



**LAST VOYAGE OF THE KALMAR NYCKEL:
Epitaph for an Exceptional Ship
(June 14 to July 22, 1652)**

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Somewhere in the North Sea off the east coast of Scotland, near Buchan Ness, lie the unmarked remains of our original namesake *Kalmar Nyckel*,¹ one of the great ships of the 17th century. She went down valiantly, with guns blazing, once again in the service of the Dutch fleet after a long and distinguished career with the Swedes,² fighting back against the English in the opening engagement of what would become the First Anglo-Dutch War. Flying Dutch colors as the *Kalmar Sleutel*,³ she had come full circle. A workhorse of a ship since being launched in Holland in about 1625, she would end her career with the people who had built her so many years before.⁴

For the first time we have what amounts to a definitive “death certificate” for our namesake *Kalmar Nyckel*. This essay traces the missing last chapter in the career of a remarkable ship, the final year from when she left Swedish service and was decommissioned by Queen Christina on 19 June 1651 until her ultimate demise fighting for the Dutch off Scotland on 22 July 1652. After decades of guesswork and speculation about this unknown endgame,⁵ the evidence presented here puts to rest conjecture about

the demise of our noble *Nyckel*. We can make peace with the past and move forward with pride and renewed purpose,⁶ finding satisfaction in closing a mystery left unanswered for so long.

Unlocking “The Key”

After twenty-two years of distinguished service to the Swedish Realm, the *Kalmar Nyckel* was decommissioned in 1651 and sold to a private merchant. An inspection by the Swedish Admiralty had determined that her aging conditions were worsening and that she would not be sound enough to cross the Atlantic for a fifth time as a colonial ship for New Sweden.⁷ By written consent of Queen Christina herself on 19 June 1651,⁸ *Kalmar Nyckel* was decommissioned and sold to Cornelis Roelofsen,⁹ a Dutch merchant living in Stockholm and known to members of the Swedish governing elite.¹⁰ This much we have always known, and Roelofsen is named in the document.

We don’t know exactly what Dutch merchant Roelofsen did with the *Kalmar Nyckel* immediately after the purchase, but we can be confident that he took note of the larger drama unfolding along the Dutch

coast, some nine hundred miles southwest of Stockholm. Dutch maritime might had been irritating English pride across the Channel for some time, and the wealth produced by Dutch trade and fishery proved an irresistible target for English privateers and naval predators. The dispute over control of the sea lanes around the British Isles led increasingly to warlike preparations among the English and Dutch forces.¹¹ As English Admiral George Monck put it at the time, “The Dutch have too much trade, and we intend to take it from them.”¹²

What we do know is that Roelofsen had the *Kalmar Nyckel* outfitted for war, up-gunned to 20 “pieces,” and had her in Amsterdam available for hire by 11 April 1652 – just when deputies of the Dutch States General¹³ came looking for ships to augment their navy.¹⁴ The States General had decided that the navy needed significant reinforcements if the Dutch were to defend their far-flung merchant and fishing fleets from English predators. The decision to reinforce the navy was made on 3 March 1652,¹⁵ and the States General requested the five Dutch Admiralties¹⁶ to find, hire, renovate, and equip 150 ships for patrol and escort duty. In response, the Admiralty Board of Rotterdam sent two deputies, Van Dorp and Van Santen, to Amsterdam to look for suitable ships. On 11 April, deputies Van Dorp and Van Santen examined the ships in Amsterdam harbor. They reported back to Rotterdam on 22 April that they had hired five ships: The *Vergulde Beer* (“Gilded Bear”); the *Sphera Mundi* (“Globe”); the *Sint Maria* (“Saint Mary”); the *Hollandia* (“Holland”); and, our *Kalmar Sleutel*¹⁷ – the last word is the Dutch literal translation of

‘Nyckel,’ *Sleutel* meaning “Key” in Dutch as well. The list records Cornelis Roelofsen as the owner of the *Kalmar Sleutel*. Van Dorp and Van Santen also reported that the owners had agreed to move the five ships from Amsterdam to Rotterdam and have 35 men aboard each.¹⁸

Ship’s Inventory – 22nd April 1652

Before the move to Rotterdam, Roelofsen had an extensive “Inventory” of his ship drawn up: “Kalmar Sleutel, old about 20 years, long over the bow 103 feet, wide 25 feet, its hold 11 feet, there above 6 feet, with a new pine hull.” Written in Dutch and prepared by Roelofsen, who signed it, the Inventory is dated 22nd April 1652.¹⁹ Although Roelofsen was a bookkeeping businessman and simply recording the value of the ship he was hiring out to the Dutch Admiralty, his Inventory gives us the most complete list of the ship’s equipment we have in all of her long career. It’s an interesting and important document that we are just beginning to study (*See Appendix: Inventory*). From the 11th of April onward, our namesake *Kalmar Sleutel* (*née Nyckel*) appears repeatedly and consistently in the Dutch archives (with confirmation from English records, too), allowing us to trace her final months with something close to certainty.

