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Unger, R.W.

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ARTIKELN

DUTCH SHIPCARPENTERS' GUILDS, C. 1400 TO C. 1600*

by Dr. R.W. Unger (Vancouver, Can.)

Though less commonly examined historically than ship design or shipping, Dutch shipbuilding was and remains an integral part of the maritime history of the Netherlands. Economically, shipbuilding supplied capital goods to the shipping industry and therefore made an important contribution to this trade sector of the economy. More than that it was the shipbuilder who created novel designs. Technical improvements in ship design merely reflected progress in the shipbuilding industry. The importance of high quality capital goods, goods which included properly suited technical features, is most often recognized by writers on the herring fishery. It is said that the new type of herring net introduced in the early fifteenth century could not be effectively employed until the herring buss came into use.

Clearly the sources of that new type or any new type of vessel, the way the design evolved and the methods of building such a type are important to the history of the economy. Though the need to explore the history of shipbuilding may be widely appreciated, such study has proven to be rather difficult. To all those problems of sources and of technical information common to any examination of maritime history is added a general lack of information about shipbuilding itself. Until the appearance of modern corporate organizations with public responsibility shipbuilding was in the hands of families noted for their conservatism and the haphazard nature of their record keeping. Since historically the tendency has been toward greater formalization, toward more complete records, then of course the study of shipbuilding is most difficult and most problematic for the earliest years, indeed for the years before the Golden Century. The development of the "fluit" in 1595 and its refinement over the following two decades combined with the appearance of a highly centralized and efficient shipbuilding industry in the Zaanstreek marked the establishment of Dutch shipbuilding as the best in Europe. That combined with the development of the Admiralties and a more scientific approach to ship design, another product of the seventeenth century, all combined to generate more extensive records dealing with ship design and with the shipbuilders implementing those designs. Though records may be less extensive still the history of Dutch shipbuilding before 1595 deserves equal or greater attention.

Craft were probably built in prehistoric times along the coast that now forms part of the two maritime provinces of Holland and Zeeland. The extensive commerce of Frisians in the eight and ninth centuries was in part shipped in their own vessels built in the two provinces. The industry, if it can be called an industry in those years, was unstable. A builder would temporarily appropriate a small stretch of beach and there piece together the vessel from a small quantity of wood, wood which might even be found locally. A stable, urban-based and Dutch, that is non-Frisian, industry with fixed and continuing shipbuilding yards did not appear until the time of Count Floris the Fifth (d. 1296). From those beginnings in the late thirteenth century the history of Dutch shipbuilding to the late sixteenth century is both complex and elusive. In those years especially after about 1450, there was rapid technical progress in ship design throughout Europe and in Holland and Zeeland as well. The design and construction of

