not necessary to defend the base before until France entered the war. However, once a comparable naval force threatened, the requirements changed. The arrival of de Grasse's fleet demonstrated that the theater had to be isolated to allow the smaller units to operate safely. England needed to commit greater forces to the critical theater, a decision that would have been facilitated by the presence of an all-weather base.

The largely overlooked operations in the southern Chesapeake theater during the War for American Independence hold valuable lessons for modern students of amphibious warfare. The operational careers of the eight ships of Dunmore's Green Water Navy can provide modern strategists with useful insights.



The Editors
International Journal of Naval History
editors@ijnhonline.org

© Copyright 2009, International Journal of Naval History, All Rights Reserved

¹ Entry for 20 Apr. 1775. *Magdalen* A Journal of the Proceedings of His Majesty's Schooner *Magdalen* (17 Apr. - 8 Sept. 1775) References to documents in the British National Archives, formerly the Public Record Office, are hereafter cited as "PRO," with a designation of the letter code indicating the originating agency (e.g., ADM for Admiralty or CO for Colonial Office) and the number designation of the file. This record is also reproduced in William Bell Clark, William James Morgan, and Michael J. Crawford, eds., *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, 11 (to date) vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965 - 2005), 1:204. (Hereafter cited as "NDAR," with a volume and page reference.) Note that the naval day commenced at noon, so the discussion of activity at 3 AM in the entry for 20 April refers to the morning of 21 April. The men carried fifteen half barrels of powder back to the ship and returned aboard at 6 a.m. The *Magdalen* was an American-built schooner, 48' 8" long, with a beam of 18' 8" drawing 8' 4" and displacing 90 9/94 tons. She had a complement of 30 men. David Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List: All the Ships of the Royal Navy - Built, Purchased, and Captured - 1688 - 1860* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1993), 212.

² John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia: 1775-1783* (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988; reprint, 1989), 2.

³ See, for example the Map of Rural Population 1770 Lester J. Cappon, Barbara Bartz Petchenik, and John Hamilton Long, eds., *Atlas of Early American History: The Revolutionary Era 1760 - 1790* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press for The Newberry Library and the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1976), 23. A copy of the map is reproduced as Map I-3.

⁴ According to census estimates, in 1770, Virginia had 447,000 residents. The second most populous colony was Pennsylvania with 240,100 residents.

⁵ Christopher P. White, *Chesapeake Bay, Nature of the Estuary, a Field Guide* (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1989), 8.

⁶ The “fall line” is a dividing line between the hard rock formations of the Appalachian Mountains and interior plateau and the softer sedimentary rocks of the lower coastal plain. It is an imaginary line connecting the waterfalls of the state’s rivers as they descend from the Piedmont to the Tidewater region.

⁷ Personal Letter Hamond to Hans Stanley, Governor of the Isle of Wight, 5 August 1776, *Roebuck* in Virginia, Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, ""A.S. Hamond - Hans Stanley Correspondence, 1766 - 1778", in *Hamond Naval Papers* (Charlottesville, VA: 1766-1825).

⁸ John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607 - 1789 with Supplementary Bibliography* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1985), 121-30, 81. The total exports from the thirteen colonies averaged £2.8 million per year. The Chesapeake exports averaged £1.04 million.

⁹ G. Melvin Herndon, *Financing the Revolution in Virginia: Taxes, Trade, and Tobacco* (Yorktown, VA: Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1981), 80.

¹⁰ William G. Anderson, *The Price of Liberty: The Public Debt of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1983), 4-5, 25.

¹¹ Anderson, *The Price of Liberty*. See, for example William Lee, Virginia Commercial Agent in France to Governor Thomas Jefferson, 24 Sept. 1779, in H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia*, 3 vols., vol. 1 The Letters of Patrick Henry (July 12, 1776 - June 1, 1779) (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1926), 219.

¹² Melvin Herndon observed that it was “difficult to see how the Revolution in Virginia could have been fought without tobacco to exchange for war material.” Herndon, *Financing the Revolution in Virginia*, 14.

¹³ Entry for 13 Sept. 1776, Journal of the Virginia Council of Safety, in *NDAR* 6: 808-11.

¹⁴ Governor Patrick Henry to William Lee, 13 Dec. 1777, in McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters, Vol. 1*, 215.

¹⁵ Collier Journal, 117.

¹⁶ Lord Cornwallis to Tarleton, 9 June 1781, camp at Jefferson’s, in Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (New York: Arno Press, 1968; reprint, 1968), 343. Tarleton’s *History* is hereafter cited as “Tarleton Journal” with a page reference.

¹⁷ Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775 - 1783*, trans. Bison Book Edition, 1993, Bison Book Edition ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1964).

¹⁸ The growth rate for the total population was almost 2.7 percent, while the black population grew from just 5,500 in 1700 at a compound growth rate of 4.8 percent. Both white and black populations increased at the rate of 2.38 percent between 1760 (196,300 whites, 130,900 blacks) and 1775. Peter H. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley, *Powhatan’s Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast, Indians of the Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 38. Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia*, Paperback ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, VA, 1999), xviii-xx, 5.

¹⁹ Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law 1619 - 1860*, Paperback ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 266.

²⁰ Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, On board the Ship *William*, off Norfolk, 7 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:990-92.

²¹ General William Howe to Admiral Richard Howe, 12 June 1775, Boston, in Ira D. Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (New York: Atheneum for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1972).

²² The seven ships employed in Dunmore’s campaign were HMS *Fowey*, *Kingsfisher*, *Liverpool*, *Magdalen*, *Mercury*, *Otter*, and *Roebuck*. The *Kingsfisher* is identified by several different names, including *Kings Fisher* and *Kingfisher*. The proper name, according to her official records is, however, *Kingsfisher*, which is used throughout. See, e.g., the ship’s muster, PRO ADM 36/7725, and captain’s journal, PRO ADM 51/506.

²³ For example, the *Fowey* was to blockade the bay with one tender until the return of other ships. Captain Andrew Snape Hamond to Captain George Montagu, *Roebuck* at the Capes of Virginia, 6 Aug. 1776, in *NDAR* 6: 88-9.

²⁴ Collier and Mathew captured or destroyed some 130 craft as well as critical shore installations and supplies. Collier urged establishing a permanent base in the Chesapeake. Commodore Sir George Collier and G. J. Rainier, "A Detail of Some Particular Services Performed in America During the Years 1776, 1777, 1778, & 1779 by Commodore Sir George Collier," in *National Maritime Museum* (London), 125. A

microfilm copy of the manuscript is in the Naval Historical Center, Early History Branch, Washington, D.C. The Journal is hereafter referred to as the "Collier Journal."

²⁵ Peter Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Series* (Washington, DC: M. St. Clair and Peter Force, 1837-1853), 4th Series, 1:340.

²⁶ Robert A. Rutland, ed., *The Papers of George Mason, 1725 - 1792*, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press for the Board of Regents of Gunston Hall and the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1970), 1:190-91.

²⁷ Although Jefferson says the matter passed "without opposition," it appears that Attorney General John Randolph did oppose it, although he may not have spoken out. Robert L. Scribner and William J. Van Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence 1763-1776, a Documentary Record*, 7 vols. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1975), 1:93-95.

²⁸ Percy Burdelle Caley, "Dunmore: Colonial Governor of New York and Virginia, 1770-1782" (Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh, 1939), 277-78. Among the matters not addressed was the passage of a bill to establish the fees for paying court officers, without which the courts could not open. Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 8-9.

²⁹ George Washington, Donald Dean Jackson, and Dorothy Twohig, *The Diaries of George Washington*, 6 vols., vol. 3 (1771-1775, 1780-1781) (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1976).

³⁰ Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 18.

³¹ Dunmore to Gage, Williamsburg, 11 June 1774, Caley, "Dunmore: Colonial Governor of New York and Virginia, 1770-1782", 278, n11, citing General Thomas Gage, "Thomas Gage Papers," (William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI).

³² 16 June 1774, W.W. Abbot et al., eds., *The Papers of George Washington*, 12 (through Dec. 1777) vols., *Revolutionary War Series* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1985 - 2002), 2: 154.

³³ Dunmore to Dartmouth, Williamsburg, 24 Dec. 1774, Reuben Gold Thwaites and Louise Phelps Kellogg, eds., *Documentary History of Dunmore's War, 1774* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc, 1989), 368. Caley discusses Dunmore's treatment of the Pennsylvania adventure in detail at 365-384.

³⁴ Caley, "Dunmore: Colonial Governor of New York and Virginia, 1770-1782", 402-03. A "tender" is a small naval craft, generally manned by the crew of a larger ship, which also serves as the tender's base. Tenders conducted offensive operations, performed reconnaissance, and carried messages and personnel for the ships of the Royal Navy.

³⁵ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed, Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence*, Revised, 1990 ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1976), 104.

³⁶ Sentiment was becoming more balanced "notwithstanding the Endeavours used [by the Faction] to keep up their Enthousiasm; and the Tyranny and Oppressive Acts exercised against Persons deemed Friends of Government." Gage to Lord Dartmouth, Boston 27 Jan. 1775, in NDAR, 1:73.

