

**Tito Benady**

**Work in Progress**

### **The Maritime Trade of Gibraltar 1805 – 1819**

After Gibraltar was ceded to Britain in 1713 it was run as a military post and the civilians were treated as part of the garrison. The result was that as there was no regular civilian administration no proper records were kept, although the number of civilians and their origin were regularly recorded by the military. It was not until Lieutenant-general Bland was sent in 1749 to establish order in the administration that the British government started to lay down rules for the administration of the civilian population, which had by then established itself, although it only numbered some 1,500. But most of the local records seem to have been destroyed during the Great Siege of 1779-1783, and only the files of General George Eliott, who assumed his office in 1776 and was governor during the Siege, have survived in their entirety. After that year the local files and the correspondence in the Public Record Office are fairly complete although there are some notable gaps in the information preserved; largely due to the lack of attention to such matters by the local administrators.

In the circumstances it is difficult to produce a proper study of the trade of Gibraltar, as it is further complicated by the fact that it had been declared a free port in 1704 by the then military commander. Prince George of Hesse, in order to attract ships with supplies during the ensuing siege. This arrangement was confirmed by the Privy Council in 1706<sup>1</sup> and ships of all flags could bring in goods from anywhere in the world which paid no duties when they were landed. Although a British colony Gibraltar was not bound by the Navigation Acts. As a result there was no check by the military authorities of the goods that were landed in Gibraltar, apart from the military and naval supplies that were recorded by the appropriate authority in England. There was an additional complication in that ships that called at Gibraltar anchored in the open road and apart from enquiries about the health on board and in the ports they had sailed from, they were not subject to any further control

The first break with this pattern was instituted by Bland in 1750 when he imposed duties on wine and spirits in order to curb the endemic inebriation of the garrison, and imposed controls on the tobacco imported in order to try and stop the smuggling of this commodity into Spain. But the duties thus raised went straight into the governor's pocket for the next sixty years and were part of his personal income and no public accounts were prepared.

The one import that received official attention was the cattle brought in from Morocco, as this entailed the admission of Jewish merchants from that country in contravention of the terms of cession under the Treaty of Utrecht, although no records of quantities or values were kept.<sup>2</sup> Apart from this we have to rely on a survey of the trade of Gibraltar prepared by the leading local merchants in 1784 at the request of the governor.<sup>3</sup> And there was a more complete survey of Gibraltar's sea trade prepared by the Captain of the Port in 1829.<sup>4</sup>

Port books were kept from 1820 onwards which listed all ships, their flags, ports of origin and cargoes on board, without however giving proper statistics. These books are kept in the Gibraltar Museum. I have found that the local newspaper, the *Gibraltar Chronicle* (founded in

1801) started, after some years, to print this kind of information and I have done a survey of the years 1805 to 1819 to establish the pattern of trade during those years. Shortage of time has led me to make a selection of six years which because of the changing international situation best demonstrate the development of Gibraltar's maritime trade; these are 1805, 1806, 1809, 1813, 1816 and 1819.

Gibraltar did not produce anything apart from fresh fish that the visiting Genoese fisherman supplied the town. So all food, clothing, building materials and everything else required was imported. During the eighteenth century fresh food came from Morocco and some from Portugal. Most other supplies came from Britain but goods for trading came from northern Europe. The garrison, which was greatly enlarged at time of war, had its own supplies, normally sent out from Britain in hired transports

### **1805**

This was a strange year for trade. The port had been closed the previous autumn because of a yellow fever epidemic and only reopened at the end of January. The mortality caused by the epidemic was so high that the *Gibraltar Chronicle* stopped publication, and only resumed on 23 March, so the figures for the year are not complete. In the meantime war with Spain had broken out. The first number of the newspaper listed 43 captured Spanish ships brought into port and the listing of merchant shipping movement was only resumed on 13 April. In the last three quarters 367 merchant vessels arrived at Gibraltar. After deducting the ten prizes and 123 which arrived in ten convoys, for which no detailed information is given, and the fortnightly packet ships from Falmouth to the Mediterranean, which also called at Gibraltar on their return journey from Malta, 235 merchant vessels called at the port of Gibraltar, of these, 87 landed cargoes. The nationality of these ships were 12 British, 16 Portuguese, 13 Ragusans, 10 Austrian, 8 American, 6 Swedish, 2 Danish, and the rest were Maltese, Sardinians, Greek ships flying Ottoman colours, Russian and Neapolitan. The small number of British ships was due to the large numbers that travelled in convoys and are not included in this figure. In addition many British merchant ships were taken up for war purposes and this gave an opportunity to neutral vessels.