Last Captain and Crew of the Kalmar Nyckel

On the 26th of April, the Admiralty Board of Rotterdam appointed Dirck Vijgh as captain of the *Kalmar Sleutel*, and the States General issued him his letter of commission.²⁰ Captain Vijgh had been

nominated by the Admiralty Board two days earlier,²¹ when it identified ten candidates as captains for their recently acquired ships. Captain Vijgh was the son of a nobleman and decorated for bravery in action against Dunkirk pirates.²² His ability and courage were noted as he worked his way up to lieutenant-captain, and Dutch Admiral Maarten Tromp had chosen him as flag captain for his flagship *Brederode* (“Castle of Brederode”).²³

At the time of Captain Vijgh’s appointment, *Kalmar Sleutel* was still in Amsterdam taking on provisions and undergoing additional modifications.²⁴ The States General had specified to the five Admiralties that all ships recently acquired for patrol and escort were to be refit so that they could carry at least 22 guns and crews of 90.²⁵ We don’t know the specific changes made to *Kalmar Sleutel*’s configuration, but we can surmise that accommodating a fighting crew of 90 would have required some alterations and that at least two guns were added, bringing her main armament up to the specified 22.²⁶ The refit was soon completed, and the ship was brought by way of Texel to her new homeport of Rotterdam, arriving on 11 May.²⁷

That these upgrades would be needed became clear soon enough. Escalating tensions between the Dutch and English fleets erupted into open warfare on the 22nd of May and then again on the 29th – the first a minor clash off Start Point in the Channel near Dartmouth; the second a major engagement called the Battle of Dover, near Goodwin Sands, where Dutch Admiral Tromp and his fleet of 42 ships fought a

smaller squadron under English Admiral Robert Blake.²⁸ From then on, no Dutch or English ship would be safe in the seas around the British Isles. The conflict would be made official with declarations on the 10th of July, and it would later be given the title First Anglo-Dutch War of 1652-54.²⁹

On the 23rd of May, Dirck Vijgh took command as the last captain of the *Kalmar Sleutel* (*née Nyckel*).³⁰ We don’t know what Captain Vijgh thought of his new ship as he stepped aboard, but, since the shooting had started, he must have been eager to inspect her carefully. On the 31st of May, the last crew of the *Kalmar Sleutel* (*née Nyckel*) came aboard and were brought under oath. There were 90 of them, and they were given one month’s wages in advance.³¹

“Buss Patrol” – Last Voyage of the *Kalmar Nyckel* (14 June-22 July, 1652)

On the 1st of June, the Admiralty Board issued assignments to the hired warships of Rotterdam,³² and *Kalmar Sleutel* was ordered to join the escort squadron protecting the Dutch herring fleet, which was out sailing off the Shetland Islands north of Scotland. The herring fleet – “the Great Fishery” – was famous the world over and the first to develop “industrialized fishing.” Its influence on the Dutch economy in the early 17th century was comparable to the more famous Dutch trading fleets – the Baltic “mother trade,” the East India Company trade (VOC), and the Dutch West India Company trade (WIC).³³ The scale of the Great Fishery was enormous, with 2,000 fishing boats at work in the North Sea and 150,000 tons of fish exported from the Netherlands for profit in

1614 alone.³⁴ One-fifth of the Dutch population was employed one way or another in the fishing business, and Dutch capitalism contributed many innovations to the “industry,” including the development of drift nets to catch shoals of herring, which are still used today.³⁵ The Dutch also perfected a preservation technique called *gibbing* – the fish were gutted and salted and packed in barrels – allowing Dutch fishing boats to stay at sea longer to follow the schools of herring far off the Dutch coasts.³⁶ The fishing vessels, called *busses*, were an innovation all their own, sturdy ships with flat bottoms that could be beached for quick and convenient unloading.³⁷ About 70 feet in length and crewed by fifteen “men,” *busses* were often worked by whole families, women and children included, making them a kind of floating “cottage industry.”³⁸

