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The Dutch Coal Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.

R. W. Unger

Moving coal down the east coast of England from Newcastle to London was to contemporaries and historians alike an overwhelmingly important part of English shipping and critical as a basis for continued maritime expansion. The volume of the trade, the frequency of voyages and the ease of entrance into the trade all made it a pillar of English commercial and maritime strength. If coal was so important to English shipping then certainly there must be some question about the contribution of moving coal to Europe's largest merchant marine in the seventeenth century, that of the Dutch Republic. Peat was of course the greatest source of heat energy in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. The peat was dug domestically and shipped along canals and rivers to nearby markets in the rapidly growing towns of Holland. Supplies lay close at hand and were very near or below the water level so it was easy to load the cut peat on boats. In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a whole new network of canals was created to connect consumers and producer of peat.¹ Home heating was the original and principal use for peat. The expansion of Dutch industry in the fifteenth century put an end to that. As demand for fuel, especially from industrial users, grew rapidly, in the second half of the sixteenth century Dutch consumers began looking for other energy sources. Coal was used alongside peat in Holland long before the golden century. For home heating peat and wood were always preferred. On the other hand smiths always relied almost exclusively on coal. Brewers turned more and more to coal over time. Coal always had an advantage since a kilogram produced more heat than a kilogram of peat.² That made transportation and storage of a given quantity of energy in the form of coal easier. Storage was a problem for urban industry. Since coal had four times the calorific value of peat then not only space could be saved with coal but also a good deal of labour in stoking fires. There were other advantages. Peat had to be dried so in years when the spring was wet supplies of good quality peat were limited. There was a seasonal problem with peat. From 1 November to 1 February peat supplies from interior provinces like Overijssel and Groningen were not available. And the exhaustion of peat supplies in Holland had obviously even by the 1670's made imported coal more attractive as an energy source.

Resistance to the change to coal had many different reasons. While peat enjoyed the advantage of being easily shipped coal often had to be transferred from a seagoing vessel to another smaller inland one to reach Dutch urban markets. Both peat and coal were bulk goods. Shipping costs were a significant proportion of delivered cost, regularly more than 50% in the case of coal. It was difficult therefore for either good to sustain any increase in transport costs. Incidentally moving peat was important to domestic shipping. In the seventeenth century it took 3,000 ships or about 40% of the inland vessels in the Republic to move the annual peat output. The work employed 6,000 men and often members of their families. Small boats making frequent voyages moved the peat. The *aalman*, the *pont* and the *pleit* were the most commonly used boats for the job. They were all flat bottomed, had no posts and were poled rather than sailed. A 1450 Leiden law set the overall length of the *aalman* at a maximum of 10.8 meters. It had platforms at either end and could carry about 4.8 metric tons of peat. Boats got bigger over time but were limited because of the width of ditches and canals that ran along the peat bogs. The *turfspont* could carry from about 15 to about 50 metric tons of peat. Vessels that carried turf to Brabant and Flanders were larger, able to handle from 50 to even 100 tons.³ Even though moving peat was important to navigation that in no way lessened the significance of moving coal to Dutch shipping in general. Holland and Zeeland had to major sources of coal. There was no domestic coal within the Dutch Republic so imports were the only possibility. Coal either came from modern Belgium and more precisely the prince-bishopric of Liège or it came from Britain, from England or Scotland. Coal is mentioned in the Maas region near Liège in 1195 and again in 1213. In all Europe only the English mines predate those of Liège. Dutch ship-ers were active in bringing coal from Newcastle to the Low Countries in the last years of the fourteenth century and probably before that.⁴ Coal is not all the same. Three large categories were used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. First there were strong or small coals which gave off an intense heat. They were much preferred by smiths. Second there were large coals which burned more slowly and had less sulphur so were used in

