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Combined operations and the European theatre during the Nine Years' War, 1688-97

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Abstract

This article assesses the strategic and operational purpose of England's combined army-navy operations within the European theatre during the Nine Years' War, 1688-97. Specifically, the historical consensus that these operations were simply a compromise product of the contemporary political discourse, and consistently suffered from poor preparation and implementation, is reassessed. In so doing, the article considers the combined service descents planned and executed against the northern French coastline between 1691 and 1694, including in particular the renowned operation at Brest in June 1694, and also those operations undertaken by Admiral Russell's Mediterranean fleet in 1695. Accordingly, the article argues that the strategic and operational dismissal of combined operations is based upon a misunderstanding of their contemporary purpose, and that these actions were in fact promoted by both the court and the ministry as strategic handmaidens to the wider continental and maritime strategies.

In 1691 a pamphlet by Edward Littleton recommended that King William should undertake a 'descent' (a seaborne landing of men on enemy territory) upon the French coast. It concluded with the claim that the responsibility of a skilful general was 'not to dance after the Enemy, but to make the Enemy dance after Him'; a combined army and navy operation to land soldiers on the French coast would cause Louis XIV to begin the jig.⁽¹⁾ Littleton's metaphor neatly encapsulated the principal strategic motive of descents in early modern warfare: the establishment of a second front in the enemy's territory, which would force him to draw resources away from the main theatre of operations. It also hinted at more immediate tactical objectives such as the destruction of a harbour, which might be completed as part of the wider strategic venture or form the sole object of the operation, but which would equally prompt an enemy response. Overall, despite the author's rather naive enthusiasm, the pamphlet outlined a positive case for this type of combined army and navy operation upon the French coasts.⁽²⁾

Although Littleton was not alone amongst his contemporaries in making the military case for descents,⁽³⁾ modern commentators have remained largely sceptical of the arguments. John Childs rejects the strategic and military worth of combined operations undertaken as descents upon the French coast during the Nine Years' War.⁽⁴⁾ He condemns them as 'political operations of war', which were 'poorly conceived and ill prepared'.⁽⁵⁾ On both counts, Childs has much evidence to draw upon. The political dialectic between the whigs, who favoured a continental, army-centric strategy, and the tories, who preferred a more exclusively maritime or 'blue-water' strategy that promoted the navy in command of the sea

while protecting and expanding overseas trade, did largely foster the European descents during the war. By combining army and navy resources to meet specific tactical or strategic objectives, the descents were considered structurally and functionally suited to fulfil certain aspects of both whig and tory strategies. At a more basic political level, the earl of Danby wrote of the propaganda benefits of effecting a landing directly on enemy territory.(6) On the second charge of poor planning and preparation, a history of failure can be found in the abandoned attempts against the Normandy coast and Brest in 1692 and 1693 respectively; in the bloody repulse at Brest in 1694; and in the lack of action by Russell's Mediterranean fleet, which had soldiers embarked aboard during 1695.(7) Nonetheless, Childs's condemnation of descents does, in the first instance, require a rather improbable rejection of the - admittedly now banal - Clausewitzian consensus about warfare being *sui generis* a political instrument.(8) And, more importantly, it assumes that London considered the descents to form a separate and coherent strategy. Clearly, within such a context the operational failures were lamentable, but, considered from a different standpoint, the extent and nature of these miscarriages becomes explicable.

An alternative approach would be to consider these combined operations as just one element of the court's war policy: a product not purely of political compromise but a combined army and naval means to implement the separate military and naval strategies. This context in part supports the argument that descents might help to alter the military balance in the land theatre, although not sufficiently to comprise a single, war-winning strategy. It also implies that William appreciated this point with a greater degree of enthusiasm than is usually accorded to him, and that, along with senior courtiers and commanders, he sought to organize a series of descents as one aspect of his continental strategy.(9) Equally, with reference to the wider naval strategy, this interpretative framework adopts descents as just one agency for its implementation. Although command of the Narrow Seas had been achieved at La Hogue (1692), the French navy had not been destroyed and the two principal squadrons operating out of Brest/Rochefort in the north and Toulon in the south could still combine to form a considerable battlefleet. There was much to recommend destroying these vessels as they lay in port to guarantee sea command; and, aside from seaborne bombardment, a combined army and navy descent offered a means to do so. This approach was underlined when, from 1694, the French naval strategy evolved to promote *guerre de course* above *guerre d'escadre*; the coastal ports now served as havens for the privateers preying on English trade and the naval warships that afforded them escort.(10) In attempting either to prevent the conjunction of the French squadrons or to combat the French *guerre de course*, the descents planned against the northern French coasts might also be considered as facilitating William's ambition to establish England as the principal Mediterranean seapower. As part of this ambition, descents were considered as an instrument for destroying shipping in the southern as well as the northern ports. More importantly, in 1695 after the main fleet had wintered in the Mediterranean for the first time, descents were perceived as a means of intervening in the war on the Iberian peninsula, and in particular at Catalonia, where the due de Noailles's army had made significant gains against the Spanish and was threatening the region's principal town, Barcelona.(11)

A consideration, therefore, of the historical evolution of this alternative context in which to assess the descents undertaken by England in Europe during the Nine Years' War, including an explication of the planning and preparation, should indicate the level of political support for, and perception of, these combined operations. If, as conjectured above, it is possible to describe descents as handmaidens of the separate continental and maritime strategies and not as an independent war-winning strategy, then Childs's interpretation of such operations would seem to be open to question.

The claim that the planned descents of the early sixteen-nineties resulted only from the king's providing 'reluctant lip service to the idea' (12) sits oddly beside William's expressed interest in such projects even before Ireland was conquered. In February 1691, the Allied Conference held at The Hague discussed proposals for a descent into France and, although William was then sceptical about the plan's practicalities, within four months he ordered that preparations begin. This change of mind was partly because Secretary Nottingham kept the proposal on the executive council's agenda, despite Sydney's representations of the king's initial reluctance. More importantly, Ginkel's successful start to the 1691 Irish campaign at Galway and Aughrim raised the prospect that troops might soon be spared for service elsewhere. Rather than ship them immediately to Flanders, the king was willing to deploy them in a descent.

Despite William's order and Nottingham's claim that the council was working on the project, no detailed planning was undertaken and only Danby, in consultation with Leinster and other French Huguenots, put forward any firm proposals. Their ideas for descents on the River Gironde or on the Normandy coast accorded with the arguments that Littleton put forward in his pamphlet regarding the military benefits which could accrue from such an attack, but as the summer lengthened, preparations had still not begun. By August, Sydney's representations that the king was lukewarm about the idea because of the lateness of the season and his desire for a naval action were gaining credit. William's reputed coolness was probably a consequence of the military momentum in Ireland stalling once again in front of Limerick's walls, ensuring that there would be no early release of soldiers from that theatre; and, as the siege dragged through to the autumn, it was indeed becoming too late in the season. All residual hope that the project might be advanced was extinguished in early October when Nottingham told Ginkel to expect that, on the conclusion of the peace treaty in Ireland, many of the soldiers would be transferred to Flanders.(13)

Nonetheless, in early spring of the following year, the idea of a descent on the northern French coast was firmly back on the agenda. A memorandum sent by Nottingham to Blathwayt on 3 March noted that a descent would take place towards the end of May and that some twenty English and Dutch infantry battalions, along with a couple of English regiments of horse and one of dragoons, would comprise the land force. Along with details about the transportation arrangements for these troops and the artillery train, the memorandum revealed that the king had spoken only to the prospective commanders - Admiral Russell, the duke of Leinster and the earl of Galway - about the plan. The fact that the king had kept other senior courtiers in the dark probably contributed to the proposal's lack of political support when it was presented to the cabinet council advising Queen Mary after William's departure to the European continent for the 1692 campaign. Indeed, Godolphin and a coterie of like-minded colleagues managed to hold up the preparations until the king provided further evidence of his intentions in the matter. However, even when this was received, the operation's organization continued to suffer delay when, in mid April, the council's attention was diverted to preparing the nation's defence against an imminent French invasion on behalf of the exiled King James.(14)

The death of Louis XIV's war minister, Louvois, in 1691 had removed from Versailles the principal bulwark against French policy focusing upon a Jacobite restoration, and the French king was soon persuaded to sponsor another attempt by James to reclaim his kingdoms. In early 1692, the French Channel and Mediterranean fleets - save for a thirty-five-strong squadron which was to winter in the Mediterranean — had been combined in the Channel under the comte de Tourville, while a sizeable expeditionary force was collected along the

Normandy coast. However, its organization proved slow and it was not complete when London became aware, through captured papers, of the French plans. To preserve the preparations already completed, Tourville was ordered to engage the Anglo-Dutch fleet commanded by Russell that had been dispatched from England to intercept. Under the gaze of James, standing on the cliffs above, the two fleets clashed off Cape La Hogue on 19 May and, after five days of fighting, Russell had not only defeated Tourville but had also destroyed much of the infrastructure for the invasion force.⁽¹⁵⁾ John Ehrman implies that the idea of a descent on the Normandy coast arose from the deliberations as to how best the victory at La Hogue might be followed up.⁽¹⁶⁾ However, as has been shown, the idea had been current almost since the start of the war and a specific proposal had already been agreed upon for 1692. Undoubtedly, though, Russell's victory provided an impetus to the preparations begun by Nottingham in late March.

Prior to the invasion emergency, it was Admiral Russell who had proposed a specific target for the descent — St. Malo. Admittedly, his selection was based on the assumption that it would force the French to a sea engagement but, immediately following La Hogue, he remained convinced that a landing should still be effected around that area of the Normandy coast, believing that it would most effectively capitalize upon French vulnerability. Significantly, however, he implied that for this opportunity to be grasped the descent force would have to be ready forthwith.⁽¹⁷⁾ As Russell was returning to Spithead, the cabinet council resolved to dispatch three of its members — Portland, Rochester and Sydney — along with Galway, to meet with the admiral and Leinster at Portsmouth to determine upon a specific target. From the — albeit limited - evidence of the meeting, it would seem that no decision was made and that, instead, it was agreed that the fleet should reconnoitre the coast to determine the disposition of the remaining French naval forces. Francis Bickley rightly concludes that this decision reflected the land force's lack of readiness.⁽¹⁸⁾ Leinster's efforts in this respect had been frustrated by the delays in bringing troops from Ireland and by the measures effected to combat the invasion threat; while a general lack of funding had also undermined his organization. Further problems threatened in June when the duke faced a recall demand from William for those horse regiments initially detailed to be transported to Flanders but which had remained behind to form part of the descent force. It was only as a result of Nottingham's entreaties that this was averted.⁽¹⁹⁾ There was no doubt, however, that William was becoming annoyed at the inertia and, through Blathwayt, he demanded a more specific explanation about what was currently proposed 'than by the Generall words of a Descent'.⁽²⁰⁾

Although there seemed to be an unexpressed consensus that St. Malo would be the target, Nottingham could barely reply to the king in any accurate detail. Moreover, by July, Russell began to set his whole face against the enterprise. Following his meeting with the three members of the cabinet council at the end of May, the admiral had undertaken a further reconnaissance voyage and had concluded that the coastline was too dangerous for the larger rates and that, in general, St. Malo was not a practicable target as the season progressed. Given the time and political currency he had expended in trying to bring the plan to fruition, Nottingham was concerned about Russell's increasing intransigence. He sought to regain the admiral's support for the venture but, at this important juncture, the secretary's correspondence did not prove sufficiently tactful. By suggesting that Russell would not want to leave himself open to the charge that he had failed to do everything possible to make the descent plan work, it seemed to the admiral that Nottingham was not only criticizing his actions to date but also preparing the political ground for him to be blamed for any subsequent failure. Accelerated by their political differences - Nottingham was a high church Tory and Russell a Whig - relations between the two men quickly deteriorated, to the

detriment of the descent plan. With little contribution from Leinster, the debate as to whether the descent was to proceed and, if so, what its target should be continued throughout July.(21)