For the next two weeks Captain Vijgh and crew undertook a flurry of final preparations. The same day the orders came through, 1 June, *Kalmar Sleutel* took on an extra 300 pounds of gunpowder, and Captain Vijgh sent a request to the Admiralty Board for four new guns – two 8-pounders and two 6-pounders.³⁹ Whether these were to be additions or replacements is not entirely clear.⁴⁰

The Admiralty of Rotterdam heeded Captain Vijgh’s request on the 4th of June and decided that all of the hired ships needed additional armament, placing four extra pieces on each ship, including *Kalmar Sleutel*.⁴¹ On 7 June, the *Kalmar Sleutel* moved to Den Briel, a staging harbor located at the mouth of the Maas River, where

Captain Vijgh and the other escort captains would await the command to sail.⁴² Captain Vijgh received an additional 700 pounds of gunpowder on 13 June and clarifying orders – the hired escorts would serve under the commander of the fishery fleet, Admiral Dirck Claesz van Dongen in the *Sint Paulus Bekeering* (“Saint Paul’s Conversion”).⁴³

On the 14th of June, Captain Vijgh and his crew of 90 set sail from Den Briel on what would be the *Kalmar Sleutel*’s (*née Nyckel*) last voyage.⁴⁴ The winds of war were upon them. They were fresh and well-equipped, and they must have been anxious to find the Great Fishery fleet which was working somewhere off the Shetlands. Leaving Den Briel, they were joined by the *Sphera Mundi*, which would serve with them as part of the “*buss* patrol.” Together they sailed out with two other ships, the *Sint Maria* (“Saint Mary”) and the *Vergulden Roskam* (“Gilded Currycomb”), which would escort them out to the herring fleet but then sail back to join Admiral Tromp’s fleet, which was still before Dover.

It was likely the early part of July by the time they found the Great Fishery fleet. They joined up with the escorts under Admiral van Dongen, some 15 or more,⁴⁵ and began to shepherd the 600 herring *busses*.⁴⁶ All was well as the fishermen went about their business, setting drift nets and hauling back vast shoals of herring, the “silver of the seas” as the Norwegians called them. They knew to be wary of the English, “perfidious Albion,” but probably didn’t know that war had been declared officially on 10 July 1652.⁴⁷ They were still undisturbed as they headed south of Fair

Isle, reaching toward the Scottish coast. They were somewhere near Buchan Ness⁴⁸ on Thursday morning, 22 July 1652, when 66 English sail were spotted coming up from the southern horizon.⁴⁹

The Battle Off Buchan Ness – 22 July 1652

The scene off Buchan Ness that 22nd of July, with stiff breezes and bright Scottish skies, could have come straight from the pen of Robert Louis Stevenson: the romance of ships under sail, the mystery of a “battle of encounter,” the smell of adventure in the salt air. But from the decks of the Dutch escort squadron charged with protecting 600 fishing boats from the depredations of Admiral Blake’s English fleet, the view that morning was terrifying and carried with it the fear of death or dismemberment.

As the English fleet of 66 capital ships bore down on the 15 escorts circling the fishing fleet, Dutch Vice-Admiral Reinout Veenhuysen of the *Sphera Mundi* opened fire prematurely – and then abruptly fled the scene.⁵⁰ Leading eight frigates of the English vanguard, Captain John Taylor of the *Laurel* was the first to answer the premature fire with a broadside of 24 guns, and the battle was begun.⁵¹ Veenhuysen’s cowardice was made up for by some of the other Dutch warships that were noted for fighting back fiercely. The Battle Off Buchan Ness turned into a bloody three-hour affair, with the Dutch “selling their skin not cheaply.”⁵² Among the English, too, noted Dutchman Pieter Casteleyn, “many gentlemen died, among others Captain Bradley was heavily wounded, and several of her best ships were put out of action.”⁵³

Not surprisingly, Captain Vijgh had the *Kalmar Sleutel* at the center of the action. He and his crew were among the most heavily engaged, fighting desperately against overwhelming English firepower. The smaller Dutch escorts, mostly up-gunned and refitted armed merchant vessels, were no match for the English frigates, new purpose-built warships that each carried 36 guns or more and doubled the weight of the Dutch broadsides.⁵⁴ Skilled Dutch seamanship could not for long overcome such a discrepancy in firepower.⁵⁵