³⁷ The ships were the outdated *Boyne* (70 guns, but converted to a troopship in 1768), *Somerset* (64), and *Asia* (64). They also carried "over and above their compliment of Marines, as many men as can be spared." Dartmouth to Gage, 17 Oct. 1774, NDAR, 1: 159, n. 2.

³⁸ Dartmouth to Governors, 19 Oct. 1774, Force and comp, *American Archives*, 4th ser. 1:881. . Dartmouth to Governors, 14 Jan. 1775, Public Record Office, London, Colonial Office, Group 5, Class 1353, folio 110 {cited in {Scribner, 1975 #1287@3:24} See also Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 19.

³⁹ Dunmore to Dartmouth, 25 June 1775, in NDAR, 1:754-57.

⁴⁰ Caley, "Dunmore: Colonial Governor of New York and Virginia, 1770-1782", 455-56, Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 2-3.

⁴¹ *Magdalen Log*, 22 Apr. 1775. *Magdalen*. "A Journal of the Proceedings of His Majestys Schooner *Magdalen* (17 Apr. - 8 Sept. 1775)." ADM 51/3894. London: Public Record Office. (Hereafter PRO).

⁴² Petition of the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Commons of Williamsburg to Dunmore, 22 April 1775, in NDAR, 1:207. See also, Holton, *Forced Founders*, 144-46.

⁴³ Lee to Colonel Landon Carter, Chantilly, VA, 24 May 1775, in NDAR, 1:215-17.

⁴⁴ She carried a crew of 150 men. She had been launched in April 17487.

⁴⁵ Lieutenant's Log, H.M.S. *Fowey*, ADM/L/ F.202 *Fowey* Lieutenant's Log 2 January 1775 through 7 January 1776, Caird Library, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England. Entries for 25, 26, and 28 April 1775.

⁴⁶ Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 4.

⁴⁷ Peyton Randolph for the Williamsburg Corporation to Mann Page, Jr., Lewis Wallace, and Benjamin Grimes, Jr., 27 April 1775. *NDAR*, 1:234.; Dunmore also reported to his Council that he had taken the powder "to prevent the attempts of any enterprising Negroes." Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 3: 77.

⁴⁸ Dunmore to Dartmouth, 1 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:259.

⁴⁹ Dunmore Proclamation, 3 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:81. See also, Holton, *Forced Founders*, 148.

⁵⁰ Dunmore Proclamation, 3 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:81.

⁵¹ Gage to Dartmouth, Boston, 15 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:338.

⁵² *NDAR*, 1:289.

⁵³ Captain Montagu to Thomas Nelson, 4 May 1775, in Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 3: 90-91. See also, Caley, "Dunmore: Colonial Governor of New York and Virginia, 1770-1782", 479. Admiral Graves to Philip Stevens, *Preston*, Boston, 16 June 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:691.

⁵⁴ Benjamin J Hillman, ed., *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, 6 vols., vol. 6 (Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1966), 666-67, Clark, Morgan, and Crawford, eds., *NDAR*, 1: 290. The latter shows the date as 6 May 1775.

⁵⁵ Purdey's *Virginia Gazette*, 19 May 1775 (referring to the event of Monday, 15 May), in *NDAR*, 1:369. Entry for 15 May 1775, {Fowey, 1774-75 #1400}

⁵⁶ Dunmore to Dartmouth, *Fowey* in York River, 25 June 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:755.

⁵⁷ The schooner had moved from the James River into the York and anchored in Queen's Creek leading to the center of Williamsburg. "At 5 Am the Earl of Dunmore and his family came onboard, at 7 weigh'd [anchor] and came to sail at 11 anchored abreast of York Town. Saluted his Lordship on his Coming on board and Leaving with 13 Guns." Entry for 8 June 1775. {Magdalen, 1775 #1401} Entry for 8 June 1775, "got on board Lord Dunmore and his family wt their baggage &c.: being Oblidged to leave the Pallace on Account of his Live being in danger," {Fowey, 1774-75 #1400} See also, Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 1.

⁵⁸ Entry for 9 June 1775. HMS *Otter* 1775-76 Journal of His Majesty's Sloop *Otter*, Mathew Squire, Commanding, January 29, 1775 - February 28, 1776 reproduced at *NDAR*, 1:643.

⁵⁹ George Washington, writing in 1781 about the need for the French fleet to provide maritime support for the campaign against Cornwallis, similarly observed that, "in any operation, and under all circumstances, a decisive Naval superiority is to be considered as a fundamental principle, and the basis upon which every hope must ultimately depend." Washington to General Rochambeau and Commodore de Teranay, 11 July 1781, Fitzpatrick, Writings John Clement Fitzpatrick and David Maydole Matteson, eds., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, 39 vols., vol. 19 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1931), 174 update., quoted in Ernest M. Eller, "Washington's Maritime Strategy and the Campaign That Assured Independence," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, ed. Ernest McMeill Eller (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1981), 483. Washington also said that the French fleet was essential to his success, "a naval superiority being essential to every enterprise in these States." John Clement Fitzpatrick and David Maydole Matteson, eds., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1931), v.20, 39-42 update. and "there can be no decisive enterprise against the maritime establishments of the English in this country, without a constant naval superiority." Fitzpatrick and Matteson, eds., *The Writings of George Washington*, v. 20, 76-78 update., quoted in Eller, "Washington's Maritime Strategy," 483. He also observed that the lack of naval superiority had been one of his great frustrations. "the expected Naval superiority which was the pivot upon wch. every thing turned, we have been compelled to spend and inactive Campaign" in 1778. Fitzpatrick and Matteson, eds., *The Writings of George Washington*, v. 18, 507 update., quoted in Eller, "Washington's Maritime Strategy," 484.

⁶⁰ Dunmore to Graves, Williamsburg, 1 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:257-58.

⁶¹ Dunmore to Gage, Williamsburg, 1 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:258-59.

⁶² Graves to Philip Stevens, *Preston* Boston, 18 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:355-56.

⁶³ Gage to Dartmouth, Boston, 12 June 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:663-64.

⁶⁴ Gage to Dartmouth, Boston, 15 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:338.

⁶⁵ Dunmore to Dartmouth, *Fowey* in York River, Virginia, 25 June 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:756.

-
- ⁶⁶ Dartmouth to the Lords Commissioners of the British Admiralty, Whitehall, 1 July 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:1308. The other three stations were New York, Charleston, and Delaware Bay.
- ⁶⁷ Entry for 6 July 1775. {Magdalen, 1775 #1401} Graves complained of Dunmore's action and the First Lord of the Admiralty wrote to the Secretary of State requesting that he "send directions to all the Governors in those Parts, not to divert any of his Majesty's Ships." Sandwich to Dartmouth, 26 Aug. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:690.
- ⁶⁸ Entry for 21 July 1775, "Lieutenant's Log of H.M.S. *Fowey* 2 Jan. 1775 – 7 Jan. 1776," maintained by Lt. Charles Sandys, Caird Library, Greenwich, Eng. ADM/L/ F.202.
- ⁶⁹ Dixon and Hunter's *Virginia Gazette*, Saturday, 2 Sept. 1775. *NDAR*, 1:1297. Virginia Committee of Safety to Virginia Delegates in Congress, Williamsburg, 11 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:993-94.
- ⁷⁰ Gage to Dartmouth, 20 Sept. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:294, n. 4.
- ⁷¹ William Cowley to General George Washington, Rhode Island, 4 October 1775 (approx.), in *NDAR*, 2:293-94.
- ⁷² Francis Lightfoot Lee to Landon Carter, Philadelphia, 21 Oct. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:557.
- ⁷³ *NDAR*, 2:260, n. 2.
- ⁷⁴ Macartney to Paul Loyall, mayor of Norfolk, His Majesty's Ship *Mercury*, Norfolk, 12 and 15 Aug. 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:1130, 1155.
- ⁷⁵ Holt's *Virginia Gazette or the Norfolk Intelligencer*, Norfolk, 16 Aug. 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:1162.
- ⁷⁶ Squire to Holt, *Otter* Sloop, Norfolk river, 9 Sept. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:66. A copy of Squire's letter, as published is shown in Illustration II-2.
- ⁷⁷ Holt's *Virginia Gazette or the Norfolk Intelligencer*, 13 and 20 Sept. 1775. Squire had seized a "great Rascal . . . [who was] raising men to fight against the King, and did have a horse aboard the boat that carried Squire's letter to Dunmore. Squire to Dunmore, *Otter* Sloop, Hampton Road, 18 Sept. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:139-40.
- ⁷⁸ Entry for 13 Aug. 1775. {*Mercury*, 1775 - 1776 #1399}
- ⁷⁹ Entry for 3 Sept. 1775. {*Mercury*, 1775 - 1776 #1399}
- ⁸⁰ Holt's *Virginia Gazette or the Norfolk Intelligencer*, 6 Sept. 1775.
- ⁸¹ Entries for 4 Sept. 1775. {*Otter*, 1775-76 #1434; *Mercury*, 1775 - 1776 #1399}
- ⁸² Entry for 8 Sept. 1775. {*Mercury*, 1775 - 1776 #1399} Note that Macartney was not relieved and arrested because his ship had gone aground, but because, on 17 July, Dunmore had demanded that Admiral Graves relieve Macartney. Contrary to Dunmore's wishes, Macartney had dined with Virginia officials on his first night in the colony in an effort to establish a relationship. Dunmore considered him insubordinate and "utterly unfit" for command. Dunmore to Admiral Graves, On board His Majesty's Sloop the *Otter* in Virginia, 17 July 1775 in *NDAR* 1:903. Macartney was tried and acquitted by a court martial. The Admiralty appointed him to command the *Ambuscade*, a new 32-gun frigate. Lords Commissioners, Admiralty, to Captain John Macartney, 30 Jan. 1776. *NDAR*, 3:541-42. He had substantial success in the new frigate, capturing several prizes in the North Atlantic in 1777. Interestingly, Macartney's first mission in the *Ambuscade* was to transport his brother, Sir George Macartney, to Granada, where he was to be governor. See log entries reproduced in *NDAR*, 9:15, 33, 293, and 869 and 4: 920. Captain John Macartney was killed aboard his ship the *Princess Amelia* (80) in a fleet action against the Dutch off Dogger Bank on 5 August 1781. Ironically, Alexander Graeme commanded the *Preston* (50) in the same action. William Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present*, 1996 Paperback ed., 7 vols. (London: Chatham Publishing, 1897), 3: 504-09.
- ⁸³ Journal of H.M. Sloop *Otter*, 2 September 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:1296.; Dixon and Hunter's *Virginia Gazette*, 9 September 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:66.
- ⁸⁴ Holton, *Forced Founders*, 134.
- ⁸⁵ Squire to the Hampton Town Committee, *Otter*, Sloop, Norfolk river, 10 Sept. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:74.
- ⁸⁶ Hampton Town Committee to Squire, Hampton, Va., 16 Sept. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:123-25.
- ⁸⁷ Purdie's *Virginia Gazette*, 15 September 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:111.
- ⁸⁸ Caley, "Dunmore: Colonial Governor of New York and Virginia, 1770-1782", 606-07. Dunmore to Dartmouth, 22 October 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:574-75; James Gilchrist to St. George Tucker, 26 October 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:614.; Captain Samuel Leslie to Major General William Howe, 1 November 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:844-45.
- ⁸⁹ Robert L Scribner and Brent Tarter, eds., *IV. The Committee of Safety and the Balance of Forces, 1775, a Documentary Record*, 7 vols., vol. 4, *Revolutionary Virginia: The Road to Independence* (Charlottesville,