Towards the end of the month, Leinster embarked the troops and the transports weighed to fall in with the fleet as it sailed up the Channel from Torbay. With both component parts of the descent force now together, and with the queen having specifically recommended to Russell that the operation should be deployed to burn St. Malo, in addition to considering the possibility of an attack on Brest in light of intelligence that a number of French vessels had proceeded to that port, Nottingham might have anticipated action. However, on 28 July, a joint service council of war aboard the *Bredah* concluded that it was not practicable to attack St. Malo and, further, that it was too late in the year to make any attempt against Brest or Rochefort (also previously canvassed as a target). Russell's influence over this decision was evident from the letter that he wrote to Nottingham following the council, in which he justified its resolutions in detail. Moreover, doubtless guided by the admiral, the council was not minded to alter its decision when Russell received the queen's recommendation regarding the burning of St. Malo. Strictly, the council had not disobeyed the queen as she had not issued a direct order, but its resolutions were clearly contrary to her wishes and, perhaps as an attempt to soften the decision, the council agreed that the fleet would put in at St. Helens where it could be kept together, ready to consider any commands from the queen. In an attempt to resolve this deadlock between the wishes of the court and the ministry on one side, and those of the descent commanders on the other, Nottingham and the available members of the cabinet council — Carmarthen, Devonshire, Dorset, Rochester, Sydney and Cornwallis - travelled to Portsmouth at the beginning of August to meet with Russell and the other senior commanders. However, at their meeting with the council of war, the politicians were not able to prevail upon the servicemen to undertake an attack against St. Malo, or indeed anywhere else on the Normandy or Brittany coasts.(22) As Nottingham laconically reported to Portland, the cabinet council members returned to London having 'succeeded in nothing that we designed'.(23) The projected descent against the Normandy coast, which had been current since early March, was now finally abandoned, and, for the immediate future, attention was focused upon an alternative joint army-navy operation that the king had proposed just before the Normandy descent was given up.

William's target was one of France's principal harbours for privateers and the most northerly point of the frontier with the Spanish Netherlands - Dunkirk. On this occasion the operation was not to be a seaborne descent, but rather two separate, although co-ordinated, attacks from the land and sea. The intended troops (save for some 200 dragoons and the regiments of Foulkes and Hales, the two latter intended for an overseas expedition to the West Indies) were currently part of the descent force with the fleet at St. Helens. William planned to land them at Ostend or Nieuport whence they would march overland with reinforcements to attack the town of Dunkirk. Meanwhile, the fleet which had transported them would undertake a seaborne bombardment against its port.(24)

Given the vacillation over the planned descents for the northern French coast, the Dunkirk operation has, perhaps with some justification, been labelled as 'face-saving'.(25) William did not, however, know for certain when he designed the operation that the descents against St. Malo or Brest had been aborted, and, in fact, he made the Dunkirk assault conditional upon a final decision being taken to abandon operations. Although Blathwayt privately informed Nottingham that the king anticipated their abandonment, that is not to suggest that the Dunkirk project possessed no merit as a combined army and navy assault outside the context of operational failure elsewhere.(26)

William had previously targeted Dunkirk in January as a first strike for the 1692 campaign and it was probably only the fact that the French got wind of the design which caused it to be shelved.(27) Now, later in the year, William was returning to the project and hoped to make effective use of the military and naval resources brought together for the proposed northern coast descents. His commitment to the success of the venture -as opposed to just being seen to be doing something with the gathered forces — is illustrated by the blanket of secrecy which he threw over details of the operation. Although William's adjutant, Colonel Withers, who carried the details about the project to Nottingham, had instructions which allowed for the service commanders to be briefed in full, it would seem that in the first instance this did not occur. Leinster did not know the exact target until he was landed at Ostend; and London - aside from select senior ministers - assumed that, with the abandonment of the proposed descents, the troops were being transported to the Flanders theatre, albeit in the direction of Dunkirk.(28)

The early organization of this enterprise contributed to the belief that William was only transferring troops. Based on the instructions delivered to Nottingham, the queen ordered Russell to detach a squadron of some eight men-of-war from his fleet at St. Helens to convoy the transport ships with Leinster's troops on board and the auxiliary store vessels containing the large descent train to the Downs or Margaret Road where further orders were to be sent. Russell appointed Shovell to command this detachment, which included Dutch vessels and, since only the dragoons and the two regiments bound for the West Indies had to be disembarked, the squadron proceeded quickly up the Channel. Once at the Downs, the instructions which Shovell and Leinster received from the king proved only a little more specific, informing them that the troops and war stores were to be landed at Ostend or Nieuport by 22 or 23 August. A separate memorandum attached to the order anticipated a visit to the squadron by Withers to inform the two commanders of the king's orders but it remains unclear just how much he revealed. At the Downs, sickness spread amongst the soldiers and in a tersely worded letter to Nottingham regarding the management of this problem, Leinster condemned the fact that he was still ignorant about how his troops were to be deployed.(29)

The outbreak of disease proved not to be as serious as Leinster had represented and, although some men were put ashore, it did not hinder the squadron's passage across the Channel. The troops were in fact landed at Ostend in advance of the prescribed dates. It was then that orders to march towards Dunkirk with the reinforcements of engineers were sent to Leinster, while Portland also visited him at Ostend to provide further explanation.(30) It is difficult to know exactly when Shovell was informed that he was to lead his squadron against Dunkirk's port as one element of a combined attack on that town. As bomb vessels were initially ordered as part of his convoy along with pilots for the Flanders coast, and he was instructed to meet with Meester's 'Machine Vessels' if possible,(31) Shovell might have guessed more about the operation than Leinster. Or perhaps Withers was more candid with Shovell, although given Leinster's seniority and reputed closeness to the king that seems unlikely. Shovell probably received more detailed instructions at the same time as Leinster given that he then wrote briefly to Nottingham about the squadron's disposal for the attack, upon which Blathwayt later expanded. This correspondence revealed that the Dutch Admiral Evertsen would lead a detachment of smaller vessels inshore to bombard the harbour and explode some of Meester's 'Machines', while Shovell would remain outside with the larger ships to combat any sea-based opposition or relief.(32)

In the event, neither commander acted upon his orders. A week after Portland's meeting with

Leinster at Ostend, the troops were only encamped just east at Veurne whence Leinster marched south-eastwards to Dixmonde, instead of pressing forward due west to attack Dunkirk. Shovell for his part struggled offshore with poor weather which prevented his well boats from tracking the army as it marched. This was essential for a co-ordinated assault but would, in any case, have become impossible once Leinster turned his troops towards the interior.(33) Blathwayt's insouciance in reporting home Leinster's actions by claiming that he was preparing winter quarters to the allies' advantage perhaps reflected his hitherto low expectations of the enterprise, but it obscures the reasons why Dunkirk was no longer the immediate target. Furthermore, the secretary-at-war failed to elaborate when the orders for the embarkation of Leinster's troops were issued in mid September, having contended that the occupation of Veurne and Dixmonde was all that the general could achieve. Portland and Cambon, after visiting Leinster at Ostend, had reported difficulties with the proposed attack, although no specific details were offered. Thus, aside from the increasing lateness of the season and the bad weather hampering the co-ordination of the naval and military attacks, there is little else to suggest why the assault on Dunkirk was dropped.(34) Bickley's conclusion that, unlike the earlier planned descents, the venture against Dunkirk had at least been begun misrepresents the nature of the planned combined operation.(35) As previously noted, it was not to be a seaborne descent but a co-ordinated attack from the land and sea; thus, although the landing of the troops at Ostend was a prerequisite for the attack, it did not mark its beginning. That event was forestalled by Shovell's squadron being beaten off the coast and, more importantly, by Leinster marching to Dixmonde. The combined operation against Dunkirk had been abandoned just like the other descents against the northern French coast.

It might be reckoned a measure of William's commitment to descents as part of his war policy that, despite the experiences of the previous year, his speech at the opening of the parliamentary session in November 1692 indicated his intent to mount a larger descent as part of the forthcoming campaign.(36) Although parliament first began picking over the traces of the previous summer's failed attempts, with debate developing into a celebrated contest in apportioning blame between the tory and whig supporters of Nottingham and Russell,³⁷ preparations for another descent were initiated at the turn of the year. Neither Russell nor Nottingham emerged with much credit from the parliamentary deliberations but it was the admiral whom the king decided to replace for the forthcoming campaign, refusing to capitulate to Russell's threat to resign if he had to receive orders from Nottingham. In Russell's place, a triple commission of Killigrew, Delavall and Shovell was appointed to command the fleet in a similar manner to Killigrew, Ashby and Haddock in 1690. To the relief of Russell's defenders, however, Nottingham suffered a reverse in March when the king completed some ministerial changes to the whigs' advantage in an attempt to build a majority in parliament. Two such changes were the removal of Nottingham to the southern department, and the appointment of the implacable whig Sir John Trenchard to the second secretaryship of state, which had lain vacant since Shrewsbury's departure. Although it had been Nottingham's suggestion that the post be filled to ease his administrative burdens, Trenchard would certainly not have been his preferred choice.(38)

In addition to his new appointment as secretary for the northern department, Trenchard assumed responsibility for naval affairs and consequently for the co-ordination of the preparations for the descent. Deliberations by the admiralty and cabinet council before and after the king's departure for the continent resolved upon Brest as the target for 1693. Specifically, the aim was to destroy the French fleet commanded by Tourville which had congregated in the port after La Hogue, and thus to prevent its conjunction with d'Estrees's squadron based at Toulon. The exact disposition for the attack was to be left to a council of

war called by the admirals for, on this occasion, no general officer was appointed to command the five regiments which would comprise the land force.(39) Not all ministers supported the project and those at the treasury in particular complained about what they calculated to be the disproportionate costs of the enterprise.(40) Despite these doubts, Blathwayt represented that William was sufficiently relaxed about the estimated £55,000 cost of the expedition to apportion a further £22,000; while the secretary also reported that the king believed 'something considerable' could be undertaken at Brest.(41)

The destruction of the enemy fleet in the port was contingent upon the descent being undertaken early in the season before the French put to sea. Preparations were pushed forward at Portsmouth, and the regiments were quickly moved to camps in Sussex and around Winchester in Hampshire where supplies were more plentiful and convenient than the alternative camp at Hounslow Heath. Moreover, it was thought that, as these camps were closer to Portsmouth, the French might be alarmed that the embarkation of the troops was imminent. Only the confusion over the amount of bedding to be provided by the Admiralty for the soldiers on board the fleet, and a debate which arose over the authority of naval captains to discipline the troops when on board, caused delay. These matters were, however, in the process of being clarified when the order was issued at the beginning of May for the admirals to embark the soldiers.(42)

It has been claimed that no embarkation took place and, indeed, that the descent upon Brest was dropped as the admirals were ordered in late May to provide additional escort to the outgoing Smyrna convoy - the Levant fleet of merchantmen which Vice-Admiral Rooke's squadron had been ordered to escort in January 1693.(43) Delays had prevented its departure and on hearing in May that Tourville had left Brest to join d'Estrees to attempt an ambush of the convoy, William thought it prudent that Rooke leave immediately. The cabinet council, however, appreciated that a quick departure was unlikely and suggested instead that the main fleet should also accompany the convoy.(44) This did not mean that the descent had been abandoned. Blathwayt had previously confided to Nottingham the king's desire that any measures taken for the Mediterranean trade should not hinder the descent project, and when members of the cabinet council went to consult with the admirals about the naval campaign the assault upon Brest was still on the agenda. When the orders to accompany Rooke were sent to the admirals, two regiments were embarked and they were to be followed by a further two with the fifth (for an unknown reason) left ashore. Moreover, these orders only required the admirals to accompany Rooke as far as they thought appropriate. This left them with both the discretion and the opportunity to undertake the attack on Brest, although the intelligence that Tourville had left the harbour negated the original objective.(45) This intelligence was, however, unconfirmed (Tourville did not in fact leave Brest until the end of May)(46) and, on their departure with the Smyrna convoy, the expectation was that the admirals would seek an opportunity to assault Brest.