In three hours of fighting the English seized 12 of the Dutch escorts and scattered the fishing fleet, taking 30 of the *busses*. Six of the captured Dutch warships were taken into the English fleet; three others were sent to the city of Inverness with the English wounded, some ninety miles away; and three were so badly shot to pieces that they could not be salvaged and were sunk by the English after being seized.⁵⁶ Alas, *Kalmar Sleutel* (*née Nyckel*) was one of the three “so much shattered” that she couldn’t stay above the waterline. On this terminal fact there is no doubt, and we have many contemporaneous sources both Dutch and English, including the testimony of Captain Vijgh, who survived and was taken prisoner, as well as detailed reports from victorious Admiral Blake.⁵⁷

Aftermath

English Admiral Blake, having scattered the herring fleet and disposed of the “12 Dutch men-of-war lately taken that guarded the busses,” headed “southward” looking for Admiral Tromp’s main Dutch fleet.⁵⁸

On the Dutch side, the English released all the wounded prisoners and sent them directly home aboard 30 captured herring *busses*. Captain Dirck Vijgh and 900 other Dutch seamen not wounded were taken prisoner of war. They were delivered to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, then paroled and sent to “walk” home by way of English ports along the Channel.⁵⁹ When they arrived home in the Dutch Republic on 24 September 1652, the commander of the fishing fleet, Admiral Dirck Claesz van Dongen, was arrested for the failure of his objective.⁶⁰ Captain Vijgh had his own court of inquiry with the Admiralty Board. Things got messy when Vice-Admiral Veenhuysen, in trying to clear his own cowardly “shat-his-pants” reputation, sued Captain Vijgh for being drunk while leading his men into battle, causing the *Kalmar Sleutel* to sink.⁶¹ Vijgh obtained declarations from his officers and crew that he was in fact sober, and the case was dismissed.⁶² Vijgh was reinstated as a captain and given another ship, the *Overijssel*.⁶³

On 1 October, Cornelis Roelofsen submitted a demand in the form of a request to the Admiralty Board of Rotterdam.⁶⁴ Listed in the records as a “merchant living in Stockholm in Sweden” and as “the former owner and renter” of the “sunk ship Kalmar Sleutel lost in the encounter with the English on 22 July 1652,” Roelofsen requested payment for the sum of 20,100 guilders. The Board noted that it would have the claim examined.⁶⁵ Two days later, 3 October, the surviving crew of the *Kalmar Sleutel* claimed reimbursement for their lost possessions on the sunken ship and four

months of lost wages. These claims were denied by the Admiralty Board.⁶⁶

Roelofsen came back to the Admiralty Board of Rotterdam on the 30th of October, this time sending an authorized agent, one notary Block. Still listed as a “merchant living in Stockholm in Sweden” but now noted as the “owner and renter of the Kalmar Sleutel, formerly commanded by Captain Dirck Vijgh, shot to sinking by the English on 22 July 1652,” Roelofsen demanded payment of the rent that had not been settled on yet. The Board responded by giving him two month’s rent, amounting to 2,200 guilders.⁶⁷

On 13 December 1652, the secretary for the Admiralty Board of Rotterdam⁶⁸ sent a letter to the States General urging the settlement of Cornelis Roelofsen’s claim for “the ship the Kalmar Sleutel that was sent to the bottom on 22 July last in the fight under the busses against the English by Captain Dirck Vijgh.” The Admiralty of Rotterdam authorized settlement to Roelofsen for 15,700 guilders based on experts who had valued his ship with the aid of the inventory prepared and signed by Roelofsen dated 11 April 1652 (*See Appendix: Inventory*). The Admiralty of Rotterdam expected the States General to have their Lord Collector General, one Philips Doublet, make the payment directly to Roelofsen so that “the loss of equipment at sea will be settled and paid so that the Council of the Admiralty in Rotterdam will be relieved from this and the aforementioned Cornelis Roelofs[en] will have his payment.”⁶⁹

We think Roelofsen was eventually paid the full amount of the 15,700 guilders, because

after a final demand to the Admiralty Board through agent Block on 20 January 1653,⁷⁰ neither he nor his case is ever again mentioned in the documents. After that, the name *Kalmar Sleutel* (née *Nyckel*) slips back into the mists of history.

Epilogue

With a death date for our *Kalmar Nyckel* – 22 July 1652 – and a proximate gravesite – south of Fair Isle and northeast of Buchan Ness (now called Boddam), at the bottom of the North Sea just off the Scottish coast – we can begin work on an epitaph for our namesake ship. We offer a draft:

Ordinary in stature and design, Kalmar Nyckel set extraordinary records for versatility and transatlantic endurance unmatched in the 17th century. Her exceptional career serving so many so well for so long – and in such different roles as a colonial ship, gun-armed merchant vessel, and warship – still inspire the people who sail her replica today.