industries such as brewing or brick- and lime-making. The third type was a mixture of dirt and coal which was very cheap and used for home heating or in some cases for salt boiling. It could not sustain the cost of transport and so was only sold close to mines. It was the first two types, forging coal and large coals which found their way into international commerce. In fact the two collectively were called 'ship coal'. English mines in the seventeenth century produced mainly for the London market where the coal was intended for home heating. They sent their large coals there and had to find a market for the other type of 'ship coal'. An easy outlet was the industries and especially the smithies of the Continental coast. During the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654) there were complaints that there was no way for English mines to get rid of their second grade of small coals since the Dutch market was closed. Even in peace time by the mid-seventeenth century finding an outlet for small coals was a problem for shippers from England's major coal port, Newcastle.⁵ No matter the type it was coal from those two sources - the southern Netherlands and the British Isles - which from the thirteenth century on competed for the market in the Rhine and Scheldt deltas. Coal from both could be sold there, in Holland and Zeeland, in Brabant and Flanders, at competitive prices because it could be moved to the region at low cost over water. The Dutch then always had access, at comparatively low cost, to the two greatest coal producing districts of Europe. It is not surprising then that coal found uses in Holland from the high middle ages on. Coal from Liège came on boats down the Maas so Dordrecht was the principal distribution point for that coal. It had to pass a number of tolls on the way. Even as early as 1272 toll collectors were having trouble with collecting the amount due them because coal was used to cover goods which had to pay a higher duty.⁶ There is some indication that by the sixteenth century Maas coal reaching Dordrecht was being sent on to other markets such as Delft, a center of brewing, and to other towns in the Low Countries as well as in some cases to northern France, Spain and to England. Very little of the shipping was over long distances however.⁷ As demand for Liège coal grew in Holland through 1600 Dordrecht became even more just simply a transshipment and distribution point. Dordrecht shipcarpenters even developed specific and unique types of vessels to carry coal. The Dordrecht *kool-haalder* was a long flat-bottomed boat, open and with no deck. There was a small rectangular cabin amidships where the single mast stood. The mast carried a square sail.⁸ Traffic along the Maas was not always easy because of wars and

government rules and tolls. Still for the sixteenth and seventeenth and through much of the eighteenth century Dordrecht was an important intermediary for moving coal from mines around Liège to consumers. Coal production around Liège dated from the high middle ages but it was probably not until the fifteenth century that there was significant production for export. In the sixteenth century production continued to grow. In 1545-'46 minimum output was 48,300 tons, rising to 90,000 tons in 1562-'63 and then dropping off to 37,000 tons in 1566-'67. Wars overseas and disturbances at home may well explain the low figure for the last date. Though there had long been a thriving market for coal in Liège and the level of consumption there was unique on the Continent there was also a sizeable surplus for export. In the sixteenth century about 40% or as much as 35,000 tons was sent out of Liège each year. The share was down to about one-third by the beginning of the eighteenth century but that still left some 50,000 tons for shipment to the Netherlands. There were other sources of coal in the southern Netherlands such as the Mons district so the exports of the Liège district to Holland are a minimum of imports. Around 1700 as many as 400 inland vessels carrying 25 to 30 tons each found work in that coal trade. There was also work for ships and men in the re-export trade. Liège coal enjoyed a reputation for high quality and it was much preferred to, for example, Scottish coal because it burned cleaner. In the early sixteenth century Liège coal competed with coal from Newcastle in French ports even though the latter was loaded directly on seagoing ships and the former had to travel some 250-300 kilometres by river to reach the sea. The re-export trade which began certainly by the sixteenth century continued through the eighteenth century. The relatively small river going vessels of the Maas could not make the trips to Rouen and other French ports. Presumably labourers on the Dordrecht docks transferred the Liège coal to boyers, a popular vessel for trade to northern France. The combination of a square sail and a spritsail on the mainmast and a lateen sail on the mizzen mast gave a high degree of manoeuvrability. Tonnages in the range of 50-100 made boyers small enough to negotiate rivers such as the Seine. Galjoots were also used for trade to France. They were faster and more narrowly built and thus not as well suited to the bulk trade in coal.¹⁰ By the eighteenth century the principal coal port in South-Holland was no longer Dordrecht but Rotterdam. Trade through Dordrecht did not end but the better location of Rotterdam for international trade and the generally healthier economy of that town

made it possible for it so supercede its upstream rival. Rotterdam specialized more in importing and re-exporting coal from the British Isles while Dordrecht, for reasons of geography, remained loyal to coal coming down the Maas. Amsterdam was in the sixteenth century the principal port for coal imports from the British Isles. The smiths of Amsterdam needed the small coals which England exported. In fact even in the second half of the seventeenth century Amsterdam along with Hamburg was the main destination for English coal exports. The two principal English exporting ports, Newcastle and Sunderland, sent more than 30,000 tons to Amsterdam in 1675. Better than 20,000 tons was typical in the late seventeenth century from those two ports alone. At an average of 80 tons for ships going to northern England a minimum of 75 ships were needed to maintain that trade. All those ships were Dutch at least up to the 1660's. The low levels of exports of coal to the Baltic from Amsterdam strongly supports the conclusion that British coal was meant for use in local industry and for distribution to nearby towns and villages. Vessels from around the Zuiderzee and from the islands in the Waddenzee carried the coal from the northeast coast of England to Amsterdam. By the late eighteenth century some shipments were regularized, an industrialist for example chartering a ship to keep him supplied during one year or longer with coal from England.¹¹ There are no exact coal import figures for the port of Amsterdam before 1668. In that year 2,369 tons of smiths' coal entered the port from England, 924 tons of the same was shipped out. Figures become more abundant from Britain, but on the other hand she took over 19,500 tons of small coal from the same source. The total of all coal imports of all types to the town was 22,300 tons. Exports of small coals in the same year were about 170 tons so the re-export trade was negligible. In 1774 imports of all coal into Amsterdam totalled almost 22,000 tons and exports were just some 70 tons. At the end of the eighteenth century Amsterdam was taking even more coal from Britain. With the outbreak of war in 1795 imports fell off dramatically. But from 1789 through 1793 the average imports from Britain to Amsterdam were about 31,200 tons. The trade to Amsterdam alone must have offered full time employment for about 59 ships. The coal trade through Amsterdam faded relatively even from the mid-seventeenth century as Rotterdam came to take its place. As early as 1680 total imports into the Rotterdam admiralty district — which included Dordrecht — of British coal was up to 15,000 tons. Almost 6100 tons of that total was exported. Rotterdam importers over time turned their interest more to coal from Sunder-