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the "fluit" was the final step in that progression. It was also a time of the expansion of Dutch commerce into many new trades, some of which Dutch shippers came to dominate. It was also a time of growth in the Dutch fishery and of significant design improvement in Dutch fishing vessels. But evidence from the shipbuilding industry is sparse. The progression in ship design is obscure even if the principle features of the advance are known. No continuing government agency existed over the three centuries to regulate shipbuilding and thus to generate documentary evidence on the industry. Contracts between shippers and builders, for the construction of vessels, an excellent source for information about the design of ships as well as about the shipbuilders and their ways of doing business, do not appear in the two provinces until the late sixteenth century. The parties to such purchases did not need to have such agreements. The usually, at least before 1550, lived near each other and could regularly consult on the design and construction of the ship. What is more, either or both parties might well be illiterate. Though contracts may be few and government documents extremely scarce, one body of evidence does exist. The information comes not from consumers but from producers, from the shipbuilders' organization, their guilds. Craft guilds were a common feature of European industrial organization in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The demographic disaster of the mid-fourteenth century associated with the Black Death and the economic consequences generated by that disaster caused an increased demand for skilled labourers. The guilds were established or expanded to train those skilled artisans. Shipbuilders did not escape the general European expansion but shipcarpenters' guilds tended to appear well after the Black Death, that is, not until the early fifteenth century. The delay may have come from a slack demand for tonnage associated with the sharp fall in the volume of international trade in the second half of the fourteenth century. Dutch shipbuilders were not alone in choosing to establish guilds. Such groups appeared in the Hanse towns, in England and in France in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Dutch shipcarpenters' guilds were little different from those in other regions or from other craft guilds in the Netherlands. Loosely defined guilds were groups with an economic basis and a legal or quasi-legal position as a public authority which placed their members under some kind of collective discipline in the practice of their common craft. 2) The guild was to train workers for the specific skill in question and also to control or be the agency of control over production and methods of production. The guild received its authority either tacitly or in a charter from some governmental body. Thus it is difficult to say whether a specific guild was an agency of government or of the trade itself, whether the guild was acting in the common interest of all persons in the town or in the specific interest of the guild membership. Of course the purpose of guild action varied with circumstances, with time and with the nature of the government body authorizing the existence of the guild. Many duties, economic, political and social, devolved on the guilds and the benefits or ill-effects of guild organization varied with the actions taken by the guilds, with how the guilds used the authority given them. The guild could encompass more than one professional group. By the fourteenth century shipcarpenters were already seen as a group apart, as men with a specific skill which required special training. Yet, shipcarpenters often found themselves subsumed in general guilds of woodworkers. Usually called carpenters' guilds, these groups included chair and window-makers. All building trades might be added, even bricklayers. It was still possible in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for a shipbuilder to carry on some other trade or trades such as general carpentry or even farming. But the inverse was not true. Shipbuilding was closed and increasingly closed to all except those with precise knowledge of new ship design and building methods. Since shipcarpenters fell into a unique category as early as the fourteenth century, the tendency for those shipcarpenters was to form a separate guild apart from other carpenters. But breaking away from parent guilds was slow in coming. Among other considerations, shipcarpenters apparently decided to wait until the market for their services was large enough to support a reasonable number of men with their specific skill and thus large enough to make such a guild viable. That reasonable number was probably very low. Perhaps as few as ten shipcarpenters would feel able to establish an independent guild in their town.

Despite their quasi-public character, usually a guarantee of great quantities of paper work and therefore surviving evidence, guilds have left few records. What has survived does not, for example, cover all those towns in which shipbuilding took place. Guilds were, by their nature, urban so that building and, more important, what repair work was done on the beaches outside the towns is completely beyond the records of guilds. Few of the guild activities were documented in detail. The result is a tantalizingly scarce body of information, even more tantalizing since it is the principal source of information for the Dutch shipbuilding industry before 1600. General documents have sporadically survived for some of the Dutch shipcarpenters' guilds. The general items give clues to the social activities of the organizations, to the extent of guild activity in town life and in the lives of the members. Such scraps of evidence also offer a test of the involvement of the guilds in the economy of the town and province. No specific body of information in guild records yields consistent information on those important issues. What is needed is an extensive series of account books like that of the Hoorn guild. Unfortunately, that detailed compilation of income and expenditure starts only in 1593. There are no other accounts from before the introduction of the "fluit". Town ordinances dealing with guilds like those of Amsterdam on guildsmen's caulking (1539) are informative but limited, sporadic and few indeed. The enrollment book of the Goes carpenters' guild shows the number of shipcarpenters and all woodworkers in the guild and presumably in the town. It is the only such book surviving and only covers the later sixteenth century. 3) Of these general pieces the best body of evidence is records of litigation. Chartered guilds were by definition juristic personalities, could sue and be sued in court. If the guild ran smoothly then there was little need for the paperwork and documents which came out of disputes. At Dordrecht not all went well, so records from court cases are rather extensive. Since they are records of the guild they are largely the opinion of the shipcarpenters' organizations. Similar views on court actions have survived at Veere from the late sixteenth century along with the results of petitions to the town government. Dordrecht is the only guild to leave record of a petition to the provincial government. The entire haphazard collection, though informative, is severely limited. The greatest problem, beyond the lack of information and the reliability of some of it, is that documents of one town are not strictly comparable with those of others. Fortunately, though, there is one of documents which to a large degree eliminates that difficulty. Guild letters, "gildebrieven", are statements of regulations which are to apply to all guild members for the life of the guild. The surviving letters of Dutch shipcarpenters' guilds of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries all deal with similar topics. Further, it is clear that with perhaps one exception the letters were not copied one from the other, but rather composed for each specific town to meet prevailing local circumstances. The similarity of topics covered in the letters is striking. The guild letter was first at most importantly a formal announcement of "incorporation", of the establishment of a legal personality. A charter from some political authority might often begin the guild letter to announce the legal establishment of the guild. A statement of charter was not necessary: the promulgation of the letter was enough. The letter was a formal statement of specific regulations, of bye-laws which covered many aspects of the professional and personal lives of shipcarpenters. The letters invariably dealt with requirements for entrance. Each guild has a policy on the citizenship of applicants. Fees on entrance were fixed and training requirements were often laid down, including in a few late sixteenth century instances, the completion of some specific task overseen by guild inspectors as proof of ability. The guild letter set out dates for general meetings of members but there was in general little said specifically about procedure in those meetings. The connection of the guild with the church, at least in letters which appeared before 1572, and general public services to be carried out by the corporation were outlined. More specific were the benefits accruing to members in case of sickness or death. Within the letters is information about the sources of corporate income and the expenditure of that income. Much of each letter is devoted to the constitutional organization of the guild, how it was to be governed, and the protection to be guaranteed members and the officers who took on specified duties for the group.