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With Annotated Endnotes

Appendix: Ship's Inventory

Inventory of the ship the Calmer Sleutel, old about 20 years, long over the bow 103 feet, wide 25 feet, its hold 11 feet, there above 6 feet, with a new pine hull.

The spars are all new
 its standing and running rigging mostly new
 2 main courses with a bonnet, more than half worn-out
 2 jibs/fore courses, one new and never attached to the spar, the other more than half worn-out, 2 bonnets
 2 main topsails, one never used, the other more than half worn-out
 1 fore topsail more than half worn-out
 1 new mizzen, used on one trip
 1 spritsail with a new top spritsail
 2 topgallants, more than half worn-out
 4 stunsails
 1 staysail
 1 sail for the shallop

5 nice heavy lines of 13 to 13 ½ thumbs [*inches*] thick, mostly new
 1 end of guy rope
 3 anchor ropes, including one new
 2 horse lines
 3 buoy lines
 1 new hound
 2 new sturdy top ropes
 6 mooring lines
 4 heavy Anchors, very heavy
 1 heavy throwing anchor
 2 grappling hooks
 2 spar chains
 1 large fishhook

Iron braces over all the hatches, below and on deck, with its bolts to close the hatches, with its weathersails
 5 Iron pump rods with her tools, more than usual
 10 Iron fids
 2 Iron hammers
 1 large Iron kettle to heat tar
 1 Iron pot to heat pitch
 4 Iron braces for the stunsails
 a stack of buoys with their locks for the malicious
 about a thousand nails, large and small
 1 chain for a grappling hook to board a ship

1 new capstan
 2 clocks, one in the saloon and one on the helm
 12 crowbars for the pieces

1 large boat with 24 new oars

1 new shallop with its tools
 4 large booms for the stunsails
 16 windlass beams
 4 hooks
 Cabins and bunks with the galley cost me 325 guilders
 for the cook's and commissary's tools together 150 guilders
 for flags and burgees together, and compasses and hourglasses, with sounding lead, with 3 Lanterns
 on the back, with 6 flat Lanterns, with 4 flanges together 200 guilders, 3 sounding lines

60 lasts of stone Ballast cost me 200 guilders

20 firm pieces with two stone pieces with all accessories

4...8-pounders, weighing.. 8,600 p
 6...6-pounders, weighing.. 11,400 p
 4...4-pounders, weighing.. 6,280 p
 2...3-pounders weighing.. 1,845 p
 together 28,125.

4 metal pieces, 2 shooting 4 pounds, 2 shooting 3 pounds weighing together 1,600 p

500 round shots
 64 bolts
 12 chain shot
 12 bar shot
 36 lanterns
 1 ½ schippond [*one "ship's pound" = 300 pounds*] iron canister shot
 12 pot grenades
 6 star shells
 400 musket bullets
 1 schippond fuses
 150 p sheet-lead
 some lead patches
 a new barrel
 7 leather buckets
 1 bruised canister
 1 leather pouch
 1,800 p gunpowder
 25 p fine gunpowder
 16 muskets with their bandoleers
 8 pistols
 38 pikes
 14 swords with their belts
 12 poleaxes
 1 long roer [*17th-century Dutch extended firearm*]
 1 1/2 tonnes of pitch
 1 1/2 tonnes of tar
 for 90 guilders of lines, houselines, marlins, lirlins, sail yarn
 for 50 guilders of constable's tools
 another 70 guilders for planks both pine as oak wood

and was signed Cornelis Roelofsen

Anno 1652, 22 April, we, the undersigned, have examined the aforegoing inventory and know the ship well so we have valued the same for the sum of fifteen thousand seven hundred guilders all done in Amsterdam and was signed by Claess van Leeck - Theunis Marssen - Jacob Zael

Fl 15,700

After collation of the aforegoing with the originals
it is found and accorded on this 20 September 1652 in Amsterdam by me,
certified

J Volkaertsz Oli
Not(ari)s Publ(icum)

¹ The present-day replica of the *Kalmar Nyckel* was launched in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1997. Built, owned, and operated by the Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, the ship serves as a floating classroom and inspirational platform for a broad array of sea- and land-based educational programs. For more about the ship and the Foundation, see www.kalmarnyckel.org.