The opportunity failed to present itself throughout the summer. After initially deciding that the main fleet would accompany Rooke's squadron thirty leagues past Ushant, the admirals agreed to continue for a further twenty. This reflected their lack of intelligence on the movements of the French fleet, and much of the early part of the summer was spent trying to guess the whereabouts of Tourville and d'Estrées. To begin with, the admirals believed that the Toulon squadron had put into Brest, although it was not until Rooke had departed that the earlier reconnaissance of Brest harbour was followed up. This confirmed that it was empty and the admirals then turned their attentions to a fruitless search for Tourville in the immediate vicinity. In the event, Tourville had sailed south to join d'Estrées to effect the ambush of the Smyrna convoy, which they achieved in Lagos Bay just round from Cape Vincent on 17 June.(47)

Although it was towards the end of August when the council of war officially abandoned the descent on Brest because of lateness of the season, in reality it was the earlier confirmation that its harbour was empty which had sounded the death knell of the descent. Unable, then, to prevent the joining of the French squadrons, the descent was rendered functionally irrelevant as an aspect of the naval strategy. This was confirmed when the additional provisions prepared for the assault were apportioned to alternative services soon after the June reconnaissance; while at the beginning of July, the field officers were set ashore and the artillery train and the auxiliary transport vessels were discharged.⁽⁴⁸⁾ As London had become increasingly concerned for the security of Rooke's squadron, the main fleet was ordered to set out to his aid. Lack of provisions and poor weather, however, prevented the fleet from sailing before word came through of the ambush. Thereafter, it continued cruising in the Soundings until the admirals' requests that the ships be laid up for the winter were granted at the beginning of September. Within a month the admirals were given leave to come to London to face the gathering political storm over the destruction of the Smyrna convoy. For the third year in succession, a descent had been prepared as a significant part of the king's war strategy only for it to be abandoned as other circumstances demanded more immediate attention. This type of combined operation would nonetheless be back on the war agenda in the following year, and it would then finally go ahead.

Two years after publication of his 1691 pamphlet proposing a descent on the French coast, Littleton wrote a sequel.⁽⁴⁹⁾ He criticized the descent projects undertaken over the past two years for being either raids or grandiose invasion ventures aimed at capturing an enemy stronghold. The first he considered morally reprehensible and the second false economy in terms of men and resources. Littleton's ideal descent would instead aspire to seize a weak point on the enemy coast, fortify it and then maintain a small garrison. This would cost England little and, with the majority of troops re-embarked to attend to other descents, several footholds could be created along the enemy coast, thereby critically stretching their resources. His emphasis was on the strategic priority of establishing a second front upon enemy territory rather than on capturing an enemy town or port for immediate tactical reasons. It is unclear whether Littleton would have approved of William's determination to assault Brest in 1694 in order to prevent the French squadron based there from leaving for the Mediterranean and joining with the Toulon squadron, thereby raising the prospect that the combined fleet might wreak the havoc on English trade that it had the previous year. At one level this descent would be the tactical capture of Brest to destroy the harbour and the ships anchored within. At another level, it would be the implementation of William's developing ambitions that England be the principal power in the Mediterranean. As this would establish intervention on another front (albeit one projected from the sea), the descent's strategic credentials must also be recognized.

Following the failures of 1693, a decision in principle to attack Brest in 1694 was taken during the winter of 1693-4 and not, as Childs contends, in the spring of 1694. A rendezvous was fixed for the fleet at the Downs at the beginning of March, but it was mid April before this was completed, and by then events in the Mediterranean had forced a rethink of the plan.⁽⁵⁰⁾ At the end of November 1693, Rear-Admiral Wheeler, recently returned from his fruitless expedition to the West Indies and North America, had been sent to the Straits with a squadron to convoy trade and provide succour to the Spanish along their Mediterranean coastline. In February Wheeler's squadron was caught in a violent storm as it made its way through to the Middle Sea and the rear-admiral went down with his ship, along with five other vessels. Although the remainder of the squadron made it into Gibraltar Bay, England was now without any effective naval presence in the Mediterranean either to pressurize the

French in that theatre or — and more importantly in the City's opinion - to provide protection for trade.(51) It now seemed imperative that the French fleets should not combine and the instructions issued on 24 April to the re-appointed admiral of the fleet and newly-appointed head of the Admiralty commissioners, Edward Russell, anticipated that he might have to chase the French fleet south to prevent such a juncture if it had quit Brest before an assault could be mounted.(52)

The political fall-out from the Smyrna convoy debacle had claimed Nottingham as its principal victim and adversely affected the two obviously tory admirals of the joint command - Delavall and Killigrew - more than Shovell, thus marking another milestone on William's political journey away from mixed ministries to his mid-decade reliance upon the whigs. Russell, therefore, largely owed his appointments not just to the failures of the joint commanding admirals but to the increasing political ascendancy of the whigs with whom he was identified.(53) It was certainly not the result of his commitment to descents, about which he had been unenthusiastic in 1692. On receiving his instructions of 24 April, he again began to question their feasibility in correspondence with the duke of Shrewsbury (lately returned to the ministry as secretary for the northern department).(54)

Russell's principal criticism, that chasing the French fleet southwards could not be undertaken in conjunction with a descent on Brest, was based on a misinterpretation of his orders. As part of William's strategy, the priority of the instructions of 24 April was to stop the Brest fleet from entering the Mediterranean to combine with the Toulon fleet: the assault on Brest harbour and the chase were merely possible options to that end, depending upon the current intelligence of the enemy's whereabouts.(55) Russell's error was understandable, for the idea that both options would be pursued was driven by the administrative preparations of the descent which, having suffered an early delay, continued independently of the refinement of the instructions upon fresh intelligence altering the operational context.

Although late, and with many of the seamen unpaid, Russell's fleet had managed to assemble at Spithead by the end of April. There was, however, still no sign of the auxiliary store ships, the artillery train, nor indeed of the ten infantry battalions which were to comprise the land force for the descent.(56) The senior English general, Thomas Tollemache,(57) had been appointed to command these troops in mid April, but it was the beginning of May before they had encamped at Portsdown Hill above Portsmouth. Nearly a fortnight later, on 11 May, Tollemache announced that they were ready to embark, but by then Russell had taken those ships in the fleet which had been paid upon a reconnaissance mission, and this confirmed the departure of the French fleet under the command of Châteaurenault from Brest harbour — presumably bound for the Mediterranean. Russell was furious that the descent force had been delayed, for Brest was then seen to be weakly defended by only the town's militia and a couple of regular infantry companies. The master-general of the ordnance, Lord Sydney, was the main target of his ire, being labelled by the admiral a 'driveller'.(58) Again, with preparations for the descent force continuing in his absence, Russell had assumed that the descent on Brest had an additional objective of preventing the French fleet's departure. Shrewsbury's correspondence with the admiral showed that he shared this assumption, although significantly, before Russell's return from his reconnaissance, the secretary went beyond the April instructions to outline a possible scenario which envisaged both an attack on Brest and the fleet sailing south. The suggestion was that if the French fleet had left the harbour, then Russell would lead a squadron to the Mediterranean in pursuit, but that the detachment which would have to be left behind to guard the Narrow Seas could undertake the descent. Upon hearing that Brest harbour was empty the king's reaction was almost exactly along these lines.(59) The descent was now being uncoupled from the policy of preventing a conjunction of the two French squadrons. It

stood independently as an assault to destroy Brest harbour and any ship contained within. Admittedly, the possible strategic benefits which might accrue both in the Channel and the Mediterranean from knocking out France's principal northern port were not explained, leaving the operation vulnerable to the charge that it was purposeless.(60)

To an extent, the administrative organization of the descent force had already prepared the ground for a refinement of the orders contingent upon the new independence of the operation. During May, as Trenchard laboured to expedite the preparations, a warrant for the embarkation of the troops aboard the ships left by Russell at Spithead under Shovell's command directed Tollemache to consult with the admiral on how best the force might be used for 'annoying the enemy'.(61) No mention was made of the descent's previous purpose as one option for preventing the egress of the French fleet, although equally it was not specifically stated that Brest was to be targeted regardless. That clarification only came some weeks after Russell had concluded his reconnaissance when, on 29 May, Lord Berkeley, who was to command the Channel squadron that was now to be detached from Russell's main fleet, was given a squadron list along with a set of instructions: these clearly directed Berkeley to undertake the descent upon Brest, although a council of war was to decide the actual plan of attack.(62)

On 31 May, after Russell had brought his ships up from Torbay (where he had put in after his reconnaissance mission) to Spithead and the two squadrons had weighed to sail down the Channel, a council was convened aboard Russell's flagship, the *Britannia*. Probably because the only access to Brest and its harbour was through a tight channel called the Goulet, the council decided against a direct attack and instead resolved to land the troops at Camaret Bay on the shore line of the Roscanvel Peninsula. This was the southern of two bays (Bertheaume Bay being the other to the north on the shore of the Plateau du Léon) which flanked the entrance to the Goulet and, if the peninsula could be secured, then batteries might be established not only to bombard Brest but also to provide cover fire for the fleet as it proceeded up the Goulet to conduct its own bombardment of the harbour.(63)

In formulating this plan the council was not wholly ignorant of the potential opposition which might be encountered. Intelligence had come through that Louis XIV had dispatched his celebrated engineer, Vauban, to Brest and that he was busily improving its defences and those on the attendant coastline; there had also been reports of significant numbers of French foot and horse being transferred to the region. Childs points to a series of 'Letters from Brest' mentioned in the London Gazette of 4 June which specifically note trenches and extensive batteries, and upwards of 9,000 troops in the area; he questions why — given that Tollemache was in receipt of at least one of these letters before sailing — the operation was not called off. Only recklessness or a sense of confidence that the force was sufficient to combat the French can provide the answer.(64)

The two squadrons had sailed together for just less than a week when, on 5 June, they parted upon their respective missions.(65) Once Berkeley had brought his Anglo-Dutch fleet of some twenty-nine warships, fireships, bomb and machine vessels safely round the Île d'Ouessant, he called a council of war. This upheld the principal resolutions of 31 May regarding the landing site at Camaret Bay and the subsequent progress of the fleet through the Goulet, but it considerably refined the landing disposition. The *Monck* and the Dutch frigate the *Damiaten* were to engage Vauban's recently built redoubt at the bay as the troops landed; a naval lieutenant was to command each landing boat; and Major-General Lord Cutts secured agreement that not only should 600 grenadiers land as a vanguard but that fifty of them should initially be put ashore to assess the strength of the enemy

entrenchments. Lastly, the council expressed its intent to land that evening or at least for the squadron to stand as far into the bay as circumstances would allow.