All the regulations in the guild letter are merely a statement of intent. That statement may or may not reflect fact. Indeed with such limited supplemental information from the general evidence there is no way to demonstrate the effectiveness of the bye-laws. With no source for comparison with the statement of the letters then they must be used very carefully. Apparently the choice is to either make the heroic assumption that the letters were valid, that indeed the bye-laws were adhered to by members, or to simply give up trying to ascertain the nature of organization of the shipbuilding industry during those important years before the Golden Century. There is one way however to avoid the pitfall of questionable enforcement. Some conclusions are possible taken not from the content of the letters but rather from their general nature and from the fact that the guild letters appeared when and where they did.

From the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries fourteen guild letters have survived which apply specifically to shipcarpenters. Eight of the fourteen come from Holland while the remaining six were drawn up in the much less populous province of Zeeland. Shipcarpenters might fall under sets of bye-laws not specifically for their trade. Such bye-laws are not included such as the 1491 Reimerswaal regulation. There the shipcarpenters were subsumed in the rest of the wood working trades so they may have formed a very small group indeed. Moreover by the late fifteenth century, the town was already in an advanced state of decline because of flooding which had covered almost all the land around the town. 4) The fourteen were not the only guild letters drawn up over the three hundred years. Some regulations may have been destroyed with the Reformation. Guilds had church responsibilities and one of their principal concerns was the maintenance of a church altar. With the change in religious practice it was necessary not only to destroy the altar but also to change guild bye-laws dealing with all aspects of religion. The conversion to a secular organization is clearly documented in the Veere guild letter of 1585. The changes, deletions and corrections made in the letter of 1520 were almost exclusively to accommodate the new approach to religion and the new character of the guild. 5) Indeed the prime reason the guild drew up a new set of regulations at all may well have been the change in religious practice. It is possible that some guilds merely destroyed the old set of bye-laws and did not bother to draw up a new letter, but there is no evidence that guilds destroyed such letters. If what has survived is not the full body of guild letters promulgated before the Reformation, then the set may well be complete for after the Reformation.

The extant documents from Holland include four guild letters from Dordrecht (1397, 1437, 1548, 1587). 6) The earlier two are rather sketchy in the regulation of shipcarpenters. The Alkmaar shipcarpenters received a guild letter in 1521. 7) The three letters of the Amsterdam guild were issued between 1578 and 1589, 1589 and 1591. Some less complete ordinances for Amsterdam shipcarpenters exist for the early sixteenth century. 8) For Zeeland the earliest document of interest is the pre-Reformation letter of Veere (1520) which was followed by the revised version (1585). A guild of shipcarpenters at Brouwershaven received a charter and guild letter in 1545 and that is apparently the only record of such an organization. 9) The guild letters of Vlissingen (1575) and Arnemuiden (1576) were drawn up soon after the Revolt and the change in religion. 10) The Zierikzee letter (1597) was the last to appear in the two provinces in the sixteenth century. 11) Though those are the only guild letters which have survived that is not to say that these were the only guilds of shipcarpenters. Since shipcarpenters could be subsumed in other guilds, the guild letters do not show conclusively the establishment of a shipcarpenters' guild; only the establishment of a separate or independent shipcarpenters' guild. The Amsterdam craftsmen belonged to at least three other guilds before striking out on their own between 1578 and 1589. 12) Further, some guilds though independent did not bother with a formal guild letter. The Haarlem shipcarpenters were fully organized. The earliest extent bye-law is of 1538. 13) No formal letter or charter for the guild has survived however. Rotterdam shipcarpenters were in with the general woodworkers until 1554 when they established an independent organization. The earliest surviving guild letter is from the mid-eighteenth century. 14) So the eight Holland and Zeeland towns which show surviving guild letters are, with the exception of Rotterdam, those which had formally organized and chartered shipcarpen-