² Famous for making four roundtrip voyages to the colony of New Sweden from 1637 to 1644 (see note 7), she had been purchased from the Dutch by the *Skeppskompaniet* (Ship Company) in 1629 and served the Swedish navy on and off from 1629 to 1651.

³ New Dutch name, derived from *Kalmar Nyckel*

⁴ There exists no definitive “birth certificate.” No records of her construction or launch have yet been found. She appears in the records for the first time in 1629, when two gentlemen from Kalmar discuss purchasing her from Holland for the Swedish *Skeppskompaniet* (Ship Company). She was listed as a Dutch-built Pinnace. Later references suggest she was built in Amsterdam in 1627.

⁵ See, e.g., C.A. Weslager, *A Man and His Ship: Peter Minuit and the Kalmar Nyckel* (1990), p. 197.

⁶ For family and friends, “missing in action” is often worse than knowing the worst; uncertainty brings a special pain and prevents closure.

⁷ See Letter from Queen Christina of 13 April 1649 from Stockholm, in the Riksarkiv in Stockholm. *Kalmar Nyckel* had made four roundtrip transatlantic crossing for the New Sweden Company, to wit: 1637-1639, 1639-1640, 1641-1642 and 1643-1644. The first of these voyages launched New Sweden in 1638 under the command of Peter Minuit, who established Fort Christina in present-day Wilmington, Delaware – the first permanent European settlement in the Delaware Valley.

⁸ See Letter from Queen Christina of 19 Juni 1651 from Stockholm, in the Riksarkiv in Stockholm.

⁹ The Swedish document spells his name ‘Cornelius Roloffson’ and the other sources on Roelofsen mention him in different spellings as well, which was common for the era, but it is definitely the same guy.

¹⁰ One solid piece of evidence we have on Roelofsen is that he sold a shipment of canary birds to the Swedish noble family De La Gardie in 1648 (De La Gardie’s account books dd April 1648, in the Riksarkiv of Stockholm).

¹¹ Sovereignty over sea lanes and the concept of “territorial waters” was in its infancy at this time, but the issue remains a thorny one even today (see, e.g., lively disputes over rights and resources in the Arctic and conflicts among many in the South China and East China Seas).

¹² Quoted in *The Rise and Fall of British Sea Mastery*, Paul M. Kennedy (New York: Scribner, 1976).

¹³ Referred to in the documents as “Their High Mightinesses,” the States General consisted of the deputies of the seven provincial governments of the United Netherlands who came together every month to discuss a range of matters and resolve on problems in the country. One of their prime responsibilities was to manage and direct the five Dutch Admiralties, which were located in Amsterdam, the Maze (located in Rotterdam), Friesland, Noorderkwartier, and Zeeland. These Admiralties individually took care of a part of the navy to share costs and risk.

¹⁴ Whether Roelofsen was motivated by patriotism or capitalism in his handling of the *Kalmar Nyckel* is hard to know at this remove, but for many of the Dutch at the time the two went hand-in-hand.

¹⁵ The National Archives of the Netherlands, in The Hague, (hereafter ‘NA’) archive 1.01.46 inv. no. 147 dd 3 March 1652.

¹⁶ See footnote 13.

¹⁷ Many sources mention her under different spellings: ‘Kalmar’ either with a ‘K’ or a ‘C’, and the Dutch often use an ‘e’ for the second ‘a’; the spelling of ‘Sleutel’ differs from source to source as well. Spellings in this period were inconsistent and often written out phonetically. In addition, ships back then did not have their names spelled out on the transom or bow, but they often did have an indication of it on the stern in the form of an image or sculpture. In the case of the *Kalmar Nyckel*, it might have been the crest of the city of Kalmar and a key on the stern. There is no city, town, or place named “Kalmar” in the Netherlands, further reinforcing that the “Dutch ship” and “Swedish ship” were one and the same. One interesting and early example of the kind of transpositions seen in the records comes from Director (Governor) Willem Kieft of the colony of New Netherland: When he mentions in a letter from April 1638 that the ship has arrived in the Delaware River for the first time with the Swedes, he refers to it as ‘Calmer Sleutel,’ indicating that the ship’s name was already being ‘Dutchified’ many years before she was bought by the Dutch.

¹⁸ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 23 April 1652.

¹⁹ NA 1.01.02 inv. 5551 dd 20 December 1652.

²⁰ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 26 April 1652.

²¹ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 26 April 1652.

²² NA 1.01.46 inv. 141 dd 24 May 1646.

²³ NA 1.01.46 inv. 444 dd 3 December 1651 and 1.01.02 inv. 5548 dd 24 April 1652.