VA: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 268-68 and n.3, 74. Falmouth, Massachusetts of colonial times is today's Portland, Maine.

⁹⁰ Virginia Committee of Safety to Colonel William Woodford, 24 October 1775 in Scribner and Tarter, eds., *4 Revolutionary Virginia*, 270-71.

⁹¹ Letter to Pinkney's *Virginia Gazette*, 1 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:843.

⁹² Letter to Pinkney's *Virginia Gazette*, 26 Oct. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:613.

⁹³ Squire employed "a schooner . . . a sloop, and two tenders," in *NDAR*, 2:613. Squire to Admiral Samuel Graves, *Otter* Sloop off Norfolk, 2d Decr 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1240. Some sources have suggested that another tender was present. Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 4: 8. The *Virginia Gazette* suggested that Squire employed "a large schooner, 2 sloops, and 2 pilot boats," in *NDAR*, 2:843.

⁹⁴ John Page to Thomas Jefferson, Williamsburg, 11 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:991; Clark, Morgan, and Crawford, eds., *NDAR*, 2: 991, Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 4: 8. *Virginia Gazette*, 2 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:843.

⁹⁵ The Committee of Safety, on 30 Oct. 1775, awarded James Barron £1.15.6 for his expenses in conveying prisoners taken from the tender *Hwke* to Williamsburg. Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 4: 306. See also, Charles B. Cross, Jr., *A Navy for Virginia: A Colony's Fleet in the Revolution*, ed. Edward M. Riley, *Virginia in the Revolution* (Yorktown, VA: Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1981), 18. The other officers in the action included Captains Abraham Buford of Culpeper, George Nicholas of the 2nd Regiment, the son of the Colonial Treasurer, and George Lymé of the King and Queen County militia. Pinkney's *Virginia Gazette*, 26 Oct. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:613.

⁹⁶ Dunmore to Dartmouth, On Board the Ship Dunmore, off Norfolk, Virginia, 6 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1309-10. John Page to Thomas Jefferson, Williamsburg, 11 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:991-92.

⁹⁷ There is some disagreement as to Lt. Wright's fate. Squire acknowledges two fatal injuries, but does not mention Wright, except to accuse him of "imprudence." Squire to Admiral Samuel Graves, *Otter*, Norfolk, 2 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1240. Page says he was attended to the opposite shore by two Negroes, one of whom was shot from 400 yards. Page to Jefferson. Williamsburg, 11 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:992. A report in Pinckney's *Virginia Gazette* on 26 Oct. 1775 said Wright swam to a schooner on the opposite shore while a subsequent report said "he was not able to reach the tenders." Compare the reports reproduced at Clark, Morgan, and Crawford, eds., *NDAR*, 2: 613 with 843. Richard Henry Lee reported that he was later "found dead on the Shore." Lee to George Washington, Philadelphia, 13 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1013.

⁹⁸ Letter to Pinkney's *Virginia Gazette*, 1 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:843. For Barron's action, see William Roscow Wilson Curle to the Virginia Committee of Safety, Hampton, 3 Dec. 1775. Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5: 45. See also, descriptions of the engagement at Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 62-3. and Holton, *Forced Founders*, 134.

⁹⁹ Dunmore loaded 109 members of the 14th Regiment and 22 Norfolk volunteers into boats under cover of darkness in the morning of 14 November 1775. He proceeded up the Elizabeth River to Great Bridge, where he expected to find the North Carolinians. Finding none, Dunmore ordered the establishment of a defensive perimeter. He then set off overland in pursuit of the reported rebel force. He caught them at Kemp's Landing. The Princess Anne militia, commanded by Colonel Joseph Hutchings and Colonel Anthony Lawson attempted to set an ambush along the road down which the British would march. At first contact, Dunmore sent his elite grenadiers under Captain Charles Fordyce to probe for the rebel flanks and Captain Samuel Leslie to advance on the center. The inexperienced militia fired their muskets at long range and fled. Dunmore to Dartmouth, December 6, 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1310. Woody Holton has suggested that the force was "largely made up of escaped slaves," but Dunmore made no explicit mention of Negroes in his report, as he often did when they were present. Dunmore specifically said that Negroes were used to garrison the fort that was then created at Great Bridge following the engagement. See Holton, *Forced Founders*, 155. See also the account of the battle in Purdie's *Virginia Gazette* of November 17, 1775 which stated that "lord Dunmore has taken into his service the very *scum* of the country," an almost certain reference to runaway slaves. That would indicate that Dunmore did, in fact, employ Negro troops although he did not mention them. *NDAR*, 2:1062.

¹⁰⁰ Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, IV:10. Purdie's *Virginia Gazette*, 10 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:973. W. Griffin to George Gefferina, *Kingsfisher*, James Town, Virginia, 14 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1025.

¹⁰¹ Dunmore to Dartmouth, 6 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1309-11;; Purdie's *Virginia Gazette*, Friday, 17 November 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1062; and Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 64.

¹⁰² Francis Berkeley, *Dunmore's Proclamation of Emancipation with an Invitation to the McGregor Library and an Account by Francis Berkeley of the Publication of the Proclamation*. (Charlottesville, VA: The Tracy W. McGregor Library, University of Virginia, 1941), Clark, Morgan, and Crawford, eds., *NDAR*, 2: 920-22. *NDAR*, 2:920-22.

¹⁰³ Helen Calvert Maxwell Read and Charles Brinson Cross, *Memoirs of Helen Calvert Maxwell Read* (Chesapeake, VA: Norfolk County Historical Society of Chesapeake Virginia, 1970), 54-56.

¹⁰⁴ Woodford to Edmund Pendleton, 10 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:39-40. Major Marshall was the father of the future Chief Justice, John Marshall, who was also engaged at Great Bridge. There is a debate about whether the servant actually deserted or was sent to mislead the governor.

¹⁰⁵ A Midshipman on Board H.M. Sloop Otter, printed in *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle* of 4-6 Mar. 1776, 9 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:29.

¹⁰⁶ Dunmore to Dartmouth, December 13, 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:141.

¹⁰⁷ *Otter* Midshipman, 9 December 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:29. Colonel Woodford reported burying thirteen and capturing sixteen British soldiers. No mention is made in either account of the black casualties. Woodford to Edmund Pendleton, 10 December 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:40-41. Caley, "Dunmore: Colonial Governor of New York and Virginia, 1770-1782", 702-03.

¹⁰⁸ Woodford to Edmund Pendleton, Great Bridge, 10 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:40.

¹⁰⁹ Woodford to Pendleton (two reports), December 10, 1775, in 3:39-41.

¹¹⁰ Woodford to Pendleton (2nd report), 10 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:40-41.

¹¹¹ Woodford to Pendleton (1st report), December 10, in 1775, *NDAR*, 3:40.

¹¹² Dunmore to Dartmouth, On Board the Ship *Dunmore* off Norfolk, Virginia, 6 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1311.