Several auxiliary vessels and even some ships had fallen too far astern for any progress to be made on the night of 6/7 June and it was the following afternoon before the fleet anchored in the water between Camaret and Bertheaume bays. On coming to this anchorage, a shortening of the wind had forced the fleet upon a double tack, thus exposing it to fire from the batteries posted at both bays as well as those situated at the Point des Minoux and the Point des Filletes on the north and south sides of the Goulet. Fortunately, none of this ordnance struck home. Curiously though, Tollemache ignored the extent of this fire when, on returning from a reconnaissance of Camaret Bay, he reported that there were neither batteries nor trenches nearby, and with only Camaret fort presenting an obstacle, he predicted that the landing would take place without any opposition. Either on a separate survey mission or accompanying Tollemache (the sources are not clear on this point) the marquess of Carmarthen and Cutts came to a different conclusion about the extent of the French defensive preparations. Returning to the flagship, they argued vigorously to Berkeley that additional ships be sent in with the two already designated to bombard the fort at Camaret Bay, so that fire might be directed against any enemy troops, which they believed would mount considerable opposition to the landing. In accordance with his instructions, Berkeley referred these matters to the council which was to assemble in the early hours of the following morning.

Thick fog at first light on 8 June kept the signal for the council unposted for some four hours, and when the cloud lessened, allowing the council to meet, it also revealed several squadrons of enemy horse on the hills rising behind Camaret Bay.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Clearly the reconnaissance of Carmarthen and Cutts had been more keenly observed than Tollemache's efforts. More importantly, it underscored their argument for an increase in the naval detachment which would act as cover for the landing. Accordingly the council resolved that an additional six vessels would follow the *Monck* and the *Damiaten* into the bay. Carmarthen offered to undertake, and was given, the task of positioning these latter two vessels first and then returning to lead in the remaining six. Meanwhile, the soldiers had been embarking in the landing boats in the previously agreed descent order by which Venner's regiment would follow the grenadiers on to the beach, with the other battalions then descending in reinforcing sequential waves.

In the event, as the landing boats began to follow Carmarthen's detachment into the bay this order was lost — inexcusably given that there was a naval commander in each boat and that the calm weather should have made it easier to manoeuvre these small oared crafts. Conversely, the tranquil weather conditions made Carmarthen's task much harder. In the calm both the *Monck* and the *Damiaten* had to be towed into position which was not only a laborious and finely-balanced manoeuvre but also caused a gap to open up between them and the other ships, now numbering only five as the *Greenwich* had failed to join the detachment. The two warships were exposed to a considerable bombardment from the west side of Camaret Bay and the Point des Filletes before they could either bring their broadside guns to bear or the other vessels arrived in support. Moreover, Carmarthen quickly appreciated that he faced a greater number of batteries - three emplacements with a total of fourteen guns around Camaret church with another redoubt of up to six guns behind the fort — than even his reconnaissance had predicted, and that to combat this he would have to alter the naval detachment's position in the bay. Forced to visit each ship individually to communicate the new positions, critical time was lost as this inshore detachment failed to achieve any superiority over the shore defences, still less to establish an effective fire

support for the beach landing.

The extent of the enemy preparations to oppose the assault also demoralized the landing party as it approached the shore line. Tollemache's aide, Captain Green, understated matters when, on spying three batteries to the right and two to left of the beach, in addition to its three trenches containing troops and another battery, and the 150 musketeers positioned to provide flanking fire, he noted that the men were 'not very forward to land'.(67) It was not, however, just the men who appeared to waver as small arms and ordnance fire began to rain down amongst the boats. Belying the sobriquet 'Salamander', which he was subsequently to gain for stolidity under fire, Cutts failed to organize the fifty pre-vanguard grenadiers. Consequently, Tollemache was forced to cry out to the brigadier to effect the landing and in so doing questioned Cutts's commitment to his orders, although in fairness to Cutts, he had previously argued that the operation should be abandoned if the fifty grenadiers found the enemy entrenchments heavily defended by regular troops — a fact which was clearly apparent without any troop landings. Nonetheless, Cutts's views had not been officially adopted by the council of war and, crucially, his vacillation in command forced Tollemache to land precipitously with only four other officers and nine grenadiers.(68)

Leading up from the beach, about thirty yards from the shore, were some rocks which provided cover for Tollemache and his colleagues while they awaited more troops. Although remaining in his boat, Cutts had now begun to organize the grenadiers and a party of 150 was landed. Tollemache, along with the other officers, moved from the cover of the rocks to lead this group up the beach but, lacking numbers and without adequate covering fire from the vessels in the bay, this party was badly galled by the French batteries. La Motte and many of the grenadiers were killed, while Tollemache was shot in the thigh (a wound from which he was subsequently to die when it became gangrenous back in England) and he struggled back to the shelter of the rocks again with Green and Montargier.(69) A further 200 grenadiers next made it onto the shore and Tollemache, despite his wound, went to rally them for an attack up the beach. Carmarthen's naval detachment was still making no impact upon the French batteries whose fire, along with some French marines, killed many English troops and forced the rest to retreat to the boats. For a third time, Tollemache was back under the rocks with his two colleagues. Just then, Green spied a considerable party of French horse making its way down to the beach and, fearing a rout, he was able to persuade a reluctant Tollemache that the descent could not succeed. Further ignominy was to attend the general before he could leave the bay. The ebb tide at landing had stranded many of the boats on the beach and, with desertions amongst the crews, refloating was proving difficult. After lifting Tollemache into a boat, Green faced this problem, and had to bribe the crew of Berkeley's long-boat to help get the general safely off the shore. The spirit of combined army and navy operational endeavour here was somewhat defective.

As Tollemache's boat reached the relative safety of the flagship, whence he was quickly transferred with a surgeon to the *Dreadnought*, the earl of Macclesfield and Carmarthen were left to withdraw the remaining land and naval forces. Theirs was an unenviable task. Macclesfield, although not on the beach, had to bring off the remaining grenadiers as the French party of horse bore down, and also turn around the other landing craft still burdened with their troops. Carmarthen, meanwhile, had to put about his detachment of ships whose rigging and masts had been badly damaged during their engagement with the fort and shore batteries. Given the progress of the descent to that point, it was perhaps remarkable that only the Dutch vessel, the *Wesep*, and four landing boats (from which approximately fifty grenadiers were taken prisoner) had to be abandoned. However, combined with the 1,091 seamen and troops killed, wounded and missing, this represented an additional failure which

had to be addressed by the council when it convened that afternoon on board the *Dreadnought*.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The council quickly fixed upon the extent of the French defences as the principal cause of the descent's failure, but when Tollemache suggested that a small squadron be sent to bombard Brest, the council demurred on the grounds that it required a prevailing westerly and easterly wind respectively to get in and out of Brest, thus raising the prospect of a considerable delay while waiting for the appropriate weather conditions. Perhaps more revealing, however, were Berkeley's fears about the quantity and capability of French ordnance at the town, which he subsequently confided to Trenchard.⁽⁷¹⁾ Accordingly, as the fleet, upon the council's direction, returned to Spithead to land the soldiers and await further orders, the importance of Vauban's preparations at and around Brest in scuppering the descent was reinforced in English minds. Yet, with respect to the execution of the combined operation, this perception of the role of the French defences can be shown to be largely a tactical and strategic red herring.

First, unwarranted attention is often paid to this issue because of the allegation that it was the earl of Marlborough who had betrayed the project to Louis XIV. Childs rightly warns against concentrating upon an issue which Marlborough's biographers have exhausted. In short, it would seem (assuming the letter is not a forgery) that Marlborough did write to Louis about the descent but that his letter was not the first that the French king had received about the English plans. Effective operational secrecy was rarely achieved in early modern warfare and, as Childs again appositely remarks, Louis's intelligence provision would have had to have been exceptionally inadequate for him not to have known, even as early as April (which he did), what the English planned. It is also significant that, following the bombardment of St. Malo in November 1693, Louis had directed Vauban to make a swift inspection of the defences on the Cotentin peninsula and the Brittany coast. So, when intelligence of the projected Brest attack was received and Vauban ordered in early May (N.S.) to attend specially to the fortifications at Brest and the defences of Camaret and Bertheaume bays, improvements at these places had already been on the French king's agenda.⁽⁷²⁾ Stripped, therefore, of the allure of scandal, the defences should be properly placed within the context of the operation.

The importance of the batteries and the fortifications in the repulse of the English cannot, however, be denied; they were undoubtedly the immediate cause of failure. The commanders knew that Vauban had been fortifying the area, and his reputation pointed to the defences being considerable. Moreover, it was an assessment of the strength of the French position which led to the naval detachment designed for the bay being augmented.⁽⁷³⁾ The descent was launched in the knowledge that it would be opposed and probably vigorously so. However, there was also a reasonable hope that this opposition could be overcome. Given that context, the tactical reasons for failure must be looked for elsewhere. The king was of the opinion that Tollemache's 'too ardent zeal' had caused him to act rashly, thereby implying that his military judgement was suspect.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Macclesfield also made this point, but rather more brutally, when he wrote to Portland after Tollemache's death that the 'King has lost a subject but not a General'.⁽⁷⁵⁾ It was Shrewsbury who, probably inadvertently, provided a credible answer. With few details then to hand, his relation to the king of the events at Brest noted the recollections of an unnamed participant that boats had run into each other and that too many craft had large draughts which were inappropriate for descending upon an ebb tide.⁽⁷⁶⁾ The loss of order by the boats - a naval responsibility - as they followed Carmarthen's detachment into the bay was critical, for the anticipated strike-force momentum built-in by the sequential landing disposition could not be realized.

Moreover, as some boats struggled with the ebb tide and Cutts's irresolution about landing the grenadiers took hold, a confusion arose which prevented Tollemache from reordering the nearby boats to effect a landing of a good number of troops, even if not in sequential waves. Tollemache's military judgement was too severely circumscribed by the conditions, and by Cutts's actions, to be at fault; zeal was all he could offer as a substitute. That could not, however, remedy the woefully inadequate strike-force of five officers and nine grenadiers which was first onto the beach, nor could the additional 350 grenadiers who subsequently landed. The tactical deficiency of the descent was simply the failure to submit the French opposition to the maximum potential of the English plan.

Strategically, the failure at Brest has been attributed - probably unintentionally given that the context of the passage was tactics - to the inflexibility of the operational instructions, which were considered to have afforded Tollemache or the other senior commanders no discretion in target selection.(77) It follows that, as they were unable to favour an alternative point of attack which might have offered better prospects of success when in-theatre, failure was largely predetermined — especially given the extent of the French defences at Brest. This was an issue which subsequently greatly exercised those involved. After the repulse, the afternoon council on 8 June asked Tollemache if he had the authority to mount an attack elsewhere. The general claimed then that he did not and maintained this view until his death on 22 June. However, Secretary Trenchard was equally adamant in his subsequent correspondence that the orders did not restrict Tollemache to land only at Brest and that the council of war possessed the sovereign authority to alter any aspect of the operation. Certainly, when delayed with the fleet at Spithead, and in receipt of intelligence regarding Vauban's work at Brest, Tollemache wrote to the court of his desire to land elsewhere; his proponents later claimed that as no reply was offered the general assumed that the attack on Brest must proceed regardless. It cannot be established whether the court did reply, but before the fleet left England Trenchard reported Tollemache's request to Blathwayt, although he misinterpreted it to mean that Tollemache wanted to undertake an additional attack, which Trenchard dismissed on the grounds of insufficient resources. The secretary did stress to Blathwayt, however, that the operational orders did not fix the assault at a particular place: the council of war was to advise on that. Trenchard returned to these points in correspondence with Blathwayt after reading the minutes of the council of the afternoon of 8 June.(78)

The final instructions issued on 29 May hold the answers. In this document Brest is clearly stated as the first strike target, and Trenchard was being disingenuous in claiming that no particular place had been settled upon, insofar as he meant a wholly different target. The instructions only allowed the council full discretion to determine the landing site and the tactical deployment of the force at Brest. Tollemache, on the other hand, was guilty of ambiguity. His claim that he had no power to order an attack elsewhere was only strictly correct in that he could not personally sanction such a move. The instructions expressly stipulated that, after the land forces had completed whatever was possible at Brest, a council of war was to consider what might be undertaken elsewhere.(79) By prioritizing the targets, the instructions lacked the strategic vision which might have allowed for an alternative place on the Brittany coast to be attacked in pursuance of the same objectives; if a foothold could have been secured on enemy territory then a body of troops might have been dispatched to attack Brest from the interior. Tollemache's failure at Brest was not tactical but strategic: he was too willing to accept the limitations of the instructions.