²⁴ Some of the modifications that brought the ship up to the specifications ordered by the States General may have been made in Rotterdam after the ship was moved from Amsterdam by way of Texel.

²⁵ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 3 March 1652.

²⁶ She was noted to have had 22 guns when she sank (NA 1.01.02 inv. 5551 dd 20 December 1652 and Admiral Blake's list of taken ships dd 31 July 1652 in *French Occurrences*, (B.M. Press Mark E, 673, 11), p. 78.

²⁷ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 11 May 1652.

²⁸ The first clash, on 22 May 1652, was a brief gun battle off Start Point, near Dartmouth, where three English ships under Captain Anthony Young in the *President* engaged three Dutch warships escorting a convoy of seven merchant vessels bound for the Mediterranean. The second battle, on 29 May 1652, between Tromp's fleet and Blake's squadron, is sometimes called the 'Battle of Goodwin Sands.'

²⁹ Two more would follow: Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-67) and Third Anglo Dutch-War (1672-74).

³⁰ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 23 May 1652.

³¹ *Ibid.* dd 31 May 1652.

³² *Ibid.* dd 1 June 1652: The orders were as follows: Two ships were to 'cruise in the Channel under Vice-Admiral Jan Evertsen', to wit: the *Overijssel* (A province of the Netherlands) and the *Utrecht* (A city and province of the Netherlands); two ships were to 'cruise the North under Vice-Admiral Witte de With', to wit: the *Sint Maria* ("Saint Mary") and the *Vergulden Roskam* ("Gilded Currycomb"); two ships were to 'cruise on the VOC ships that were bound to return soon', to wit: the *Vergulden Beer* ("Gilded Bear") and the *Hollandia* ("Holland"); and two ships were 'to escort the ships of the Great Fishery', to wit: the *Calmar Sleutel* ("Key of Kalmar") and the *Sphera Mundi* ("Globe").

³³ See C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire: 1600-1800* (1965).

³⁴ See, Smithsonian's *SHIP: The Epic Story of Maritime Adventures* by Brian Lavery (2004, DK Publishing, NYC), p. 248.

³⁵ See Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and*

Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815 1997), pp. 243-45, 419.

³⁶ They even got so far off the coasts that they ended up on the other sides of the North Sea, founding little fishing villages in Scotland and Norway, such as Wick on the Scottish coast and Lerwick on the Shetland Islands.

³⁷ See, Smithsonian's *SHIP: The Epic Story of Maritime Adventures* by Brian Lavery (2004, DK Publishing, NYC), p. 258.

³⁸ See, *Once A Week* Vol. 1; Vol. 18 by Eneas Sweetland Dallas (Bradbury & Evans: 1868)

³⁹ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 1 June 1652.

⁴⁰ See footnote 26.

⁴¹ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 4 June 1652.

⁴² *Ibid.* dd 7 June 1652.

⁴³ *Ibid.* dd 13 June 1652 – Notarial Archives Rotterdam (NAR) inv. 503 document 224/204 says that Cornelis Roelofsen agreed with Dirck Vijgh that the latter had to do a test of adequacy as the captain of Roelofsen's ship the *Kalmar Sleutel*. This is one of the few references that name Cornelis Roelofsen and Dirck Vijgh and the *Kalmar Sleutel* – owner, captain, ship – in the same document. Another such direct connection comes on the same date, with the same notary (NAR Rotterdam inv. 503 document 223/203), where Roelofsen had Captain Vijgh declare that several of Roelofsen's former crew had disembarked the ship with their possessions in Amsterdam but were "hired in the service of the country." These persons were Roelof Sweersz, bosun, from Gothenburg, Andries [?] from Gothenburg, Daniel Corstensz, constable, from Mastrand, Sweden and his mate, the cook Albert, carpenter's mate Willem from Norway and another unnamed sailor.

⁴⁴ NA 1.01.46 inv. no. 147 dd 14 June 1652.

⁴⁵ Even though the accounts relating to 22 July 1652 state that 12 warships were taken, the escort fleet must have consisted of at least 15 ships as the States General commanded the Admiralties to send out a joint fleet of 15 renovated vessels (NA 1.01.46, inv. no. 147) to reinforce the ordinary convoying ships that were already there. We know there was a thirteenth ship, the *Sphera Mundi* – which fled after firing the first shot.

⁴⁶ *Hollandsche Mercurius*, July 1652, Pieter Casteleyn, p.84.