¹¹³ Chester G. Hearn, *George Washington's Schooners: The First American Navy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 104. As if to underscore the interconnected nature of the war, the *Fowey*, which had played a central role in Dunmore's escape, had been the first ship of the Royal Navy to capture one of Washington's raiders. Captain Montagu had taken the armed brig *Washington* on 5 December off Cape Ann, Massachusetts, after an all-night chase through a snow squall. Entry for 5 Dec. 1775. *Fowey*1775-77A Journal of the Proceedings on Board His Majesty's Ship *Fowey* under My Command Commencing the 1st of May 1775 to 31 Jan. 1777, Hearn, *George Washington's Schooners: The First American Navy*, 71.

¹¹⁴ Washington to Richard Henry Lee, 26 December 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:253.

¹¹⁵ 23 Dec. 1775. *Dixon and Hunter's Virginia Gazette*, and Pinkney's *Virginia Gazette*, in *NDAR* 3: 219-220.

¹¹⁶ Bellew to Howe, 24 Dec. 1775, Liverpool off Norfolk. PRO CO 5/1353, reproduced in *NDAR*, 3:228.

¹¹⁷ Bellew to Howe, *Liverpool*, off Norfolk, 30 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:310; Howe to Bellew, 24 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR* 3: 228. Howe to Edmund Pendleton, Esq. President of the General Convention, 25 Dec. 1775. Norfolk, in *NDAR*, 3:244

¹¹⁸ Howe to Bellew, Norfolk, 30 Dec. 1775, in *NDAR*, 3:310.

¹¹⁹ Letter from an unidentified Midshipman on board the *Liverpool*, off Norfolk, 4 Jan. 1776, in *NDAR*, 3:621.

¹²⁰ Dunmore to Dartmouth and letter of *Liverpool* Midshipman, 4 Jan. 1776, in *NDAR*, 3:618-21.

¹²¹ Norfolk had a population of six thousand in 1775. The cities with larger populations were Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Charleston, Newport, Quebec, and Baltimore, which had about 700 more inhabitants. Montreal was approximately the same size. Cappon, Petchenik, and Long, eds., *Atlas of Early American History*, 97-98.

¹²² Over the three days following the initial bombardment, rebel troops ran amok and burned Norfolk, extracting vengeance on the loyalist enclave. According to the report of an investigatory commission appointed by the Virginia Convention, "1,331 structures, with a total value of £176,426 1s. 10d [were burned]. Of these 32 had been destroyed by Dunmore's orders prior to the British and Tory evacuation, and 19 had been burned on the day of bombardment. The total fired by the Virginia and North Carolina troops was 863 – 70.2% of the buildings destroyed. The loss in real property totaled £114,371 2s. and the loss of personal property £9,570 5s. 11 ¼ d. more." Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5: 17.

¹²³ *NDAR*, 3:645.

¹²⁴ Colonel Robert Howe to Edmund Pendleton, president of the Virginia Convention, Norfolk, 3 Jan. 1776, in *NDAR*, 3:592.

¹²⁵ Over the three days following the initial bombardment, rebel troops ran amok and burned Norfolk, extracting vengeance on the loyalist enclave. According to the report of an investigatory commission appointed by the Virginia Convention, “1,331 structures, with a total value of £176,426 1s. 10d [were burned]. Of these 32 had been destroyed by Dunmore’s orders prior to the British and tory evacuation, and 19 had been burned on the day of bombardment. The total fired by the Virginia and North Carolina troops was 863 – 70.2% of the buildings destroyed. The loss in real property totaled £114,371 2s. and the loss of personal property £9,570 5s. 11 ¼ d. more.” Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5: 17. “Report of Commissioners appointed by an Act of the General Assembly to inquire into and ascertain the losses sustained by the late inhabitants of the Borough of Norfolk,” 10 Oct. 1777. *Journal of the House of Delegates*. See also, Alf J. Mapp, Jr., “The “Pirate” Peer: Lord Dunmore’s Operations in the Chesapeake Bay,” in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, ed. Ernest McNeill Eller (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1981), 88-89. If the numbers in the report are correct, 436, not 416, were burned on orders of the committee and other causes.

¹²⁶ Colonel Patrick Henry to Edmond Pendleton, President of the Fourth Virginia Convention. 19 Dec. 1775, Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5: 191-92.

¹²⁷ Colonel Patrick Henry to President Edmund Pendleton, 23 Dec. 1775, in Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5: 227.

¹²⁸ Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 3: 89-90. The Fairfax County Committee of Safety consisted of John Dalton, Wm. Ramsay, John Muir, John Carlyle, James Kirk, George. Gilpin, and Richard Conway.

¹²⁹ Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5: 138.

¹³⁰ *Journal of the Fourth Virginia Convention*, Thursday, 21 December 1775, in Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5: 208.

¹³¹ Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 5: 248, 377-80, n.8. The bill was debated on 23, 26, 27, 29, and 30 December 1775 and again on 1 January 1776, but the committee still did not agree on a final form and continued the debate on nine separate days until the committee completed its work on Saturday, 6 January, 1776 and reported on the bill on Tuesday, 9 January. It was read a second time and the vote deferred to Wednesday, 10 January 1776, when it was read a third time.

¹³² Scribner and Schreeven, eds., *Revolutionary Virginia*, 3: 378-9, n.8.

¹³³ Potomac: Safeguard and Protector; Rappahannock: Page and Hero; York: Norfolk Revenge and Henry James: Hero and Manley; Eastern Shore: Accomac and Diligence; and Ocracoke: Washington and Caswell.

¹³⁴ A table listing the vessels that served is attached as Appendix A.

¹³⁵ The distinction among the types of rigs is largely technical and was subject to change. Ships had three masts and a bow-sprit, with sails set on square-rigged spars, while brigs had only two square-rigged masts. On a brigantine, the after mast carried a large gaff-rigged fore-and-aft sail. A schooner had two masts, but the sails were rigged fore-and-aft by attaching them to the mast, rather than to a spar mounted across the mast. The term “sloop” was more ambiguous, but generally referred to a vessel with one mast having sails rigged fore-and-aft. The “boats” could have been of any rig, but were probably small schooners.

¹³⁶ A regiment in the Virginia Line, or the Continental Army, nominally consisted of ten companies of sixty-eight men each. E.M. Sanchez-Saavedra, *A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations in the American Revolution* (Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1978), 3.

¹³⁷ There is no comprehensive roster of the men who served in the Virginia Navy and few detailed musters for individual ships. It is possible to compile an extensive list based on the Virginia Navy Papers and the pension and bounty claim records. Robert Armistead Stewart made the first effort to compile such a list in 1933. Robert Armistead Stewart, *The History of Virginia's Navy of the Revolution* (Richmond, Va: Mitchell & Hotchkiss, 1933), 140-271. Subsequent to Stewart’s work, the War and Navy Departments transferred pension files previously under their custody to the National Archives. Howard H. Wehmann and National Archives and Record Service, “Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant Application Files, Pamphlet Describing M804,” (Washington, DC: General Services Administration, 1974), 10. Those files have now been microfilmed and indexed, greatly facilitating access to the necessary records. In addition, historians have prepared indices of Virginia pension claims and tax records, allowing validation by comparison with Virginia Navy records. See, e.g., Gaius M. Brumbaugh, *Revolutionary War Records*, Reprint ed., vol. 1, Virginia (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing, co, 1936; reprint, 1967 (reproduced in Family Archives CD #121 (Military Records: Virginia in the Revolution and War of 1812, 2000))) and Netti Schreiner-Yantis and Florene Speakman Love, *The 1787 Census of Virginia: An Accounting of the*

Name of Every White Male Tithable over 21 Years; the Number of White Males between 16 & 21 Years; the Number of Slaves over 16 & Those under 16 Years, Together with a Listing of Their Horses, Cattle & Carriages; and Also the Names of All Persons to Whom Ordinary Licenses and Physician's Licenses Were Issued, 3 vols. (Springfield, Va.: Genealogical Books in Print, 1987). It is now possible to include men that Stewart had omitted and to eliminate others who may have been erroneously included.

¹³⁸ The composition of the Virginia Navy is addressed in detail in Chapter IX, below.

¹³⁹ Entry for 10 Feb. 1776. Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, ""Narrative Account of Activity in the Revolutionary War, 1775 - 1777" and "Heads of the Life of Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, Bart."" in *Hamond Naval Papers* (Charlottesville, VA: 1766-1825). Hamond's Narrative Account is hereafter referred to as *Hamond Narrative*, with a date and, where available, page reference.

¹⁴⁰ Entry for 27 Feb. 1776. *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁴¹ Entry for 12 Feb. 1776. *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁴² Extract of a letter to a gentleman in Scotland, Norfolk, Virginia, 17 Feb. 1776, in *NDAR*, 3:1341. See also, Mapp, "Pirate Peer," 90.

¹⁴³ Entries for 27 Feb. – 15 Mar. 1776, *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁴⁴ Entry for 26 Feb. 1776, Andrew Snape Sir Hamond, William Hugh Moomaw, and ed, eds., *The Autobiography of Captain Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, bart., R.N., 1738-1828, Covering the Years 1738-1793* (Charlottesville, Va.: 1953).