The British ships that arrived independently were mostly small vessels bringing potatoes, butter and other provisions from Guernsey and Ireland, the Portuguese vessels also brought in other staples including chickens and salt fish, sugar, and coffee. It is interesting to note that Gibraltar received most of the tea she consumed and exported to Morocco from Lisbon, as well as tobacco from Brazil which was smuggled into Spain. The American ships brought in salted meat and pork, flour, wheat and rice, although some wheat also came from the Black Sea, in Greek ships under the Ottoman flag. The Austrian and other Mediterranean registered ships brought in beans, wheat, and wine. Some of the wine came from Italy but most of it was transported by the neutral ships from Spain. The cargoes of the captured vessels were also sold locally after they had been condemned by the Vice Admiralty Court. The shortage of British

merchant shipping because of the number of ships on government service led to coal being imported from Newcastle in Swedish vessels.

There is little reference in the list to the large fleet of local boats that brought in supplies from Morocco, particularly live cattle, or were engaged in the smuggling of tobacco into Spain.<sup>5</sup> It is obvious from other sources that Gibraltar remained dependant on the supply of bullocks from Morocco for fresh beef, but there is only mention of one shipment, 50 bullocks brought in by a local xebec from Tetuan in November.

## 1806

The general pattern of trade continued as before.

During the year 489 ships called at Gibraltar in addition to 112 prizes. 176 ships arrived in convoys, of which 37 were Swedish vessels escorted by Swedish men of war, of the other 313 ships, 138 brought cargoes to Gibraltar. 39 were British, but the number of American ships had increased considerably to 38, and 33 Portuguese ships brought in supplies from Portugal and also from Spain as they were not at war with that country. This also applied to the other neutral vessels – Ragusan (7), Moroccan (5), Ragusan, Greek (5), Danish (4), Swedish (1), Austrian (1). The 3 Maltese ships that called were still flying the 'Jerusalem' flag of the Knights of St John and were considered to be neutral, although Malta was a *de facto* British colony by then.

Ten of the American ships arrived not with goods that had been ordered but with a variety of cargoes looking for a market. They brought, flour, rice, tobacco, barrel staves, logwood, pepper, maize, sugar, coffee and cocoa, presumably Gibraltar was just a stop before they entered the Mediterranean to hawk their cargoes. Two other ships also arrived with goods looking for a market, a British brig with salted codfish from Newfoundland, and a Greek polacre with wine and nuts. Once again there is no mention of bullocks from Morocco, but a Greek polacre arrived from Oran in July with a cargo of 102 bullocks and 34 sheep.

Portugal continued to supply provisions and wine, though some came from Lisbon in British ships, and a number of the Portuguese vessels brought in fresh vegetables and fruit and wine, from Malaga and other Spanish ports.

There were 112 captures brought in by the Royal Navy and privateers, most of which were condemned by the Court and their cargoes sold locally.

## 1809

The panorama in the Western Mediterranean had changed considerably as Spain had repudiated the alliance with Napoleon the previous year and had become an ally of Britain. Without Spanish shipping to prey on, most of the town's privateers turned to peaceful trading.

The *Gibraltar Chronicle* now included additional information, giving estimates of the number of small Spanish, Portuguese boats that called every week. The first few months did not give an account every week, but the total included during the year was 868, which taking into account the gaps in the information provided must have amounted to over 1,000 boats in the year. These boats are listed as bringing wine, brandy, oil, and fresh and dried fruits, as well as

building materials – bricks, tiles and timber; lead and copper; charcoal, paper, silk, cotton, wool, hemp, biscuits, vermicelli and general merchandise. The locally registered boats are not listed.

The effect of Trafalgar and the subsequent diminution in French naval activity meant that the seas became safer for British shipping and the number of ships arriving in convoys halved as compared to 1806, which means we have more information to analyse.

The number of ships that called at Gibraltar during the year was 1,014 which was treble the number that arrived in 1806, and this demonstrates the changing pattern of British trade, which after the Napoleon had instituted his continental blockade of British trade, had switched from the north to the Mediterranean so that it could enter Europe through its soft underbelly.<sup>6</sup> Gibraltar participated to a certain extent in this activity, and the number of ships bearing cargoes for the local market trebled to 348 but it was obvious that that the bulk of the increase in trade was from the central Mediterranean, through Malta and Sicily.