In the aftermath of the failure at Brest the king indirectly threw his support behind further descents on the northern French coast by confirming that he would not immediately recall

the soldiers to Flanders and was content for them to be otherwise employed. This caused the queen to order Berkeley to hold a council of war of land and sea officers to consider what might now be undertaken against the French coasts. With Brest no longer a viable target, the council, which assembled on 15 June at St. Helens, seemed bereft of ideas. It rather vaguely resolved that the squadron would sail to the northern French coast with the soldiers and the bomb vessels to trouble the enemy as much as the weather conditions would allow. This proved insufficiently detailed for the queen who, through Trenchard, ordered the fleet to the Isle of Wight to land the soldiers until the council decided both upon a particular target and the number of troops to be deployed. In his defence of the council's deliberations, Berkeley drew upon the military case for descents expressed by Littleton's first pamphlet. The admiral chimed that the council's vague resolution to remain ready in sight of the French coast was a ploy to keep the enemy guessing about where a landing might take place, thereby forcing them to stretch their resources to cover all possible options. Berkeley also claimed the more practical motivation that, in light of recent events, it was prudent to keep operational details secret. A further council held on 18 June was only a little more specific in its resolutions, suggesting Calais, Dieppe and Havre de Grace as possible targets. Four regiments were considered sufficient, but it was significant that greater emphasis was placed on their help to man the fleet and the bomb vessels rather than as an assault force. The council was now promoting bombardment as a form of engagement upon the enemy coast and, in conjunction with the increasing impasse between the council and the queen, descents were being undermined as a part of the war policy.(80)

Obviously keen that some attack be made against the French coast, the cabinet council attempted to push events forward by accepting the council of war's prerogative over targeting. The Lords were, however, of the opinion that the full ten battalions should be embarked if the council of war's objective remained to keep the enemy resources stretched; they believed that this would leave weak points on the coast where the English troops might be profitably landed. Consequently, once the king had again confirmed that he did not require the troops in Flanders, Berkeley was ordered to embark the ten battalions, with Macclesfield as their commander.(81) The admiral and the council of war were, however, now settled upon the bombardment of French coastal towns rather than upon troops landings. In early July, the Channel squadron set about bombarding Dieppe and Havre de Grace, reducing the former to ashes and leaving about two-thirds of the latter ablaze. In Berkeley's account of these actions there is no indication that the soldiers were deployed in a combined action, other than as help in manning the fleet and the bomb vessels. Just before sailing from Dieppe, Berkeley did send the *Elizabeth* and a brigantine with Colonel Venner in command of 200 troop to make an assault upon Treport, but this detachment soon returned having failed to effect a landing. In truth, the admiral considered the ten regiments a burden, especially since two of his squadron had been withdrawn to escort the victualling ships bound for the Mediterranean. He warned that the overcrowding would cause the spread of sickness and returned to his claim that four regiments would be sufficient to make good the lack of seamen manning the squadron.(82)

The bombardment of Dieppe and Havre de Grace took its toll upon the bomb vessels and the ship-borne mortars, and Berkeley's squadron was back on the English coast at the end of July for a refit. Permission was then given for him to disembark some of the soldiers if he wished, but he was to come to London for discussions on how best the squadron might be employed for the remainder of the campaign season. It was decided to target Dunkirk and for the rest of the summer attempts were made by the Channel squadron, first under Berkeley and then, when the first and second rates had been laid up at the end of August, under Shovell, to destroy Dunkirk harbour through bombardment or the explosion of fireships and

machine vessels. In mid September, Shovell also brought the squadron in front of Calais to bombard it.(83) At least four regiments from the original ten were aboard the squadron during these attempts but at no point was a landing attempted, nor is there evidence to suggest the troops' active participation in the bombardments.(84) In the event, these assaults proved largely unsuccessful, although support for them increased as the instrument of warfare best directed against the French coastline.(85) A combination of the failure at Brest and their subsequent frustration by the commanding admiral and the council of war had caused the descents to be dropped as the preferred form of coastal attack. In the summer of 1696, a couple of small scale descents - in reality these were little more than raids - were undertaken by Berkeley and Captain Messe at Belle Île le, the islands of Houat and Hoëdic, and Rhé Island, but it would appear that neither infantry nor marine soldiers were involved, and that the brief landings were conducted by the seamen. By mid decade, bombardment was the staple form of assault upon France's northern coasts and the only combined army and navy operations being deployed in the European theatre were in the Mediterranean, through the agency of Russell's fleet.(86)

Two months after leaving Berkeley thirty-seven miles south of Ram Head, Admiral Russell led his fleet of sixty-three warships through the Gibraltar Straits and into the Mediterranean. July had been spent refitting and revictualling at Cádiz and, in search of the combined French fleet, Russell was bound for the waters off Barcelona where Tourville had taken station to succour Noailles's army as it advanced on this principal Catalan town.(87) For the 1694 campaign, Louis XIV had committed large resources to the war in Spain in the hope that Noailles could make considerable gains in Catalonia and force the Spanish to a separate peace. His calculation was that this would damage the unity of the Grand Alliance and perhaps cause the other members to seek individual peace with the French. On 7 May, Noailles's army decamped from Le Boulou and, assisted by Tourville's Toulon squadron, made good progress. The Fluvià and Ter rivers were crossed by the end of May and at the latter the Spanish army, commanded by Catalonia's viceroy the duke of Escalona, was defeated. A month later Palamós and Gerona fell to the French who, shadowed by their now combined fleet, pressed on towards Barcelona; a siege in early autumn seemed probable. However, news of Russell's approach caused Tourville to scurry back to Toulon, believing his fleet to be outnumbered by the Anglo-Dutch force. The balance was more even than the French admiral thought but his actions had effectively allowed Russell to complete his mission of chasing the French from the Mediterranean sea; while it also meant that Noailles was without the necessary fleet support to besiege Barcelona.(88)

Running short of provisions and with only a few weeks left in which the larger rated vessels could remain at sea, Russell's expectation was that he would shortly head for England. The king, however, wishing to consolidate this newly-gained strategic position in the Mediterranean, had other ideas. At the end of July, William let it be known to the cabinet council that he wanted Russell to continue as long as possible in the Mediterranean and, on his departure, to leave a substantial squadron to winter in those parts. William's actual desire was for the whole fleet to winter in the Mediterranean but, as political cover, he wanted the initiative on this to come from his ministers. However, when the cabinet council vacillated, and then issued Russell with instructions which allowed him the option of returning home depending upon the stage in his return journey at which he had received these orders, the king decided to issue his own instructions on 7 August. These were unequivocal: Russell was to use Cádiz as a base and winter with the whole fleet in the Mediterranean; only the passage of the French fleet through the Straits would admit Russell's departure. The prospect of wintering in the Mediterranean had apparently been raised with Russell earlier in the summer, and on that occasion he had argued strongly against it on strategic and

practical grounds. His immediate reaction on receiving his instructions was no different. It was largely due to Shrewsbury's soothing correspondence that Russell accepted the king's orders without first embarrassing himself or endangering his command by raising objections.(89) William now had the strategic presence in the Mediterranean which he had long sought and the 1695 campaign season offered the prospect of converting this into territorial gains upon the French Mediterranean coastline, or into tangible diplomatic currency by helping the Spaniards to force Noailles back across the Pyrenees.

Aside from the marine soldiers aboard, Russell's fleet had no additional troops to use either as a strike force on the French coast or to offer as support to the Spanish army. These circumstances had, in 1694, caused him to reject the Spanish viceroy's proposal to augment his army for attacks against French positions.(90) Accordingly, it was decided in December to boost Russell's capability by dispatching to Cádiz four regiments - about 3,000 men in total. The emphasis of command was indeed upon the admiral for, although Brigadier Stewart was appointed commanding officer of the regiments, he was to defer to Russell about their deployment and Russell was separately commissioned as captain-general. The decision had been taken before the turn of the calendar year to ensure that the troops arrived in the Mediterranean early in the campaign season, but transport arrangements quickly ran into problems. A portion of the troops were to go aboard the victualling convoy and bomb vessels set to leave in the spring but for the remainder ships would have to be hired. The initial hope that these vessels would be ready to come down the Thames to the Downs as soon as the ice melted at the end of January quickly became forlorn as the owners proved punctilious in getting protection for their crews in advance of concluding the charter party negotiations. Even then the transport ships were slow in getting to the Downs whence they were still to sail along the coast to Spithead for the troop embarkation. In late March, William had Blathwayt float a proposal to hire ships at Portsmouth instead. When Lord Cutts, whom the king had appointed to inspect and embark the soldiers, wrote that there was a shortage of 800 berths upon his arrival at Portsmouth, Blathwayt might well have wished that he had pushed the proposal further. It was not just the organization of the transports which gave rise to delay, for problems emerged during the embarkation process. Many of the companies remained unpaid, as a result of their officers' speculation, and it was the stifling of an order about Day by an officer which allegedly led to the mutiny of four companies of Brigadier Stewart's regiment at Salisbury as they marched to Southampton, where they were to board. Cutts's intelligent management of these problems ensured that they did not proliferate, thus allowing him to complete the embarkation towards the end of March. Shortly thereafter, the convoy was reported to be in mid Channel, off St. Catherine's point and bolstered by a fair gale from the east and north. Within approximately three weeks the troops were with Russell.(91)

A descent on Toulon or at Marseilles - similar in form to that undertaken at Brest - was considered by the ministry to be the optimum use of these troops, and the Instructions sent to Russell in May prioritized these targets (not ordering their abandonment as Childs contends). To bolster the attack, a link-up with soldiers provided by the duke of Savoy, Victor Amadeus II, which would march upon the target from the interior, was also mooted and the English envoy in Turin, Lord Galway, was attempting to co-ordinate matters. Russell, however, first attended to the subordinate part of his instructions which required that he put troops into Barcelona to prevent its capture by the French, who were considered likely to make it a priority again in the forthcoming campaign. Then he took the fleet to the Îles d'Hyères whence he was able to reconnoitre Toulon, while Rear-Admiral Neville was sent with four colonels to assess Marseilles. Both missions reported on the extensive French defensive preparations, particularly at Toulon where the French fleet lay, apparently showing

no signs of putting out. In the interval, Victor Amadeus, having set in train the negotiation which would lead to a separate peace with France and Savoy's departure from the Grand Alliance, failed to respond to Galway. Russell then returned to the Catalan coast to find that the troops were not required in Barcelona, the war in Spain having taken a different course from the previous year.(92)

The opportunity for Russell to intervene in the Spanish theatre was a product of the altered military realities in Catalonia, where the energy of the new viceroy and army commander, the marquis de Gastañaga, caused the Spaniards to take the initiative. In the spring, he moved to capture Ostalric and Castelfollit de la Roca and, although on that occasion French relief got through, by the end of July the new French commander, the due de Vendôme, had abandoned the former town in the face of Gastañaga's second approach. The French had retired to Gerona and consequently the viceroy was keen to capture Palamós next, but with only an army of 12,000 (many of whom were sick) and, more importantly, lacking the heavy ordnance which would be necessary to conduct a successful siege, he sought Russell's help.(93) At the beginning of August, after having withdrawn the troops from Barcelona, the two commanders held a meeting at Blanes, about half a day's march from the Spanish camp, and it was agreed that Russell would provide combined military and naval help.(94)

Initially Gastañaga had rather vaguely proposed that Russell land his troops at Blanes whence they would march with the Spanish army to Palamós. The admiral, concerned that this held out the prospect of several days' marching, and presumably keen to firm up the details of the operation, instead informed the viceroy that he would land up to 4,000 soldiers at a bay near Palamós if the siege looked likely to go ahead. Russell also claimed that he then informed Gastañaga that he could spare the troops for just over a week and that their deployment at the siege should allow for a straightforward embarkation back aboard the fleet in the event that the French navy departed from Toulon. Soon after their meeting, Brigadier Stewart was set ashore to consult further on military matters, while Russell took the fleet south down the coast in anticipation of the troop landings and to deliver the first phase of naval support.