¹⁴⁵ Narrative of the Alarm over the Sloop Otter, transmitted by the Maryland Council of Safety to the Virginia Committee of Safety, 13 Mar. 1776, in *NDAR*, 4:326-27. Smith and Earle, "The Maryland State Navy," 216-23. Joseph Smith to Elnathan Smith, Baltimore, Maryland, 20 Mar. 1776, in *NDAR*, 4:422-24. Log entries for HMS *Otter*, 4-17 Mar. 1776, in *NDAR*, 4:271-72 and 425-26. The crewmen who died on the cruise were seamen Peter Theorson (6 Mar.), John Resterich (15 Mar.), and Jno Hunkhop (17 Mar.), and drummer Richard Jackson (9 Mar.).

¹⁴⁶ Continental Naval Committee to Commodore Esek Hopkins, 5 Jan. 1776, in *NDAR*, 3:637-38.

¹⁴⁷ Continental Naval Committee to Hopkins, 5 Jan. 1776, in *NDAR*, 3:638.

¹⁴⁸ Narrative of Sir Henry Clinton, 17 to 27 Feb. 1776, in *NDAR* 4: 102.

¹⁴⁹ Entry for 20 Mar. 1776, *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁵⁰ Entry for 16 May 1776, *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁵¹ Entry for 19 May 1776, *Hamond Narrative*. See also, Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 58.

¹⁵² Entry for 25 May 1776, *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁵³ Entry for 22 May 1776, *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁵⁴ Entries for 27 May – 10 June 1776, *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁵⁵ Hamond to Parker, *Roebuck* at "Gwins Island in Virginia," 10 June 1776, in *NDAR*, 5:460.

¹⁵⁶ Entry for 10-24 June 1776, Hamond, "Narrative." See discussion at Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 58-61.

¹⁵⁷ Entry for 11 July 1776, Trevett's Journal, in *NDAR*, 5:473.

¹⁵⁸ Trevett's Journal, in *NDAR*, 5:688 n. 1. Gwynn's Island, at the mouth of the Piankatank River and just below the Potomac River, was actually about thirty miles to the north.

¹⁵⁹ Trevett's Journal, in *NDAR*, 5:688 n.1.

¹⁶⁰ Lord Dunmore to General Thomas Gage, Williamsburg, 1 May 1775, in *NDAR*, 1:258-59.

¹⁶¹ Entry for 8 July 1776, *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁶² Entries for 1-8 July 1776, *Fowey*, Master's Log, PRO/ADM 52/1749. and quoting from entries for 10 June-9 July, *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁶³ 24 May 1776, Proceedings of Maryland Convention, in *NDAR*, 5:235-36. Hamond to Commodore Sir Peter Parker, *Roebuck* at Gwins Island in Virginia, 10 June 1776, in *NDAR*, 5: 461.

¹⁶⁴ Montagu to Eden, *Fowey* off Annapolis, 23 June 1776, in *NDAR*, 5:698-99.

¹⁶⁵ Entry for 23 June 1776, *Fowey* A Log for His Majesty's Ship *Fowey*, by James Kellie Master, PRO/ADM 25/1749.

¹⁶⁶ The additional artillery included two 12-pounders, five 9-pounders, three 6-pounders, two field guns. Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 125-6; Harold B. Gill, Jr., *Dohicky's Folly . . . and Dunmore's Last Stand* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1993).

¹⁶⁷ Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 125. Quoting from entry for 9 July 1776, *Hamond Narrative*. Brigadier General Andrew Lewis to Richard Henry Lee, Williamsburg, 15 July 1776, in *NDAR*, 5:1084-95.

¹⁶⁸ Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 59-60; Selby, *Revolution in Virginia*, 126. *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁶⁹ Entry for 9-11 July. *Hamond Narrative*. With respect to the cables and anchors, see, John Page, Lieutenant Governor, to Thomas Jefferson, Williamsburg, 15 July 1776, in H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia*, 3 vols., vol. 1 The Letters of Patrick Henry (July 12, 1776 - June 1, 1779) (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1926), 1: 7.

¹⁷⁰ Purdie's *Virginia Gazette*, Friday, 19 July 1776, in *NDAR*, 5:1147-50.

¹⁷¹ Ernest M. Eller, "Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, ed. Ernest McNeill Eller (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1981), 23.

¹⁷² Entries for 20 July 1776, *Roebuck* Master's Log (James Holroyd). *Hamond Narrative*.

¹⁷³ Entry for 20 July 1776, *Hamond Narrative*. also reproduced at *NDAR*, 6:172.

¹⁷⁴ Entry for 22 July 1776, *Roebuck*, Master's Log, in *NDAR*, 5:1194.

¹⁷⁵ Entry for 2 Aug. 1776, *Roebuck*, Master's Log, in *NDAR*, 6:66.

¹⁷⁶ Entry for 4 Aug 1776, *Fowey* Captain's Log (1775-1777), Adm 51/375

¹⁷⁷ Entry for 5 Aug. 1776, *Fowey* Captain's Log (1775-1777), Adm 51/375 The *Fowey* and her charges anchored just four miles outside Cape Henry that night, which may be why Hamond says she sailed on the sixth. Entry for 6 Aug. 1776, *Hamond Narrative*. reprinted at *NDAR*, 6:173.

¹⁷⁸ Entry for 7 Aug. 1776, *Roebuck*, Master's Log, in *NDAR*, 6:107-08. Quoting from entry for 5 Aug. 1776 [sic 7 Aug. 1776, based on the ships' logs] *Hamond Narrative*. reprinted at *NDAR*, 6:174.

¹⁷⁹ Lord Dunmore to Lord George Germain, Ship Dunmore in Potowmack River, Virginia, 31 July 1776, in *NDAR*, 5:1312.

¹⁸⁰ Entry for 6 Aug. 1776, *Hamond Narrative*. also reproduced at *NDAR*, 6:174.

¹⁸¹ Hamond to Hans Stanley, *Roebuck* in Virginia, 5 Aug. 1776. Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, "A.S. Hamond - Hans Stanley Correspondence, 1766 - 1778," in *Hamond Naval Papers* (Charlottesville, VA: 1766-1825). and reproduced at *NDAR*, 6:68.

¹⁸² The governor's fleet included, from time to time, the *Roebuck* (44), *Liverpool* (28), *Fowey* (24), *Mercury* (20), *Otter* (14), and *King's Fisher* (14) in addition to the *William*, the *Dunmore*, and their tenders.

¹⁸³ They prevented Woodford's troops from reaching Kemp's Landing in time for the battle. They forced the navy's trading ship *Adventure* to lie up in the Wicomico River, instead of proceeding to sea for much needed supplies. They forced consideration of the re-routing of all trade through Ocracoke Inlet. For the shortage of salt, see Fairfax County Committee of Safety to John Hancock, 23 Nov. 1775, in Robert A. Rutland, ed., *The Papers of George Mason, 1725 - 1792*, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press for the Board of Regents of Gunston Hall and the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1970), 1:257. See also, Richard Henry Lee to Henry Tucker, Philadelphia, 24 Nov. 1775, in *NDAR*, 2:1119. "I am very apprehensive of a great Scarcity of Beef & Pork among our Troops this Summer." George Mason to George Washington, Gunston-Hall, Virginia, 2 Apr. 1776, in Rutland, ed., *The Papers of George Mason, 1725 - 1792*, 1:267.

¹⁸⁴ Entries for 16 Mar. - 16 May 1776. *Hamond Narrative*. W. Hugh Moomaw, "Autobiography of Captain Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, Bart. R.N., 1738--1828, covering the years 1738-1793" (Masters Thesis, University of Virginia, 1953), 61-65.

¹⁸⁵ John W. Jackson, *The Pennsylvania Navy 1775 - 1781: Defense of the Delaware* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974), 39.

¹⁸⁶ Entries for 5-15 May 1776. *Hamond Narrative*. Hamond's autobiography says that the *Roebuck* had five killed and fifteen wounded in the battle with the galleys on 8 May. Hamond and Moomaw, *Autobiography*, 64. The ship's muster, however, concurs with Hamond's Journal. Only John Murray died in the Delaware, "slain in act" fitting the rebels" on 9 May 1776. *Roebuck* Ship's Muster, PRO ADM 36/8638. See also, Hamond to Hans Stanley, 5 Aug. 1776, *Roebuck* in Virginia, in *NDAR*, 6:66-69.

¹⁸⁷ The ship's first lieutenant, a midshipman and two seamen were killed in the action and four men were wounded. Entries for 22 Aug. - 9 Oct. 1776. *Hamond Narrative*. *Roebuck* Master's Log, PRO ADM 52/1965. See also, David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in American Waters, 1775-1783* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1989), 52-53.

¹⁸⁸ Entry for "1776 Decr," Delaware Bay. Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, "Narrative Account of Activity in the Revolutionary War, 1775 - 1777 and Heads of the Life of Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, Bart.," in *Hamond Naval Papers*, Alderman Library, University of Virginia (Charlottesville, VA: 1766-1825) (hereafter cited as *Hamond Narrative*, with a date and, where available, page reference), also reproduced at *NDAR*, 7:666.

¹⁸⁹ Entry for July [1777]. *Hamond Narrative*, also reproduced in *NDAR*, 9:363.