The changed pattern of trade meant that Gibraltar now received its supplies in British ships which accounted for 274 of those bringing cargoes to the port, both supplies and merchandise from Britain and fruit (lemon Juice) and wheat from Cagliari. 23 came arrived with goods which had not been ordered but were looking for a market in the Mediterranean, and Gibraltar was usually the first port of call, half a dozen of them were schooners from Newfoundland with salted cod for the Mediterranean market.

The Americans came next with 35 arrivals, a number of which were on merchanting voyages. The Portuguese were next with 16 ships. A new source of supply had opened up tobacco, sugar, coffee and cocoa was imported directly from Brazil in both Portuguese and British ships, bypassing the traditional route through Lisbon. Most of the Spanish trade came in small boats but 6 are listed as bringing cargoes from London, Lisbon and Valencia.

64 of the ships are listed as carrying bale goods or general merchandise which would have been mostly British manufactured good for smuggling into the continent.

### **1813**

The war ended that year and this was reflected in the reduced pattern of British Trade to the Mediterranean, the number of ships calling at Gibraltar reduced to 771, although the convoys continued and accounted for 181 and the number of individual transports amounted to 97, most of which were returning military personnel and surplus stores to England. 493 ships arrived individually of which 210 brought cargoes to Gibraltar.

The Gibraltar trade had now reverted mainly to British ships which accounted for 180 out of the 210. 11 were registered locally. Maltese ships were no longer under the Jerusalem flag and were included in the number of British ships. There were 935 entries of small Portuguese and Spanish boats brining the necessary fresh supplies and building materials required by the town, although the town boats are not mentioned. As Britain and the USA were at war ships of that nationality were missing, although 8 were captured when they tried to enter Cadiz and were brought in as prizes.

## 1816

The trade to the Mediterranean had obviously recovered since the peace, with the same amount of movement as in 1808 during the war but there was much less military traffic and the commercial movements had obviously increased accordingly, of the 442 ships that landed cargoes at Gibraltar, 175 were British and 58 locally registered, making a total of 233. Next came the 99 Americans with their cargoes of wheat, flour, rice, bread, tobacco, sugar and barrel staves, and 46 Swedish vessels which mainly brought timber, masts and spars, tar and iron.

## 1819

The number of ships calling at Gibraltar was only 10% higher than in 1816 but the number of cargoes landed had increased by almost 50%, and this denotes a considerable increase in Gibraltar's trade, not only with Morocco, but also smuggled into Spain, and, Spanish goods which were smuggled into the old colonies in revolt in the New World. The number of Sardinian ships had risen to 48, this is a continuation of the long-standing personal and commercial links that Gibraltar had with Genoa. In previous years this trade had been carried in Genoese ships registered at Gibraltar in order to take advantage of the British Mediterranean Passes they thus obtained, but the tightening of the regulations for the issuing of those passes and the decrease in Moslem corsair activity mean that less Genoese shipowners operated from Gibraltar.<sup>7</sup>

### Appendix

#### Arrivals at Gibraltar

	1805	1806	1809	1813	1816	1819
<b>Captures</b>	53	112		8		
<b>Ships in convoys</b>	123	276	135	181		
<b>Military/Naval transports</b>			62	97	57	11
<b>Individual ships</b>	235	313	877	493	984	1166
<b>Total arrivals</b>	411	701	1071	789	1021	1177
<b>Cargoes for Gibraltar</b>	87	138	347	210	442	656
<b>Small vessels</b>			868	935	546*	900

- Only partial figures

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<sup>1</sup> TNA, PC.1/3170; John Drinkwater, *A History of the Siege of Gibraltar 1779-1783*, (London 1905) 10.

<sup>2</sup> See T Benady 'The Settlement of Jews in Gibraltar 1704-783', *Transaction of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 26 (London 1979)

<sup>3</sup> The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), CO.91/32 Report on the Trade of Gibraltar. See also T Benady, 'Trade and Contraband in British Gibraltar in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' in *Anglo-Saxons in the Mediterranean*, ed Carmel Vassallo and Michela D'Angelo (Malta University Press 2007)

<sup>4</sup> Gibraltar Government Archives (Hereafter GGA) John Sweetland, 'Observations on the Trade of Gibraltar'.

<sup>5</sup> GGA, 'Despatches from Gibraltar 1808-1814' 10-18, letter from E Viale 22 Jan 1808.

<sup>6</sup> See Michela D'Angelo, 'British Trade and Merchants in the Mid-Mediterranean: an alternative market during the Napoleonic Wars

<sup>7</sup> See T Benady, 'The Settee Cut: Mediterranean Passes issued at Gibraltar', *Mariner's Mirror* 87:3, August 2001.