⁴⁷ The States General had sent a letter to Commander Van Dongen to warn him about the official declaration and the English fleet moving towards him, but that letter probably never arrived (NA 1.01.02 dd 15 July 1652).

⁴⁸ Nowadays Boddam, Scotland, between Aberdeen and Peterhead: *Robert Blake, Admiral and General at Sea, based on family and State papers*, by William H. Dixon, p. 203 (London, Chapman 1852) and "*Hollandsche Mercurius*", July 1652, p. 84. NAR Rotterdam inv. 155 document 21/336 says: "They were with Van Dongen at sea to protect the herring fleet south of Fayershil (Fair Isle) when on 22 July, the English warfleet appeared."

⁴⁹ The indication of time is derived from the NA 1.01.02 inv. 5550 dd 2 and 4 August 1652. Admiral Robert Blake's fleet had been ordered by the English Parliament to disrupt the Dutch fishery in the 'English' North Sea and had sailed out shortly before 13 July. After having passed the Scottish coastal city of Dunbar on the 19th, they encountered the 15 Dutch men-of-war.

⁵⁰ A letter from Admiral Blake's fleet dd 5 August 1652 mentions the first shot of the battle by the Dutch Vice-Admiral (Veenhuysen) and the answer by Captain Taylor. While reporting on the battle of 22 July in the *Hollandsche Mercurius*, Dutchman Pieter Casteleyn called Veenhuysen a "shat-his-pants" and stated he "fled the scene, and was arrested when he came home, but instead of him, a swine was hung to the gallows." Weeks after Veenhuysen returned to the Netherlands he was banished for five years.

⁵¹ Letter from Admiral Blake's fleet dd 5 August 1652.

⁵² *Hollandsche Mercurius*, July 1652, p. 84, Pieter Casteleyn; see also William H. Dixon, in *Robert Blake etc.*, says: "Meeting the great herring-fleet off Bockness, his [Blake's] advanced guard of twenty sail fell furiously on the men-of-war, and after a gallant contest, prolonged by the obstinate valour of the Dutch against superior numbers for three hours...."

⁵³ *Hollandsche Mercurius*, July 1652, p. 84, Pieter Casteleyn.

⁵⁴ See James C. Bender, research about English fleet compiled online at: <http://www.kentishknock.com/englishs.shtml> (2015).

⁵⁵ The authors' correspondence with Carl Stapel, December 2014.

⁵⁶ Admiral Blake noted that he decided to sink the three ships after holding a "council of war" with his captains (Letter from Admiral Blake's fleet, dd 1 August 1652 and a letter from Leith dd 10 August 1652).

⁵⁷ Admiral Blake noted that he had taken the following ships: The *Paul of Rotterdam*, Admiral's

flagship, the *Waterhound*, the *Sampson of Enkhuizen*, the *Arms of Holland*, the *Swan of Amsterdam*, the *Adam and Eve*, the *John Baptist*, the *Land of Promise*, the *Katharine*, the *Noah's Ark*, the *Sampson of Hoorn* and the *Calmer Sleutel*. The sources in the footnotes above mention the division of 12 ships seized: six ships taken into the fleet, three ships sent to Inverness, and three sunk. The *Kalmar Sleutel* was repeatedly noted in Dutch documents to have been 'shot to the bottom', (NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 1 October, 30 October 1652 and 20 January 1653 and NA 1.01.46 inv. 5551 dd 20 December 1652), making her at least one of the three to have been sunk by the English. The *Sampson of Hoorn* appeared to be another one to have been sunk. The third ship is yet to be identified.

⁵⁸ Letter from Admiral Blake's fleet, dd 1 August 1652.

⁵⁹ London is mentioned as one of the ports.

⁶⁰ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 24 September 1652.

⁶¹ NAR Rotterdam, inv. no. 503 document 378/371 and 377/370.

⁶² NAR Rotterdam, inv. no. 504 document 477/467.

⁶³ NA 1.01.46 inv. 775 dd 3 October 1652.

⁶⁴ Roelofsen may have submitted the request in person to the Admiralty Board; no agent is mentioned as appearing for him – as in the subsequent requests made on 30 October & 20 January 1653.

⁶⁵ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 1 October 1652.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* dd 3 October 1652.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* dd 30 October 1652.

⁶⁸ See Letter from Secretary W. van Couwenhoven, NA 1.01.46 inv. 5551 dd 20 December 1652.

⁶⁹ NA 1.01.46 inv. 5551 dd 20 December 1652.

⁷⁰ NA 1.01.46 inv. 147 dd 20 January 1653.