ters' guilds. The nine were by no means the only towns with shipcarpenters' guilds nor for that matter were they the only towns with a shipbuilding industry. The problem then is not why shipcarpenters formed guilds - for that there were usually sound economic reasons - but rather why such groups sought formal regulation. First, any change in town government, in the personnel ruling the town was the inspiration for guilds to seek such formal recognition of their groups. Acceptance of the Revolt or of the Reformation in the 1570's commonly meant such a change. At Dordrecht the establishment of all craft guilds, shipcarpenters included, was part of a move to more democratic government. The monopoly of political power held by merchant oligarchs was broken in 1367 when Duke Albrecht, count of Holland, granted a charter for the establishment of craft guilds and gave the craftsmen some political power, power to be exercised through the guilds. 15) Such constitutional arrangements common in Flanders and South Germany were known only at Dordrecht in Holland and Zeeland. The chartering of guilds at Arnemuiden and Vlissingen came soon after those towns joined the Revolt. At Amsterdam the shipcarpenters chose independence soon after the "Alteratie". The guild letter is not dated so it may well have been drawn up immediately after the change in government. Second, it appears that the desire to regulate the trade, the desire to have formal legal recognition of the regulatory body was for the shipcarpenters a defensive measure and defensive in an economic as well as a political sense. The formal arrangement, the chartering of a guild in most cases apparently came out of a fear of loss of relative economic strength, of loss of tonnage sales to the shipping industry. Guilds as informal associations of men with common economic interests plying the same trade could and did exist. Such associations of shipcarpenters may have even been larger than the chartered groups. With no data on membership in either type of group comparison is impossible. Still what is important is not the size of the group but rather how the competitive position of the shipcarpenters changed within the memory of members and how those tradesmen assessed their future. The Veere shipcarpenters must have perceived a decline in their prospects after the shift of the Schelde and the concomitant move of shipping from the eastern to the western arm of that river. A guild letter was issued at Veere before 1520 and though the date is unknown it probably appeared after the change in delta sandbars. The letter of 1520 included revision and greater formalization of the earlier bye-laws. The decision of 1520 suggest another step to combat the deterioration. The Vlissingen guild letter was not only the product of a change in government but was also an emergency measure designed to meet the crisis in shipping generated by the Revolt and the confusion about the future of trade through Antwerp. The emergency nature of the decision to regulate the guild is all but stated in the letter. The Zierikzee shipcarpenters guild existed before the earliest surviving guild letter of 1597. The change in trade patterns in the Schelde delta had an adverse effect on the trade of Zierikzee and therefore presumably on demand for shipbuilding. An earlier guild letter of unknown date was apparently designed to overcome the associated economic difficulties. The 1597 letter appeared in the wake of the Revolt which was most damaging to the town. But more than that Zierikzee was fighting a losing battle with silting in the harbour. Shippers were deterred from choosing the town as a transshipment point and thus from employing local carpenters for repair or new construction work. In both Holland and Zeeland the shipcarpenter's guild most conscious of privilege was that of Dordrecht. The group regularly sought reaffirmation of its position. Guildsmen made a point of maintaining records of their privileges. They went to court frequently to prevent infringement of their privileges and at times they sued to extend those privileges. Dordrecht, the home of the most vigorous of organized shipcarpenters' guilds in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was also a town that experienced stagnation in shipping volume, in population and indeed in almost every indicator of economic well-being. Dordrecht throughout the two centuries was attempting to hold onto the prosperity the town had known in the thirteenth century. The vigorous defensive posture struck by the shipcarpenters' guild was apparently just a reflection of a general attitude held by all the people of Dordrecht. Despite their efforts though business, commerce and shipbuilding were lost to towns further down the