On 7 August (N.S.), two bomb vessels were sent into the Bay of Palamós to throw some shells as a preliminary to the siege. Two days later, upon Brigadier Stewart's word that the military circumstances were propitious, with the French army camp reportedly at least four leagues from Palamós at La Bisbal d'Emporda, Russell landed 3,000 English infantry and about 500 Dutch troops under Count Nassau in the early hours of the morning at St. Feliu de Guíxols. Linking up with the Spanish army which had encamped at Calonge, the whole force marched that day to within two miles of Palamós. Covering these final miles the next day, the Anglo-Dutch van encountered a considerable body of enemy horse as they entered a defile and, although they did not attempt to stop the march, it did contradict the report that the French were some days march from Palamós. As the allies settled into their camp just outside the town, Vendôme drew up his army to within a mile, posting his horse in the valley and foot upon the surrounding hills. The French had effectively checked the initial moves of the allied force and, when reports came though that Vendôme was expecting over 4,000 reinforcements from Rousillon, it seemed unlikely that the allies would be able even to invest Palamós.

According to Russell (although it is necessary to keep in mind his contempt for the Spanish) the Spanish commanders next panicked and, expecting a battle the following day, they transferred all power of command to Stewart. In the event, an engagement did not occur. The allies occupied and began fortifying some high ground so that when on 12 August the

French marched forward to inspect their opponent's position, they wheeled north and left for the neighbouring town of Palafrugell. Perhaps they felt the allied position too strong or were surprised at the size of the Spanish army, given that they were probably unaware of the arrival of troops from England. Whatever the reasons, twenty-four hours had been sufficient to make the siege of Palamós appear a realistic proposition.

It took a similar period of time to bring this operation to an end. Over 12-13 August (N.S.), Russell had delivered the second phase of naval support. Bomb vessels and ketches with mortars were towed into Palamós Bay to throw their shells at the town, and were exacting considerable damage, when a frigate, which had previously been dispatched on an intelligence gathering mission along the Provence coast, returned. The captain had taken two Toulon fishermen prisoner and they claimed that the French fleet of sixty warships was now lying in Toulon Road, armed and ready to sail. In order to prevent them passing through the Straits, Russell wished to go in search of them and, once a council of war had sanctioned his resolution, he informed Gastañaga that he was recalling his troops so he could leave the Catalan coast. The Spanish viceroy protested, not least because he had just begun to press the siege forward by landing heavier ordnance brought down from Barcelona, but Russell remained firm. A debate on the viability of continuing with the siege of Palamós followed, although the sources place different emphasis upon the participants. In his correspondence with Shrewsbury, Russell gave himself a central role in pressing the futility of the operation; he foresaw the principal difficulty as that — even with the troops he had put ashore — the total number would be insufficient to combat the French relief army currently at Palafrugell but which could return at any point. Another source emphasized instead the discussions that took place between Gastañaga, his Spanish colleagues and the imperial officer, the prince of Hesse-Darmstadt. During these consultations, Hesse-Darmstadt heard what he considered were defeatist, even treacherous, remarks by the Spanish commanders to the effect that the English fleet was of no service to Spain and that a separate peace treaty would be of greater benefit. He accordingly withdrew the imperial troops and this was thought to have caused the siege to be abandoned. All such discussions probably contributed to the demise of the action, but with regard to the combined operation, it is Russell's account of his own behaviour which is of interest.

Since arriving in the Mediterranean, Russell had made no secret of his contempt for the Spanish in general and their military competence in particular.⁽⁹⁵⁾ He agreed to Gastañaga's request for aid, but inserted a qualification about how long he could have the troops ashore and as soon as intelligence came through which allowed him to recall his troops, he did so. Yet, the urgency that he protested was necessary to prevent the French fleet from passing through the Straits did not seem to extend to embarking the troops. They were not put aboard until 16 August (N.S.) and then Russell, at Gastañaga's request, agreed to support his army as they marched away from Palamós, all the while passing further derogatory comment upon the Spanish. Such conduct begs the question whether this was another example of Russell's equivocation about combined operations, similar to that displayed in 1692 and over the descent on Brest in 1694.

The intelligence about the French fleet's imminent departure proved to have been a ruse concocted by Vendôme. When Russell arrived off Toulon the fleet were found to be still in the harbour, although he was unable to determine the extent of their preparations for sea as bad weather forced him off station. By then, however, any further combined action on the Spanish coast could not be contemplated and, although the French did evacuate from Palamós and Castelfollit de la Roca, they maintained a presence in Catalonia. In October, leaving a squadron of ships under Vice-Admiral David Mitchell, which Sir George Rooke was

on his way to augment, Russell returned to England. He took all the troops with him - save for a couple of companies from Colonel Pusissar's regiment - and there were to be no further combined operations in the Mediterranean. For the remaining two years of the war, England maintained a squadron in the Mediterranean sufficient for the protection of trade, but without the military capability to intervene decisively on the French or Spanish coasts. Indeed, Barcelona fell to the French in 1697.⁽⁹⁶⁾ The abandonment of descents or combined operations as part of the war strategy in the northern European theatre had been quickly followed in the southern Mediterranean region.

In various guises, and with limited success, England's war policy in the European theatre during the Nine Years' War embraced combined operations as a strategic instrument of war, but not in a manner that served to revolutionize the military component of the court's Grand Strategy. It is important to understand, however, that this was never the contemporary aspiration for these operations; and the condemnation - offered principally by Childs - of the supposed Grand Strategic ambition of these combined operations tilts at an historical illusion as to their operational purpose.

Combined operations as descents in the European theatre were motivated by differing strategic and tactical reasons. The potential (as articulated in Littleton's pamphlets) of the proposed landings in Normandy to alter the balance of force in Flanders was recognized, while there were obvious immediate maritime benefits to be gained from destroying or capturing coastal ports such as Brest. Moreover, the targeting of the latter in the sixteenth-nineties contributed indirectly but substantially to the grander naval ambition of establishing England as the preponderant power in the Mediterranean. In these respects, combined operations should be appropriately looked upon as embedded within the Grand Strategy, and, depending upon the ascendancy of the whigs or tories in the ministry, as contributing to their favoured continental or maritime policies. The whigs' commitment to William's campaigning on the European continent disposed them to arguments regarding the diversionary capacity in the land theatre of descents, while the tories were keen to link the amphibious capability to the maritime standard.

This political split on strategy was more general than absolute, however. The king, principally advised by Blathwayt, kept a tight rein over war policy and, in the context of the European theatre, emerged as the most relevant champion of the combined operation in either a maritime or continental context. Indeed, such was the level of William's commitment that the descents on the northern French coast were allowed to continue longer than their manifest failure admitted and, although the fleet may have wintered in the Mediterranean for the first time in 1694—5, its combined operational deployment in the following campaign season made little impact. A history of operational failure should not, however, obscure the positive choice that William and his ministries made to deploy combined operations in the European theatre as handmaidens to the broader continental and maritime strategies which were developed to combat French military power during the Nine Years' War.

Endnotes

(1) Edward Littleton, *Portrait of a Descent Upon France* (1691), p. 28.

(2) Littleton, *Portrait of a Descent*, pp. 1-28

(3) Nottingham University Library (hereafter N.U.L.), PwV 55, fos. 63-70, memorial, Berlin, 2 Oct. 1693.

(4) J. Childs, *The British Army of William III, 1689-1702* (Manchester, 1987), pp. 209-18; J.

Childs, *The Nine Years War and the British Army, 1688-1697: Operations in the Low Countries* (Manchester, 1991), p. 28.

(5) Childs, *British Army*, p. 216.

(6) A. Browning, *Thomas Osborne, Earl of Danby and Duke of Leeds, 1632-1712* (3 vols., Glasgow, 1944-51), ii. 202-4, Carmarthen to [the King], 18 July 1691.

(7) Childs, *British Army*, pp. 209-37; J. Childs, 'Secondary operations of the British Army during the Nine Years War, 1688-97', *Jour. Society for Army Historical Research*, lxxiii (1995), 73-98, at pp. 74-80; J. Ehrman, 'William III and the emergence of a Mediterranean naval policy, 1692-4', *Cambridge Historical Jour.*, ix (1949), 268-92; H. Richmond, *Statesmen and Sea Power* (Oxford, 1946), pp. 66-7, 70-2, 75.

(8) C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. M. Howard and P. Paret (Princeton, N.J., 1989), p. 87. See H. Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 1-2; and J. T. Sumida, 'On the relationship of history and theory in On War: the Clausewitzian ideal and its implications', *Jour. Military Hist.*, lxxv (2001), 333-54, at pp. 347-8.

(9) T. Claydon, *William III* (2002), p. 151.

(10) G. Symcox, *The Crisis of French Sea Power 1688-97* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 3-4, 6-8, 169-77.

(11) J. S. Corbett, *England in the Mediterranean: a Study of the Rise and Influence of British Power Within the Straits, 1603-1713* (2 vols., 2nd edn., 1917), ii. 420-65; S. F. Gradish, 'The establishment of British seapower in the Mediterranean, 1689—1713', *Canadian Jour. Hist.*, x (1975), 1-9; Ehrman, 'Emergence of a Mediterranean naval policy', pp. 268-92; Childs, 'Secondary operations', pp. 74-80.

(12) Childs, *British Army*, p. 217.

(13) Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Finch MSS.*, iii. 17—18, Nottingham to the lord president [Carmarthen], 17 Feb. 1689; 98-9, Nottingham to Portland, 5 June 1690; 128-9, 188, Nottingham to Sydney, 26 June, 31 July 1691; 140—1, 165, 191, Sydney to Nottingham, 6, 20 July, 3 Aug. 1691; 182, 281, Nottingham to Ginkel, 28 July, 6 Oct. 1691; 183-4, Nottingham to Russell, 29 July 1691; 202-3, Russell to [Nottingham], n Aug. 1691; 397, 402, minutes of the committee (cabinet council), 23 June, 28 July 1691; Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, p. x; Browning, ii. 202-6, Carmarthen to [the king], 18 July, 28 Aug. 1691.

(14) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 32, pp. 18-19, memorial for Mr. Blathw[ayt], 3 March 1692; London, National Maritime Museum (hereafter N.M.M.), SOU/13, unfoliated, Nottingham to Blathwayt, 19, 21 Apr., 6, 17, 24 May 1692; [Blathwayt] to 'My Lord' [Nottingham], 9, 19, 22 May 1692 [N.S.]. H. Horwitz, *Revolution Politicks: the Career of Daniel Finch 2nd Earl of Nottingham, 1647-1730* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 130.

(15) J. Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III 1689-97: its State and Direction* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 393-7; R. Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare 1650-1830* (1999), pp. 154-5; W. S. Churchill, *Marlborough: his Life and Times* (4 vols., 1st edn., 1933 — 8; 1967), i. 338-41.

(16) Ehrman, *The Navy*, pp. 399-400.