¹⁹⁰ Entry for 6 Aug. 1776. *Hamond Narrative*, also reproduced at *NDAR*, 6:174. The *Fowey* had sailed from England on 12 May 1772 and was last cleaned in a yard overhaul in August 1773. *Fowey*, A Journal of the Proceedings on board his Majesty's ship *Fowey* under my Command Commencing the 1st of May 1775 to 31 Jan. 1777, 1775-77 Public Record Office, ADM 51/375. London. Documents from the collection of the Public Record Office are hereafter cited as PRO with the group (ADM for Admiralty and CO for Colonial Office) and file designation.

¹⁹¹ Entry for 7 Sept 1776. *Fowey*, Captain's Log (1775-1777), PRO ADM 51/375. Hamond was "much concerned at the Shortness of" *Fowey's* water, but hoped his tender would be able to help replenish her stores and water. Hamond to Captain George Montagu, *Roebuck* at the Capes of Virginia, 6 Aug. 1776, in *NDAR*, 6:89.

¹⁹² Entries for 4 Aug. – 15 Sept. 1776. *Fowey* Captain's Log, PRO ADM 51/375.

¹⁹³ Between the time the *Fowey* was recommissioned on 18 May 1777 and the time she sailed for America, 195 men had been assigned to her. Of those men, 41 were transferred to other duties and 15 deserted before she sailed. There were 139 men in the ship's company when she sailed from England. *Fowey* Muster Table, PRO ADM 36/9502.

¹⁹⁴ Survey report, Richard Dick, Provo Wallis, and Richard Wells to Commodore Hotham, 4 Jan. 1778, New York. PRO ADM 1/488, 152.

¹⁹⁵ The traditional Royal Navy drinking song "Farewell Spanish Ladies" describes the passage up the English Channel from Ushant to the Downs. It includes the refrain "from Ushant [off Brest] to Scilly is thirty-five leagues" (105 nautical miles). The Royal Navy's bases at Plymouth, Portsmouth and the Thames were relatively close to the blockade stations. From the Virginia Capes to Halifax is over 740 nautical miles. From Brest to Plymouth is roughly 120 nautical miles, roughly 1/5 as far.

¹⁹⁶ The following table sets forth the approximate numbers of ships deployed in North America on certain dates from the outbreak of the war until the seaborne attack on Philadelphia.

Dates	North American Station	Cruising on Blockade
1 Jan. 1775	24	
30 June 1775	29	15
1 Dec. 1775	50	11
13 Aug. 1776	69	14 (exc. at NY)
18 Sept. 1776	70	14 (exc. at NY)
15 Jan. 1777	70	31
5 June 1777	81	31
28 Aug. 1777	84	32

Sources: Disposition reports contained in PRO Adm. 1/487 and 1/488 for the North American Station; Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*, 203, 64, and 92; David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in American Waters, 1775-1783* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1989), 60.

¹⁹⁷ Howe to Hotham, *Eagle* off New York, 23 Dec. 1776. For orders for "securing the Passage of the Delaware until the Navigation is rendered impracticable," see, *NDAR*, 7:573. Howe to Philip Stevens, 12 Dec. 1776, in *NDAR*, 7:461. Hamond left the Delaware on 10 January 1777 and arrived at Antigua on the twenty-seventh. Andrew Snape Sir Hamond and William Hugh Moomaw, (ed.), "The Autobiography of Captain Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, bart., R.N., 1738-1828, Covering the Years 1738-1793," (Charlottesville, Va.: 1953), reprinted at *NDAR*, 7:1048.

¹⁹⁸ The following table sets forth the number of ships dedicated to blockading the Chesapeake Bay from time to time during the year following Dunmore's withdrawal.

Date	Number of Ships	Ships

1776/0 8/07	1	<i>Fowey</i>
1776/0 9/07	0	
1777/0 1/12	4	<i>Phoenix; Preston, Brune</i> offshore anchored 1777/01/19; <i>Daphne</i> sent from New York.
1777/0 2/12	5	<i>Emerald</i> at Cape Charles (took <i>Two Friends</i> , next day took schooner <i>Phoenix</i> at Lynn Haven Bay (took <i>Two Friends, Betsey, Hope</i>)
1777/0 2/18	2	<i>Preston, Daphne & Brune</i> left, leaving <i>Phoenix & Emerald</i> (sailing in company 41 leagues off on 27 Feb. 1777)
1777/0 2/27	0	<i>Phoenix & Emerald</i> were cruising far offshore.
1777/0 3/25	6	<i>Phoenix</i> [and <i>Emerald</i> ?] with <i>Roebuck, Perseus, Camilla, & Pearl</i> ordered to Chesapeake. <i>Daphne, Thames, and Preston</i> ordered to Delaware.
1777/0 4/17	5	<i>Phoenix, Roebuck, Perseus, Camilla, & Pearl</i> ordered to Bay 8ndar361 (no mention of <i>Emerald</i>) <i>Thames</i> was also present (e.g., 27 April, when she took the Virginia brig <i>Raleigh</i> .)
Invasi on		There were many ships of all kinds throughout the Chesapeake Bay during the attack on Philadelphia.
1777/0 9/22	5	<i>Phoenix, Emerald, Solebay, Otter, and Senegal</i> were ordered to stay and close the Chesapeake by Admiral Howe.

Sources: Disposition reports contained in PRO ADM 1/487 and 1/488 for North America and logs of the respective ships retained at PRO ADM 51.

¹⁹⁹ List of Vessels seized as Prizes, and of Recaptures made, by the American Squadron, between the 1st of January, 1777, and the 22d of May following, according to the Returns received by the Vice Admiral, the Viscount Howe, in *NDAR*, 8:1053-63.

²⁰⁰ For example, the armed brigantine *Musquetto* (12) captured the British merchant ship *Nobel* and had her sold in Guadeloupe as a prize. The unfortunate Virginia cruiser was quarantined because of small pox aboard the prize. When she was finally able to sail, she encountered HMS *Ariadne* (20) and was captured after a twenty-four hour chase. Forty nine men from the crew were sent to Forton Gaol near Gosport in England. Many tried to escape. All the officers, except the boatswain, John Smith, made good their escapes. Walter Drew McCaw, "Captain John Harris of the Virginia Navy: A Prisoner of War in England, 1777 - 1779," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 22 (1914): 162-63. At least two, George Chamberlayne and Byrd Chamberlayne (no relation) returned to command other Virginia Navy ships. Entry for 25 June 1778, Navy Board of Virginia, "Virginia Navy Board Journal, 23 July 1776 - 27 February 1779," in *Virginia Navy Papers file of the State Government Records Collection, also on Microfilm, Reels Misc. 301 and 302* (Richmond, Va: 1776 - 1779)..

²⁰¹ Entries for 11 Nov. 1775 – 9 May 1776. *Magdalen* Captain's Log, PRO ADM 51/3894.

²⁰² Entries in *Magdalen* Captain's Log, 51/3894. Unlike most of the other ships in Dunmore's service, the *Magdalen* generally had a full complement of seamen. Between February 1775 and the time of her sale, eighty-one men served aboard. Twenty deserted the ship, ten while she was in Canadian waters and only three in Virginia. Men most frequently left the ship by being transferred to other vessels. Ten of the men who served aboard joined the ship in America or had been American residents. Only one man died during the commission. He drowned when the ship was in the St. Lawrence River in September 1776. *Magdalen* Muster, PRO ADM 36/8478.

²⁰³ Entries for June 1 – 24 Dec. 1777. *Mercury* Captain's Log, PRO ADM 51/600. Captain James Montagu to Commodore William Hotham, 25 Dec. 1777, *Fowey* off Blomandol Hudson's River. PRO ADM 1/488, also reproduced in *NDAR*, 10:806-07. Interestingly, the crew was rescued by HMS *Fowey*, then commanded by Henry Colins.

²⁰⁴ Entries for 24 July – 6 Dec. 1777. *Liverpool* Captain's Log, PRO ADM 51/548, Folio 7.

²⁰⁵ Entries for 11-17 Feb. and 1 May 1778. *Liverpool* Captain's Log, PRO ADM 51/548, Folio 7. A ship's officers were automatically court-martialled when a ship was lost. There was not necessarily any implication of misconduct in the initiation of the proceeding.

²⁰⁶ Entries for 3 Feb. 1777 – 30 July 1778, quoting from 29-30 July 1778. *Kingsfisher* Captain's Logs, PRO ADM 51/506 and 51/507.