Maas, especially to Rotterdam which had an independent shipcarpenters' guild after 1554. The shipcarpenters of many rapidly growing commercial centers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not seek the establishment of a formal chartered and regulated organization. Amsterdam and Rotterdam are the exceptions. For Amsterdam shipcarpenters, in a rapidly growing town with a well established guild system and a government deeply involved in regulating all aspects of shipping, the choices were limited. They could let the town government legislate for them. That had obvious disadvantages. Guild organization was common so the shipcarpenters turned first to larger guilds which might protect them and then finally to self-regulation through the chartering of their own independent guild. At Rotterdam the situation was very much the same. At Hoorn a shipcarpenters' guild existed but it did not have a guild letter. Brielle, the port of the herring fishery in the fifteenth century, Enkhuizen, the rapidly growing center of the fishery in the sixteenth century, and Edam, reputed to be the greatest shipbuilding center in sixteenth century Holland, had no shipcarpenters' guilds at all. If the shipcarpenters were organized in these three towns it was on a personal and informal basis. These men apparently did not feel the need for a set of regulations to cover their actions. Shipcarpenters in stagnate or declining towns did. And though they may have been taking a defensive measure that is not to say that the shipcarpenters took restrictive action. To look at all guilds as impediments to economic growth would be ignoring the facts. The regulations laid out in the guild letter may have in fact been relatively open and designed instead to promote growth in the industry. Indeed a regulated industry might prove less restrictive of competition than one informally organized. Both Amsterdam and Rotterdam shipcarpenters had a guild and there is no indication that growth of the industry was stunted there by the method of organization. Indeed, in both towns in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries extensive public investment was made in shipbuilding facilities. To assess the restrictiveness of the regulations not only is it necessary to know the effectiveness of the regulations but also to know about the nature of the market for shipping tonnage in Holland and Zeeland. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that market was growing and it seems that some towns or more precisely some shipcarpenters did not feel that their sales were growing fast enough. So these men sought solace in better or rather in more formal internal organization of their trade. The guild letters of shipcarpenters' organizations can be used effectively in at least one sense. The simple fact of issuing a guild letter demonstrates the intent or aspiration of the tradesmen involved. Whether or not the regulations were enforced or how they effected the trade is not crucial. The great fear for the historian who uses guild bye-laws is always that they may give a false picture of the true situation. But here only the intention and not the action is important. The pitfall has been avoided. Conclusions about the desires of shipbuilders derived from these documents are valid but of course conclusions about the shipbuilding industry itself must be treated with a great deal more care. The maritime history of Holland and Zeeland before 1595 must in part be based on an understanding of shipbuilding so this evidence, the guild letters and related guild material, is valuable as a first step in examining the origins of superior Dutch ships. Of course, a great deal of other information must be brought to bear on the shipbuilding industry, its structure, personnel and methods of operation before it is possible to assess the contribution of Dutch shipbuilders to the shipping industry and indeed to Dutch maritime expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The men who built the ship though were conscious of their position in the economy and the legitimate legal structure of their towns. Faced with internal or external difficulties they deliberately chose a course of action to meet those difficulties. Shipbuilders apparently were aware of their options and rather than passively accept the situation they picked a positive course of action from among those options.