(17) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 255, pp. 133-4, Russell to Nottingham, 9 May 1692; no. 287, pp. 152-3, Russell to Nottingham, 13 May 1692; no. 349, pp. 183-4, Russell to Nottingham, 25 May 1692; no. 361, pp. 189-90, Russell to Nottingham, 27 May 1692.

(18) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, p. xxxi; no. 350, p. 185, Nottingham to Russell, 26 May 1692; no. 357, p. 188, Nottingham to Blathwayt, 27 May 1692; no. 367, pp. 193-4, council of flag officers, 30 May 1692. Ehrman, *The Navy*, pp. 399-400.

(19) Horwitz, *Revolution Politicks*, p. 131; Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 433, pp. 228-9, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 13/23 June 1692; N.M.M., SOU/13, unfoliated, Nottingham to 'Sir' [Blathwayt], 22 June 1692; [Blathwayt] to 'My Lord' [Nottingham], 2 June, 7 July 1692 [N.S.].

- (20) N.M.M., SOU/13, unfoliated, [Blathwayt] to 'My Lord' [Nottingham], 7 July 1692 [N.S.].
- (21) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, p. xxxv; no. 505, pp. 270—1, Russell to Nottingham, 30 June 1692; no. 550, p. 299, Nottingham to Russell, 7 July 1692. Horwitz, *Revolution Politics*, pp. 131-2.
- (22) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, pp. xxxv-xxxvi; nos. 622, 639, pp. 334, 343, Meese to [Nottingham], 22, 26 July 1692; nos. 635, 664, pp. 340-1, 358-9, Nottingham to Blathwayt, 26 July, 1 Aug. 1692; nos. 636, 665, pp. 341, 359, Nottingham to Russell, 26 July, 1 Aug. 1692; no. 637, p. 342, the queen to Russell, 26 July 1692; no. 643, pp. 344-5, Leinster to Nottingham, and enclosure (i); nos. 649, 655, pp. 348-51, 354, Russell to Nottingham, 29, 30 July 1692, and enclosure (i); N.M.M., SOU/14, unfoliated, Nottingham to Blathwayt, I, 3 Aug. 1692.
- (23) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 682, p. 369, Nottingham to Portland, 5 Aug. 1692.
- (24) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, pp. xxxvi—xxxvii; no. 646, pp. 345-6, the king to Nottingham, [28 July/] 7 Aug. 1691 and enclosure (i); no. 680, p. 368, the queen to Leinster, 5 Aug. 1692. British Library, Additional MS. 37991 fo. 135, Nottingham to Blathwayt, 3 Aug. 1692; fos. 146—7, 162—4, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 8, 29 Aug. 1692.
- (25) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, p. xxxvii.
- (26) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 689, pp. 373-4, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 8 Aug. 1692 and enclosure (i).
- (27) N.U.L., PwA 1432, unfoliated, 'A Project made in the Year 1692'; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 61337 fos. 19-31, 'Memoire touchant le Siege de D.: Fait au mois de janvier, 1692'; Childs, *Nine Years War*, pp. 178, 210, n. I; G. J. Wolseley, *The Life of John Churchill Duke of Marlborough to the Accession of Queen Anne* (2 vols., 1894), ii. 265-6; Churchill, i. 333-4, esp. p. 333, n. 8. Childs obliquely, and Wolseley directly, suggest that Marlborough was responsible for betraying the Dunkirk project to the French. Churchill, however, derided Wolseley's evidence for this charge but in the process made the claim that the plan was not formulated until Aug. - a view contrary to the manuscript source.
- (28) Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37991 fos. 161-4, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 25 Aug. 1692; N.U.L., PwA 1001 fos. 1-2, Carmarthen to Portland, 5 Aug. 1692; *The Portledge Papers*, ed. R. J. Kerr and I. Coffin-Duncan (1928), pp. 144-5, Laphthorne to Coffin, 6, 13, 18, 20 Aug. 1692.
- (29) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 679, p. 368, the queen to Russell, 5 Aug. 1692; no. 680, p. 368, the queen to Leinster, 5 Aug. 1692; no. 690, p. 374, Shovell to Nottingham, 8 Aug. 1692; no. 704, p. 380, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 14/24 Aug. 1692 and enclosure (i); no. 726, pp. 393-4, Leinster to Nottingham, 10 Aug. 1691; no. 741, p. 401, Leinster to Nottingham, 17 Aug. 1691. The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Record Office, ADM 7/692, p. 53, order to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, 6 Aug. 1692; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37991 fos. 141-3, Nottingham to Blathwayt, 12 Aug. 1692.
- (30) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, p. xxxvii; no. 742, p. 402, Atkinson to Nottingham, 17 Aug. 1692; no. 767, p. 411, Shovell to Nottingham, 22 Aug. 1692; no. 788, pp. 421-2, Portland to [Nottingham], 26 Aug. [1692]; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37991 fos. 161-4, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 25, 29 Aug. 1692.
- (31) 'Machine Vessels' were small ships containing explosive 'machines' (which Ehrman, *The Navy*, p. 573, compares to modern depth charges) with a firing device which could be set to explode once the vessel had been towed inshore and ideally placed alongside the intended target. Meester was a Dutch artillery officer at the forefront of the vessels' development during the 1690s, although his Machines were utter failures in all respects. For a history of the 'Machine Vessel' both before and after Meester's versions, see E. W. H. Fyers, 'The story of Machine Vessels', *Mariner's Mirror*, xi (1925), 50-90.
- (32) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 785, p. 420, Shovell to Nottingham, 26 Aug. 1692; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37991 fos. 162-4, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 29 Aug. 1692.

- (33) Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37991 fos. 159-60, 165-6, Blathwayt to Nottingham, i, 8 Sept. 1692; Hist. MSS. Cornm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 839, p. 448, Shovell to Nottingham, 7 Sept. 1692.
- (34) Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37991 fos. 159-60, 164-6, Blathwayt to Nottingham, i, 5, 8 Sept. 1692; Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, no. 847, pp. 453—4, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 12 Sept. 1692; no. 855, pp. 457-8, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 15 Sept. 1692.
- (35) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Finch MSS.*, iv, p. xxxviii.
- (36) Cobbett's *Parliamentary History of England: from the Norman conquest in 1066 to the year 1803* (36 vols., 1806-20), v. 707.
- (37) The Commons debates can be followed in A. Grey, *Debates of the House of Commons from the Year 1667 to the Year 1694* (10 vols., 1763), x. 243-8, 252, 263-79, 291-6; and in *The Parliamentary Diary of Narcissus Luttrell, 1691-3*, ed. H. Horwitz (Oxford, 1972), pp. 218-19, 220-4, 239-41, 271-7, 294-6, 310, 329-33. The papers submitted during these debates can be found in *Commons Journals*, x. 714-23, 749-59. H. Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III* (Manchester, 1977), pp. 104—22, is a detailed secondary account of the parliamentary proceedings.
- (38) Ehrman, *The Navy*, pp. 409-13; Horwitz, *Revolution Politicks*, pp. 135-41; Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics*, pp. 109, 114-15.
- (39) Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37992 fos. 26-7, Blathwayt to Trenchard, 27 Apr. 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, pp. 3, 6, 9, Trenchard to the admirals, 18, 24 Apr., 3 May 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 7/694, p. 41, order to the admirals, 4 May 1693; Browning, ii. 214-16, Carmarthen to [the king], 28 Apr. 1693.
- (40) *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1693*, pp. 102-3, [Godolphin] to the king, 18 Apr. 1693.
- (41) Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37992 fos. 26-7, Blathwayt to Trenchard, 27 Apr. 1693.
- (42) N.M.M., SOU/14, unfoliated, [Blathwayt] to Nottingham, 27 Apr. 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 3/8, board minutes, 9, 10, 22, 25 May 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 7/694, pp. 41, 55, order to the admirals, 4, 10 May 1693; pp. 33-4, 77-80, 92-4, Admiralty to the admirals, 10, 23, 24 May 1693; pp. 67-8, 72-4, 82, the admirals to 'Rt Honble', 18, 22, 24 May 1693.
- (43) Ehrman, 'Emergence of a Mediterranean naval policy', p. 270.
- (44) Ehrman, 'Emergence of a Mediterranean naval policy', pp. 270-1; S. Harris, *Sir Cloudesley Shovell: Stuart Admiral* (2001), pp. 163-4, 166.
- (45) Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37992 fos. 6-8, Blathwayt to Nottingham, 15 May 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, p. 14, instructions for Thomas, marquis of Carmarthen and others, 13 May 1693; p. 15, order to the admirals, 13 May 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 7/694, pp. 56-8, the admirals to 'Rt Honble', 18 May 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 7/694, pp. 70-1, order to the admirals, 19 May 1693.
- (46) Symcox, p. 134.
- (47) T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 7/694, pp. 101-3, the admirals to 'Rt Honble', 16 June 1693; C. de la Ronciere, *Histoire de la Marine Française* (6 vols., Paris, 1932), vi. 139-48; Ehrman, 'Emergence of a Mediterranean naval policy', pp. 276-8; Harris, pp. 167-9.
- (48) T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 7/694, pp. 184-90, the admirals to 'Rt Honble', 17 Aug. 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 7/694, pp. 203-4, council of war minutes, 19 Aug. 1693; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, p. 29, Trenchard to the victualling commissioners, 23 June 1693; pp. 30, 42, Trenchard to the transport commissioners, 23 June, 21 July 1693; p. 34, Trenchard to Clark, 4 July 1693; p. 42, Trenchard to the principal officers of the ordnance, 21 July 1693.
- (49) Edward Littleton, *The Descent Upon France Considered; In a Letter to a Member of Parliament* (1693).
- (50) T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/5248, naval minutes, 29 Dec. 1693, 11 Feb. 1694; Ehrman, 'Emergence of a Mediterranean naval policy', pp. 280-1; Childs, *British Army*, p. 221.
- (51) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, pp. 87-91, instruction for Sir Francis Wheeler Kt., 20 Nov.