lund rather than from Newcastle. The quality was higher. The relative rise of Sunderland coal exports was in part due to the growth of the Rotterdam market. As with Amsterdam much of the coal went to local industry or to villages and towns in the district. By the late eighteenth century that consumption and the re-export trade had driven up imports to a level far above those of Amsterdam. One observer in 1777 put imports into the Zuiderzee at 26,320 tons from all sources. The quantity of coal reaching Maas ports at that time was over 110,000 tons and that was imports just from Sunderland. There were additional and significant supplies from Newcastle and from Scotland.¹² 250 Ships would be the minimum number for coal carrying ships serving Rotterdam alone in the late eighteenth century. By that date, however, few if any of those ships were Dutch. In the late middle ages shipments came principally from Newcastle but also from ports like Lynn and Scarborough. From 1377 to 1403 occasional figures for six of those years show an annual average export from Newcastle alone by Hollanders and Zeelanders of 1505 tons. Overseas exports were volatile because of wars, shipping problems and variations in taxes. The share of exports in total English production fell over time. In the mid-sixteenth century it was still around 50% but sales overseas did not keep pace with the rapid growth in output. By the end of the seventeenth century foreign markets only took some 20%. Of those exports 80-95% went to ports in northern France, the Low Countries or the North Sea coast of Germany. The markets fluctuated. For example Holland was the most important foreign destination in the 1620's but by the 1630's it had changed to Hamburg.¹³ Coal exports to Holland alone required as much as 5,000 tons of English shipping in the second decade of the eighteenth century. By the last decade of the century that figure had risen to over 12,500. That was small compared to the total tonnage needed for carrying coal to the rest of northwestern Europe — 265,000 tons in the 1750's — or in the coasting trade — 125,000 tons in 1773. The carriage of English coal by then was almost exclusively in British ships. The total of all exports of coal rose over the eighteenth century. The total volume remained stable but the Dutch share of total exports tended to fall.¹⁴ This made little impression on Dutch shipping since carriers from Holland had already been chased out of the trade. The tonnage of coal shipped was on the other hand very important to the English merchant marine. By the close of the eighteenth century clearly industrial uses dominated in Holland for coal. Rotterdam dominated imports and Britain dominated supply. All estimates from

English Coal Exports to Holland (metric tons)

Year (Christmas to Christmas)	Total of all exports	Tons to Holland
1710 — '11	66 176	27 296
1711 — '12	66 907	24 117
1712 — '13	79 255	24 013
1728 — '29	124 127	31 663
1729 — '30	87 060	34 613
1730 — '31	123 197	34 280
1731 — '32	128 917	37 925
1732 — '33	125 018	33 214
1733 — '34	133 244	35 243
1734 — '35	135 350	36 791

the eighteenth century and all official returns point to the importance of coal as a source of energy in Holland, to Holland's importance as a market for English coal exports and the importance of coal in international trade. Carrying coal down England's east coast was a simple task. Navigational problems were few. Winds were reliable. The trade was best served by small ships of inexpensive build and frequently old ones. They also had to be ships which were inexpensive to operate. It was in exactly that type of ship that Dutch shipbuilders excelled. They produced low cost bulk carriers which dominated the trades of northern Europe. That was already true in the sixteenth century so Dutch ships carried the majority of English coal exports. English merchants preferred Dutch-built ships since they cost so much less to buy and to operate. They bought them directly from Dutch yards or captured them as prizes in one of the three Anglo-Dutch wars. In the 1660's and 1670's as much as one-third of English mercantile tonnage may have been of foreign build and almost every ton of that was for carrying bulk goods like coal. The English coal trade always employed a high proportion of tonnage not because of the distances, which were usually short, but because of the massive tonnage of coal which the ships moved. By the second half of the seventeenth century colliers were specialized vessels — not just any old ship pressed into service as had been the practice a century before. The change in design led to larger ships with greater carrying capacity with little or no increase in crew size. The average size of a cargo of coal into London in 1592 was just 51 tons but it was up to 66 tons by 1606, 75 tons by 1615, 126 tons by 1638 and it had jumped to 225 tons by 1701. In the same period the manpower needs for each ton fell by about 50%. Coal