HET OORLOGSSCHIP "DE ALKMAAR" EN ZIJN WAPENFEIT BIJ KIJKDUIN IN 1673*

door Dr. J. Belonje

Vaak hebben de "schepen van oorlog" ressorterende onder de verschillende admiraliteiten en in het bijzonder wellicht die der XVIIe eeuw, namen gevoerd, welke ontleend waren aan de binnen het gebied van die admiraliteiten gelegen stemmende steden. Die steden plachten hun gecommiteerden naar de zeeraden te zenden en naar mate men daar dan kon opkomen voor het plaatselijke belang - hetgeen volstrekt niet tot de zeldzaamheden behoorde - bleef de vertegenwoordiger doorgaans attent en actief. Deze bemoeienissen beperkten zich niet alleen tot materiele zorgen, zij strekten zich zelfs uit tot de naamgeving bij de bouw van nieuwe schepen. Wanneer ik mij thans blijf bepalen tot de admiraliteit van West-Friesland en het Noorderkwartier, dan valt het op dat hier schepen vernoemd zijn naar o.a. de steden Hoorn, Enkhuizen (ook: "Het Wapen van Enkhuizen" en "De Maagd van Enkhuizen"), Medemblik (ook: "Het Wapen van Medemblik" of "Het Casteel van Medemblik"), Alkmaar ("Het Wapen van Alkmaar") en Monnikendam. Dit betekent intussen in het geheel niet, dat een eenmaal toegekende naam afgedaan zou hebben wanneer het aldus vernoemde oorlogsschip door handelingen van de vijand verloren ging, schipbreuk leed, of afgevoerd werd. Zo is het algemeen bekend, dat bij de genoemde admiraliteit een schip de "Alkmaar", soms "Het Wapen van Alkmaar" geheten, gedurende tal van jaren - tezamen gerekend kunnen wij wel spreken van langer dan een eeuw - deel heeft uitgemaakt van het onder de directie van dit bestuurslichaam uitgeruste en onderhouden gedeelte van 's-Lands Vloot. Evenwel, niet uitsluitend gericht op de naam bestonden er betrekkingen tussen de stad en wat men zou kunnen aanduiden als "haar" oorlogsvaartuig. Onder het ressort vooral van de admiraliteit van West-Friesland en het Noorderkwartier toch is het bij herhaling voorgevallen dat de scheepsbouw en de scheepsuitrusting aan de stedelijke magistraten werden overgelaten, wanneer de particuliere ondernemers daar geen baat in zagen. Het valt gemakkelijk te raden vanwaar alle leveranties dan komen moesten. 1) Zelfs hierbij bleef het nog niet, want niet enkel de kapitein maar meestentijds ook het betrokken scheepsvolk moest dan liefst zonder uitzondering gerecrueteerd worden uit dezelfde stad. 2) Met besliste zekerheid valt niet uit te maken wanneer de éérste "Alkmaar" aan de zee-macht van de Geunieerde Provinciën werd toegevoegd. Het moet evenwel reeds in of mogelijk vóór 1639 zijn geweest, want ik vond in een acte van 5 november van dat jaar melding gemaakt van een zekere Jacob Willemsz., die als schipper fungeerde op het oorlogsschip "Alcmaer", "daer Capiteyn op is Jan Warnarsz Capelman" 3). 's Mans schip, dat 80 koppen en 24 stukken geschut voerde en vanzelf thuis behoorde onder de admiraliteit van het Noorderkwartier, schijnt identiek te zijn met "'t Wapen van Alcmaer", dat in de vloot van admiraal Witte de With in de Deens-Zweedse oorlog van 1644/5 gediend heeft. 4) Zoveel is intussen zeker, dat de kapitein Capelman twee jaren tevoren nog het commando voerde in een actie tegen de Duinkerkers op "De Luypaert". 5) In ieder geval was er een in 1654 afgebouwd, 32 stukken voerend fregat "Alcmaer" bij onze vloot nog in 1657 aanwezig, 6) dat onder de kapitein-ter-zee De Groot op 18 oktober 1658 uitvoer en deelnam aan de slag in de Sont. In 1660 werd het bevel gevoerd over "Het Wapen van Alkmaar", bewapend met 64 stukken, door Evert Nagtglas, een stadgenoot, die aan verscheidene zeegevechten onder admiraal De Ruijter heeft deelgenomen. 7) Behalve matrozen had Nagtglas, zoals destijds allengs meer gebruikelijk was geworden, ook soldaten aan boord, hetgeen ons toevallig overgeleverd is door een clausule in een testament van 19 juli 1661. 8) Dat stuk werd namelijk gepasseerd ten verzoeke van de Alkmaarder "Sr. Matthijs Schagen", toen hij op punt stond te vertrekken "gaende in qualite van commandeur over de soldaten op den scheepe van den manhaften Capiteyn Nagtglas ten oorloge ten dienste dezer landen." Gedurende tal van jaren verscheen sedertdien een (Wapen van) Alkmaar in de Nederlandse zeemacht. Bij de uitrusting van de 6 oorlogsschepen, 2 fregatten en één advies-