-
- ²⁰⁷ Court martial record, 19 Nov. 1778. PRO ADM 1/5310, 463-64. See also, Admiral James Gambier to Phillip Stevens, 15 Nov. 1778, *Ardent* off New York. PRO ADM 1/489, 118.
- ²⁰⁸ Germain to Clinton, 8 Mar. 1778. Colonial Office file no. 5/95, Public Record Office, London, Eng. References to documents in the British National Archives, formerly the Public Record Office, are hereafter cited as "PRO," with a designation indicating the originating agency (e.g., ADM for Admiralty or CO for Colonial Office) and the number designation of the file. This document is reproduced in K. G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783; (Colonial Office series)* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), 15:57-62. Piers Mackesy, *The War for America, 1775 - 1783*, trans. Bison Book Edition, 1993, Bison Book Edition ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), 154-56.
- ²⁰⁹ Lyon, *Sailing Navy List*, 96 and 224. Admiral Gambier's disposition report for 14 Oct. 1778 lists only the original *Otter*, commanded by Mathew Squire at St. Augustine. PRO ADM 1/489, 51-52. Gambier reported the loss of the *Otter* on 15 Nov. 1778. Gambier to Phillip Stevens, 15 Nov. 1778. PRO ADM 1/489, 118. Gambier's disposition report for 3 April 1779 lists the "armed ship" *Otter*, fitting for sea at New York. PRO ADM 1/489, 274. He indicates that she had a complement of 125 men, but no indication of armament at this time. Admiral Arbuthnot's disposition report of 30 August 1779, list Creyk's *Otter* as having a complement of 125 men and mounting 16 guns. PRO ADM 1/486, 213.
- ²¹⁰ Lord Howe to Philip Stevens, *Eagle*, Elk River, Maryland, 28 Aug. 1777, in *NDAR*, 9:835. A noted British naval historian puts the number at "about 280" ships. William Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present*, 1996 Paperback ed., 7 vols. (London: Chatham Publishing, 1897), 3: 390. See also, Howe's disposition plan, 28 Aug. 1777, in *NDAR*, 9:838-43.
- ²¹¹ Admiral Howe to Philip Stevens, *Eagle*, Elk River, 28 Aug. 1777, in *NDAR*, 9:835.
- ²¹² Howe to Stevens, *Eagle*, Elk River, 28 Aug. 1777, in *NDAR*, 9:835. See also, J.A. Robinson, "British Invade the Chesapeake, 1777," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, ed. Ernest McMeill Eller (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1981), 366.
- ²¹³ Hamond to Captain Anthony J.P. Molloy, 2 Sept. 1777, Hamond Papers, *Roebuck* Order Book.
- ²¹⁴ Entries for 10 Sept. – 23 Nov. 1777, *Roebuck* Captain's Log, PRO ADM 51/4311. See also, Hamond and Moomaw, *Autobiography*, 78; Syrett, *Royal Navy in American Waters*, 80-85.
- ²¹⁵ Entry for 14 Sept. 1777. HMS *Vigilant*. PRO ADM 51/1037, reproduced at *NDAR*, 9:928.
- ²¹⁶ Howe to Parker, *Eagle*, in the Chesapeak Bay, 22 Sept. 1777, in *NDAR*, 9:952-53.
- ²¹⁷ Henry to Governor Thomas Johnson of Maryland, Williamsburg, 10 Apr. 1778, in H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia*, 3 vols., vol. 1 The Letters of Patrick Henry (July 12, 1776 - June 1, 1779) (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1926), 1: 263.
- ²¹⁸ Henry to Benjamin Franklin, Williamsburg, 9 Mar. 1778, in McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters, Vol. 1*, 1: 251.
- ²¹⁹ Manuscript Collier and Rainier, "Collier Journal," 117-18. A microfilm copy of the manuscript is available in the Early History Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C., hereafter cited as Collier Journal.
- ²²⁰ Collier Journal, 122. Map VI-2 is a contemporary map that depicts the immediate vicinity of Fort Nelson and the Virginia Navy shipyard at Gosport.
- ²²¹ Collier Journal, 122-23.
- ²²² Collier considered the works of Fort Nelson facing the river to be of "astonishing Strength." Collier Journal, 124. Robert Fallaw and Marion West Stoer, "The Old Dominion Under Fire: The Chesapeake Invasions, 1779 - 1781," in *Chesapeake Bay in the American Revolution*, ed. Ernest McMeill Eller (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1981), 446.
- ²²³ Commodore James Barron (II), "The Schooner Liberty," *Virginia Historical Register* I, no. 2 (1848): 79.
- ²²⁴ The four privateers were named the *Dunmore* (16), *Hamond* (14), *Lord North* (12), and *Fincastle* (2). The flotilla captured two sloops, two schooners, two brigs and a French polacre. Entries for 8-13 May 1779. HMS *Otter* 1780 Captain's Log of His Majesty's Sloop *Otter* from 28 December 1778 to 31 December 1780, Richard Creyk Captain 26 Dec. 1778 - 31 Dec. 1780
- ²²⁵ Collier Journal, 132-33.
- ²²⁶ Germain to Sir Henry Clinton, 27 Sept. 1779, London, PRO CO 5/263.
- ²²⁷ Collier Journal, 136.
- ²²⁸ Collier Journal, 125-27.
- ²²⁹ Entries for 31 May – 21 Oct. 1778. *Fowey* Master's Log. PRO ADM 52/1748.
- ²³⁰ Entries for 27 Nov. – 29 Dec. 1778. *Fowey* Master's Log. PRO ADM 52/1748.

²³¹ Entry for 13 Sept. 1779. *Fowey Master's Log*, PRO ADM 52/1748.

²³² Entries for 1 – 22 Dec. 1778, *Roebuck Captain's Log*, PRO ADM 51/4311. See also Hamond and Moomaw, *Autobiography*, 95. While in England, Hamond testified before parliament “on the subject of the Conduct of General Sir William Howe, KB, and the Viscount Howe in the Prosecution of the War against the Americans, during the time those Officers Commanded in Chief.” This was a political dispute, in which the opposition took the part of the Howe brothers and sought to “throw the whole blame of want of Success in the War, entirely on the shoulders of Government.” Hamond testified for four hours and, like Lord Cornwallis and the other two witnesses called by the officers, defended their conduct. Hamond and Moomaw, *Autobiography*, 98-99. The proceeding terminated without a finding when the Parliament was prorogued on 3 July 1779. Ira D. Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (New York: Atheneum for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1972), 349. The incident was the subject of ongoing vitriol in a war of pamphlets that continued for years. See the list of selected pamphlets in Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*, 366-70. See also, Hamond and Moomaw, *Autobiography*, 99, n. 321.

²³³ See, *Roebuck Captain's Log*, PRO ADM 51/796.

²³⁴ Entries for 25-26 Dec. 1779 and 8-10 Apr. 1780, *Roebuck Captain's Log*, PRO ADM 51/796.

²³⁵ Admiral Mariott Arbuthnot to Phillip Stevens, 14 May 1780, in Tarleton Journal, 48-52. See also, John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780 - 1782* (Birmingham, ALA: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 64.

²³⁶ Entry for 28 June 1780, *Roebuck Captain's Log*, PRO ADM 51/796. Although they are not identified, it is likely that they were four of the five ships operated by the Goodrich family, which had been forced to relocate from Virginia to New York. Four Goodrich privateers had served with HMS *Otter* in May 1779, when she conducted a raid in the bay. The four privateers were named the *Dunmore* (16), *Hamond* (14), *Lord North* (12), and *Fincastle* (2). The flotilla captured two sloops, two schooners, two brigs and a French polacre. Entries for 8-13 May 1779. *Otter Captain's Log*, PRO ADM 51/664.

²³⁷ The squadron included at least *Roebuck*, *Blonde*, *Romulus*, and *Camilla*. Entries for 29 June through 6 July 1780. *Roebuck Captain's Log*, ADM 51/796.

²³⁸ Clinton to Leslie, 10 Oct. 1780, head quarters, New York, Tarleton Journal 199.

²³⁹ Clinton to Leslie, 10 Oct. 1780, Tarleton 199. Leslie transmitted a copy of his orders to Cornwallis in an effort to establish communications. Leslie to Cornwallis, 24 Oct. 1780, Cornwallis Papers PRO 30/11.

²⁴⁰ Entry of 17 Oct. 1780, *Otter Master's Log*, PRO ADM 52/1896.

²⁴¹ The warships were *Romulus* (44), *Blond* (32), *Delight* (14), *Otter* (14), *Halifax* (6, formerly the Virginia Navy ship *Mosquito*), *Beaumont* (14), and the galleys *Cornwallis* and *Dependence*. List, Disposition, and Condition of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels Employed under the Orders of Vice Admiral Arbuthnot, Commander in Chief in North America, 30 Sept. 1780. ADM 1/486, 440-41. See also, Orders of Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot to Gayton, ADM 1/486, cited at Fallaw and Stoer, "Old Dominion under Fire," 454.

²⁴² Jefferson advised Samuel Huntington, president of the Congress that “a 20 gun ship of Jno. Goodrichs” accompanied Gayton's squadron. Jefferson to Huntington, 3 Nov. 1780. Richmond. McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters*, Vol. 2, 228. The Goodrich family had relocated to bases in New York and Bermuda. After the war, they moved to England, having prospered through their privateering. They “participated in every major raid into Virginia before Cornwallis's campaign in 1781.” George M. Curtis, III, "The Goodrich Family and the Revolution in Virginia, 1774-1776," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 84, no. 1 (1976): 74.

²⁴³ Entry for 21 Oct. 1780. *Otter Master's Log* PRO ADM 52/1896. They first landed “about eight hundred [men] near Portsmouth, some on the bay side of Princess Anne.” Governor Thomas Jefferson to General Horatio Gates, 28 Oct. 1780, Richmond. McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters*, Vol. 2, 227.

²⁴⁴ Entries for 21 Oct. through 3 Nov. 1780. *Otter Master's Log* PRO ADM 52/1896.

²⁴⁵ Entries for 16 Oct. – 14 Dec. 1780. *Otter Master's Log* PRO ADM 52/1896; *Otter Captain's Log*, PRO ADM 51/664.