- 1693; N. Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs From September 1678 to April 1714* (6 vols., Oxford, 1857), iii. 195, 225, 287; Ehrman, *The Navy*, pp. 503-5, 510; Corbett, ii. 152.
- (52) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, pp. 109-10, instructions for Edward Russell, 24 Apr. 1694.
- (53) Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics*, pp. 116-19, 125; Horwitz, *Revolution Politics*, pp. 143-9; T. Merz, *The Junto* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1907), pp. 108-27.
- (54) *Private and Original Correspondence of Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury*, ed. W. Coxe (1821) (hereafter *Shrewsbury Correspondence*), p. 192, Russell to Shrewsbury, 3 May 1694.
- (55) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, p. 192, Russell to Shrewsbury, 3 May 1694; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, pp. 109-10, instructions for Edward Russell, 24 Apr. 1694.
- (56) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, p. 192, Russell to Shrewsbury, 3 May 1694; Hist. MSS. Comm., *Buckleuch Montague MSS.*, ii, pt. i, p. 64, Russell to Shrewsbury, 3 May 1694; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/204, p. 114, Trenchard to Sydney, 2 May 1694.
- (57) Throughout its 800-year history, the Tollemache family name has been spelt in a variety of ways (see E. D. H. Tollemache, *The Tollemaches of Helmingham and Ham* (Ipswich, 1949), p. 13).
- (58) N.M.M., SOU/2 fos. 211-14, Trenchard to Blathwayt, 11 May 1694; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/167, p. 212, order to Henry, Viscount Sydney, 28 Apr. 1694; *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, pp. 194-6, Russell to Shrewsbury, 24 May 1694; *Memoirs Relating to the Lord Torrington*, ed. J. K. Laughton (Camden 2nd ser., xlvii, 1889), pp. 66-7.
- (59) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, pp. 193-4, Shrewsbury to Russell, 5, 19 May 1694.
- (60) A. N. Ryan, 'William III and the Brest fleet in the Nine Years War', in *William III and Louis XIV: Essays 1680—1720 by and for Mark A. Thomson*, ed. R. M. Hatton and J. S. Bromley (Liverpool, 1968), pp. 49-67, at p. 64; Childs, *British Army*, p. 224.
- (61) N.M.M., SOU/2 fbs. 207-10, warrant to Lt.-Gen. Talmash, 11 May 1694.
- (62) N.M.M., SOU/2 fos. 272-4, orders to Lord Berkeley, 29 May 1694.
- (63) Marquess of Carmarthen, *A Journal of the Brest Expedition* (1694), pp. 6-8; Brit. Libr., *Egerton MS. 3359 fo. 5*, 'A Draught of Breste and the Harbour'; Childs, *British Army*, pp. 226-7.
- (64) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, pp. 131-2, Trenchard to Russell, 24 May 1694, and enclosure; *Cal. S.P. Dom, 1694-5*, p. 155, Trenchard to Russell, 28 May 1694, and enclosure; *Cat. S.P. Dom, 1695 and Addenda 1689-95*, p. 258, newsletter, 24 May 1694; Grantham, Buckminster Park Estate, Tollemache Family Archives, 716, unfoliated, 'An Account of the Proceedings of the Brest Expedition' (hereafter 'Brest Expedition'); Childs, *British Army*, p. 228; *London Gazette*, no. 2983, 11-14 June 1694. The author is grateful to Sir Lyonel Tollemache for permission to publish the account of the 'Brest Expedition'.
- (65) The ensuing account of the descent upon Brest is based on the following primary sources and secondary authorities: Carmarthen, pp. 9-34; Brit. Libr., Add MS. 61264 fos. 9-12, 'Report of Descent on Brest'; Tollemache, 'Volunteer with Lt.-Gen. Talmach in the Expedition to Brest, Given this 15th June 1694', pp. 78-80 (hereafter Tollemache); 'Brest Expedition'; 'The attempt on Brest, 1694', in *The Naval Miscellany II*, ed. J. K. Laughton (Naval Records Soc., xl, 1910), pp. 202-5; Hist. MSS. Comm., *Portland MSS.*, viii. 41-2, 'Engagement in Camarett Bay'; N.M.M., SOU/3 fos. 35-7, 'My Lords Cutts His Account of the Attempt at Brest', 9 June 1694; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/3 fos. 522-5, Berkeley to Trenchard, 9 June 1694; A. le Moyne de la Bordene, *Histoire de Bntagne* (6 vols., Rennes, 1972), v. 565-7; G. Gustave-Toudouze, *Monsieur de Vauban* (Paris, 1954), pp. 103-40.
- (66) Numbers given in the sources range from 5 to 14 squadrons of enemy horse.
- (67) Tollemache, p. 79.
- (68) The officers were Col. de la Motte, Lt.-Col. de Montargier, Capt. Green and an ensign accompanying the grenadiers.

- (69) Childs, *British Army*, p. 234 states that Tollemache received his wound on making his final retreat from the rocks to the shore. Capt. Green's account, which clearly states that the general was shot in the thigh when he went to lead the 150 grenadiers who had landed, is preferred here (Tollemache, p. 79).
- (70) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/3 fos. 518-19, totals of seamen and troops killed, wounded or missing during the Brest operation. These official figures may have been massaged downwards.
- (71) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/3 fos. 522-5, Berkeley to Trenchard, 9 June 1694.
- (72) Childs, *British Army*, pp. 224-7, 238, n. 19; B- Pujos, *Vauban* (Paris, 1991), p. 191; Y. le Gallo, *Histoire de Brest* (Toulouse, 1976), p. 130.
- (73) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, pp. 131-2, Trenchard to Russell, 24 May 1694, and enclosure; 'Brest Expedition'; Carmarthen, pp. 14-17.
- (74) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, p. 46, William III to Shrewsbury, 1 July 1694 [N.S.].
- (75) N.U.L., PwA 469, unfoliated, Macclesfield to Portland, 16 July 1694.
- (76) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, pp. 41-4, Shrewsbury to William III, 15 June 1694.
- (77) Childs, *British Army*, p. 235.
- (78) N.M.M., SOU/3 fo. 25, council of war minutes, 8 June 1694; N.M.M., SOU/3 fos. 67-8, Trenchard to Blathwayt, 15 June 1694; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/3 fos. 522-5, Berkeley to Trenchard, 9 June 1694; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, p. 138, Trenchard to Berkeley, 13 June 1694; 'Brest Expedition'; N.M.M., SOU/2 fos. 275-8, Trenchard to Blathwayt, 29 May 1694.
- (79) N.M.M., SOU/2 fos. 272-4, orders to Lord Berkeley, 29 May 1694.
- (80) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, pp. 138, 140, Trenchard to Berkeley, 13, 16 June 1694; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/3 fos. 540-3, 556-9, 566-9, Berkeley to Trenchard, 13, 17, 18 June 1694; fos. 552-5, 564-5, council of war minutes, 15, 18 June 1694; fos. 588-91, Cutts to Anon., 21 June 1694.
- (81) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/3 fos. 152-3, committee of council minutes, 21 June 1694; N.M.M., SOU/3 fos. 107-14, Trenchard to Blathwayt, 22, 26 June 1694; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, p. 145, warrants to Lord Berkeley and the earl of Macclesfield, 23 June 1694.
- (82) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/3 fos. 592-9, 606-9, 628-31, 652-5, 664-7, 684-7, 718-21, Berkeley to Trenchard, 25, 28 June, 2, 6, II, 13, 17, 25 July 1694; fos. 600-1, 674-5, council of war minutes, 28 June, 14 July 1694; fos. 616-23, 978-85, Admiralty to Trenchard, 4, 13 July 1694, and enclosures.
- (83) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 44/205, pp. 156, 159, 162, 164, 172, Trenchard to Berkeley, 16, 21, 26 July, 6, n, 15 Aug. 1694; p. 176, Trenchard to the Admiralty, 24 Aug. 1694; N.M.M., SOU/3 fos. 183-6, 203-6, 223-6, 231-4, 249-52, 315-18, Trenchard to Blathwayt, 27, 31 July, 3, 7, 10, 24 Aug. 1694. T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/4, unfoliated, committee of council minutes, 15, 23 Aug. 1694; Richards to Anon., 18 Aug. 1694; Hopson to Anon., 29 Aug. 1694; Shovell to Trenchard, 29 Aug. 1694; orders to Shovell, 31 Aug. 1694; Admiralty to Shovell, 10 Sept. 1694.
- (84) Hist. MSS. Comm., *Frankland-Russell-Astley MSS.*, p. 79, [Lord Cutts] to Trenchard, 27 July 1694. T.N.A.: P.R.O., WO 5/7, unfoliated, orders to Cols. Stewart, Venner and Hastings, 25 Sept. 1694; order to Brig. Erle, 9 Oct. 1694.
- (85) N.M.M., SOU/3 fos. 302-10, Trenchard to Blathwayt, 21 Aug. 1694. T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/4, unfoliated, Shovell to Shrewsbury, 13, 19 Sept. 1694; Harris, pp. 193-5.
- (86) Harris, pp. 197-224; Harding, p. 162; W. Clowes, *The Royal Navy: a History from the Earliest Times to the Present* (7 vols., 1897-1903), ii. 481-4; Ryan, pp. 64-5.
- (87) *An Exact Journal of the Victorious Expedition of the Confederate Fleet, the Last Year, Under the Command Admiral Russell* (1695), pp. 1-4; T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/3 fos. 602-5, 714-17, Russell to Trenchard, I, 28 July 1694; *Memoirs Relating to the Lord Torrington*, p. 67.
- (88) *An Exact Journal of the Victorious Expedition*, pp. 4-7; C. Sevin de Quincy, *Histoire*

- Militaire du Regne de Louis Le Grand* (4 vols., Paris, 1726), iii. 54-70; J. A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV 1667-1714* (1999), pp. 243-4; Childs, 'Secondary operations', p. 76.
- (89) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, p. 65-70, 72-5, Shrewsbury to the king, 3, 14, 28 Aug., 7 Sept. 1694; pp. 68-71, 75-6, the king to Shrewsbury, 16, 30 Aug. 12 Oct. 1694 [N.S.]; pp. 198-9, Russell to Shrewsbury, 1 July, 3 Aug. 1694; pp. 200-1, 204-9, Shrewsbury to Russell, 4, 14, 26 Aug., 25 Sept., 23 Oct., 20 Nov. 1694; N.M.M. SOU/3 fos. 203-6, 315-18, Trenchard to Blathwayt, 31 July, 14. 24 Aug. 1694; Ehrman, 'Emergence of a Mediterream naval policy', pp. 284-92.
- (90) T.N.A.: P.R.O., SP 42/4, unfoliated, council of war minutes, 2 Aug. 1694; Russell to Anon., 3 Aug. 1694. *Memoirs relating to Lord Torrington*, pp. 68-9.
- (91) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, p. 78, Shrewsbury to the king, 23 Dec. 1694; pp. 222-4, Russell to Shrewsbury, 10 Feb. 1695; T.N.A.: P.R.O., WO 5/7, unfoliated, Blathwayt to Bridgeman, 9, 16, 19 Jan, 6 Feb. 1695; Blathwayt to the commissioners of transportation, 16 Jan., 21, 22 Feb., 7, 8 March 1695; Blathwayt to Cutts, 17 March 1695; SP 44/168, p. 104, instructions for Brig.-Gen. William Stewart, 12 March 1695; 'Lord Cutts's letters, 1695', ed. J. Childs, *Camden Miscellany XXX* (Camden 4th ser., xxxix, 1990), nos. 12, 14, 17, 19-20, pp. 394, 396, 398-404, Cutts to Blathwayt, 16, 19, 21, 22, 24 Mar. 1695; no. 13, p. 395, Rivett to Cutts, 19 March 1695; no. 18, pp. 399-400, Blathwayt to Cutts, 21 March 1695.
- (92) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, pp. 228-31, Shrewsbury to Russell, 7 May, 2 July 1695; pp. 229-42, Russell to Shrewsbury, 2, n May, 14 June, 21 July, 16 Aug. 1695; Hist. MSS. Comm., *Buckleuch Montague MSS.*, ii, pt. i, pp. 182-3, privy council minutes, 4 May, afternoon 4 May 1695; Childs, 'Secondary operations', pp. 77-8.
- (93) Quincy, iii. 77-81; Lynn, pp. 251-2.
- (94) The ensuing account of the operation to retake Palamós is based upon the following primary sources and secondary authorities: N.M.M., SOU/16 fos. 5-12, 'An account of proceedings from the first time it was desired of me that His Majesty's subjects land in Catalonia', 16 Aug. 1689; T.N.A.:P.R.O., SP 94/74 fos. 4-6, Stanhope to 'My Lord', 28 Aug. 1695 and enclosure; Kent, Maidstone, Centre for Kentish Studies, U1590 C9/1/33, 'Father' to James, 4 Aug. 1695 [N.S.] (Alexander Stanhope specifically claims that Russell offered help to Gastañaga before being asked for it, but this is not borne out by other evidence); Quincy, iii. 77-81; Lynn, pp. 251-2; Childs, 'Secondary operations', pp. 78-80.
- (95) *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, pp. 216-18, 242-5, Russell to Shrewsbury, 31 Dec. 1694, 4 Sept. 1695.
- (96) Quincy, iii. 178; *Shrewsbury Correspondence*, pp. 242—5, Russell to Shrewsbury, 4 Sept. 1695; T.N.A.: P.R.O., WO 5/7, unfoliated, orders to Brig. Stewart, Cols. Brudenell, Coote and Puissar, 2 Nov. 1695; Lynn, pp. 251-2; Harding, p. 162.