²⁴⁶ Entry for 13 Dec. 1780. *Otter Captain's Log*, PRO ADM 51/664.

²⁴⁷ Entry for 9 Oct. 1783, *Otter Captain's Log* PRO ADM 51/664.

²⁴⁸ Germain to Clinton, 3 Jan. 1781, Germain Papers, Supplemental Dispatches, William L. Clements Library, quoted at Pancake, *Destructive War*, 147.

²⁴⁹ Cornwallis to Clinton, 23 Aug. 1780 and 10 Apr. 1781, British Headquarters Papers, document no. 2976.

-
- ²⁵⁰ Cornwallis to Clinton, 10 Apr. 1781, British Headquarters Papers, document no. 3444.
- ²⁵¹ Clinton to Arnold, 14 Dec. 1780, head quarters, New York, Cornwallis Papers, PRO 30/11/4, 331-32.
- ²⁵² The Queen's Rangers, commanded by Lt. Col. John Graves Simcoe, embarked on 11 December 1780. *Simcoe Journal*, 158. Entry for 22 Dec. 1780, *Fowey Master's Log* PRO ADM 52/1748. The warships were *Charon*, *Amphrite*, *Charlestown*, *Thames*, *Medea*, *Fowey*, *Bonetta*, *Swift*, *Hope*, *Vulcan* fireship, and *Independance* armed brig. Vice Admiral Arbuthnot to Captain Thomas Symonds, 4 Dec. 1780, on board HMS *Charon*, off Staten Island, PRO CO 30/11, quoted in full at Fallaw and Stoer, "Old Dominion under Fire," 458-59.
- ²⁵³ The *Fowey* had twenty-eight ships in sight when they reached Cape Henry. Entry for 30 Dec. 1780, *Fowey Master's Log* PRO ADM 52/1748. According to Simcoe, Arnold moved immediately, without waiting for the last ships to arrive. *Simcoe Journal*, 159. The master of the *Fowey* recorded that the ship "Sent a Petty Officer & 11 men in a flat Boat to Assist Landing the Troops up James River," at 6:00 on the morning of 31 December.
- ²⁵⁴ Map VI-5 shows Arnold's route and the Virginia Navy installations at Hoods and Westham. The Virginia Navy had used the location as a storehouse for provisions and cargo since early in the war. See. E.g., Navy Board to Captain William Dean. 6 Nov. 1776 and Navy Board to Captain Eleazar Callender, 26 Nov. 1776, Richmond. Navy Board of Virginia, "Virginia Navy Board Letter Book, 15 July 1776 - 9 Oct. 1777," in *Virginia Navy Files of the State Government Records Collection, available on Microfilm, Miscellaneous Reel 302* (Richmond, VA: 1776-1777), hereafter cited as NBLB. In July 1780, Commissioner Maxwell ordered Commodore Barron to explore the possibility of establishing a "naval magazine" on the site. Entry for 22 July 1780, CNJ.
- ²⁵⁵ W. P. Palmer, "The Virginia Navy of the Revolution," *Southern Literary Messenger* XXIV, no. 1 - 3, January - March 1857 (1857): 210-11.
- ²⁵⁶ *Simcoe Journal*, 159-60. Palmer, "The Virginia Navy of the Revolution," 211. The fort was only defended by forty men who defended the position against the British ships, but abandoned it when scouts advised them of Simcoe's landing. Captain James Cocke [in command at Hoods] to George Muter [Commissioner of War], 18 Jan. 1781, Bon Accord. Boyd et al., eds., *Jefferson Papers*, 4: 395-96. Cocke had served in the *Manley* Galley and commanded the state brig *Raleigh*.
- ²⁵⁷ Governor Thomas Jefferson to Governor [North Carolina] Abner Nash, Richmond, 16 Jan. 1781, McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters, Vol. 2*, 282.
- ²⁵⁸ Jefferson to Governor [North Carolina] Abner Nash, Richmond, 16 Jan. 1781, McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters, Vol. 2*, 282. *Simcoe Journal*, 161-63.
- ²⁵⁹ *Simcoe Journal*, 171-72. The following map shows the defensive installation created by the Queen's Rangers at Great Bridge.
- ²⁶⁰ Jefferson to to Major Claiborne Continental Q M G or any person acting by authority from him [Richard Claiborne, Deputy Quartermaster for Virginia], 18 Jan. 1781. Jefferson to James Maxwell, 16 Jan. 1781. Boyd et al., eds., *Jefferson Papers*, 4: 393 and 80.
- ²⁶¹ *Simcoe Journal*, 177-78.
- ²⁶² *Simcoe Journal*, 178. General William Phillips to Sir Henry Clinton, 29 Mar. 1781, Portsmouth, Va. Cornwallis Papers, PRO 30/11/5, 137.
- ²⁶³ Clinton to Phillips, 10 Mar. 1781, BHP. John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780 - 1782* (Birmingham, ALA: University of Alabama Press, 1985), 151.
- ²⁶⁴ The eight ships escorting General Phillips' convoy were the *Richmond*, *Orpheus*, *Chatham*, *Raleigh*, *Bonita*, *Savage*, *Vulcan* and *Roebuck*. The largest were the *Chatham* (50 guns) and *Roebuck*. The entire flotilla mounted 228 guns. Entry for 21 Mar. 1781, *Roebuck* Lieutenant's Journal of Andrew Snape Douglas 1 Sept. 1781 - 3 July 1781, hereafter cited as *Roebuck* Lieutenant's Journal (A.S. Douglas).
- ²⁶⁵ Entry for 18 April. *Fowey Master's Log*, PRO ADM 52/1748. Jefferson to State Officers, 19 Apr. 1781. H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Official Letters of the Governors of the State of Virginia*, 3 vols., vol. II. The Letters of Thomas Jefferson (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1928), 487.
- ²⁶⁶ *Simcoe Journal*, 194. Map VI-7 shows Phillips' route on the second ascent of the James River.
- ²⁶⁷ Arnold to Clinton, 12 May 1781. Tarleton Journal, 334-35. Map VI-8 shows the attack on Burwell's Ferry.
- ²⁶⁸ Captain Joseph Saunders of the *Lewis*, reportedly put up a brief fight before scuttling the ship. Cross, *A Navy for Virginia*, 72-73. Jefferson, apparently not aware of Dundas' movement wrote that, "by the most unaccountable inattention, the *Lewis* and *Safeguard* galleys have withdrawn up Chickahominy instead of

James River.” Jefferson to Colonel Benjamin Harris, 22 Apr. 1781. McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters*, Vol. 2, 491.

²⁶⁹ Read and Cross, *Memoirs of Helen Calvert Maxwell Read*, 64. Arnold to Clinton, 12 May 1781, Petersburg, Va. Tarleton Journal, 334-340. Jefferson to the President of the Congress, 27 Apr. 1781. McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters*, Vol. 2, 495.

²⁷⁰ *Simcoe Journal*, 194.

²⁷¹ *Simcoe Journal*, 197.

²⁷² Jefferson to the President of the Congress and General Washington, 9 May 1781, Richmond. McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters*, Vol. 2, 509-10.

²⁷³ Arnold to Clinton, 12 May 1781, Petersburg. Tarleton Journal, 336. Maps VI-9 and -10 portray the action at Osborne's.

²⁷⁴ *Simcoe Journal*, 199. Arnold to Clinton, 12 May 1781, Tarleton Journal, 336.

²⁷⁵ Charles B. Cross has suggested that the ships, with an aggregate complement of approximately 750 men, had only seventy-eight aboard. Cross, *A Navy for Virginia*, 72-73. These figures are consistent with those given by Captain Robert Mitchell for the pressed ships. Report of Captain Mitchell, 21 Mar. 1781. Brumbaugh, 35.

²⁷⁶ *Simcoe Journal*, 198-201.

²⁷⁷ Arnold to Clinton, 12 May 1781. Tarleton Journal, 336.

²⁷⁸ *Simcoe Journal*, 198-201.

²⁷⁹ Arnold to Clinton, 12 May 1781. Tarleton Journal, 336-37. Jefferson summed up the battle, saying that Arnold had “destroyed the Residue of the Public Armed vessels, and several of private property.” Jefferson to the President of the Congress and General Washington, 9 May 1781. McIlwaine, ed., *Governors' Letters*, Vol. 2, 510.

²⁸⁰ Entries for 18 Apr. – 4 May 1781. *Fowey Lieutenants' Logs*, Isaac Potgrave, 15 May 1780-15 May 1781. ADM/L/ F.185 Caird Library, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.

²⁸¹ Entries for 20 Aug.- 13 Oct. 1781. The ship was scuttled on 13 Oct. 1781. *Fowey Master's Log*. PRO ADM 52/1784.

²⁸² Cornwallis to General Henry Clinton. 8 July 1781, in Tarleton, *Journal*, 401.

²⁸³ Entry for 17 Oct. 1781. *Fowey Master's Log*. PRO ADM 52/1784. The master had continued his log even after the ship was scuttled. The other ship's records were destroyed when “two shells fell into the Provision Tent” on 14 October.

²⁸⁴ Sandwich to North, 8 December 1777, in NDAR 10; 1073-74.