ships typically had small and efficient crews, usually only one man for each 20 tons or more of cargo. A collier of 1650 with a ratio of 21.5 tons/man had among the highest ratios of any sailing ship before the nineteenth century. The average size of colliers rose as the smaller ones disappeared and a few large ones — above 400 tons — entered the trade in the course of the seventeenth century. The ships in the export trade were typically larger, that is well above 100 tons. This applies to both English and Dutch ships. No matter the size it still took about two weeks to make the better than 600 kilometer trip from Newcastle to London.¹⁵ The principal ship for the Newcastle coal trade was the hoy. The keel, a ship with pointed bow and stern, shallow draft and a wide beam — as much as one — half the typical length of 12 metres — was the vessel for handling coal in the middle ages. The design was similar to that of small Scandinavian vessels. The keel was used as a lighter along the River Tyne long after it had been supplanted in the longer distance carriage of coal. In the sixteenth century builders began making their coal carriers setting up the frame first and then adding the hull planks rather than starting with overlapping hull planks. The design change to skeleton-from shellbuilding was a major one. It made possible the construction of larger, lighter, and less costly colliers. The hoy, of skeleton design, owed a great deal to the *heu* or *heude*, a sea going ship of the Low Countries. There such vessels rarely exceeded 40 tons. They were large enough to have a full deck and a large trapezoidal wing transom. Originally there was a single low mast with a single spritsail. There was also a staysail on the forestay. The combination of pure fore-and-aft rig kept manning requirements very low. Netherlands shippers used such vessels on

inland waterways but the sharp cut of the hull recommended the *heu* for use at sea.¹⁶ Used for carrying coal in the seventeenth century the hoy was made larger and sometimes given a square sail as a topsail on the mainmast and even a jib. The spritsail was replaced by a gaffsail which was simpler to handle and equally effective on either tack since there was no big sprit running a 45° angle from the foot to the top of the sail as with the spritsail. It was still possible with a gaffsail to increase sail area by adding bonnets, small strips of canvas sewn to the bottom of the sail to make it longer and easily taken off when it was time to shorten sail. The gaffsail was easier to shorten too since all sailors had to do was lower the gaff as far down the mast as they thought necessary. These coal hoys enjoyed a good reputation for being nimble, highly mobile and surprisingly fast. The change in the seventeenth century to larger ships was also a change to a different type. Dutch *fluiten* proved highly effective in carrying all kinds of bulk cargoes, for example grain and salt, and so it was not long after the development of the type in the late sixteenth century that *fluiten* went into use in the coal trade. The hull was almost box-like, the bows bluff. Standard rig was three masts with square sails on the fore and mainmasts and a lateen sail on the mizzen mast. For the coal trade apparently there was in some cases a reduction to two masts and increasingly the use of a sprit- or gaffsail on one mast to decrease the already low manning requirements. Sterns were round and that feature was kept in colliers in the eighteenth century as ketches, two-masted vessels, tended to dominate the trade. Many colliers were said to be cat-built and that may reflect descent from medieval Scandinavian design. Bows were bluff as with the *fluit* and almost square. The waist was deep and the bottom rather flat. Sometimes called coal cats they carried three but more often two masts. There could be topsails, but again those were rare, to keep down manning needs. The rig was similar to that on hoys but with the addition of a second and even a third mast. Hull design was very different from the more sharp hoy. To get more driving power builders included more square sails as a percentage of the total canvas. In the seventeenth century both Dutch and English shippers used the same types of vessels, principally *fluiten* or variations on the basic *fluit* design. By the eighteenth century English shipwrights especially those along the Yorkshire coast, had developed the skill of building specialized colliers, efficient, relatively large, rugged and durable. Captain James Cook on his first voyage of discovery in 1768 chose a 368 ton bark of collier design to make the trip to the South Pacific. Though she was a slow sai-

ler she, like others of her design, was an excellent sea-boat.¹⁷ The success of northeast shipwrights was part of the shift of the coal trade from East Anglia and from the Netherlands. East coast trade was long dominated by short voyages along that coast or to the Low Countries. In the fifteenth century surplus capacity in East Anglia turned to the carriage of coal from the Tyne to home ports for redistribution either locally or to London. Fishing boats in the off season could on occasion supplement earnings by moving coal. English vessels still dominated the carriage of coal in the 1540's. The expansion in total tonnage used along the east coast of England down to the end of the century brought new vessels from overseas into the trade. Shippers in the smaller East Anglian ports had to face not only competition from foreigners but also from London and Yarmouth shippers who in the course of the seventeenth century acquired cheap Dutch bulk carriers. Ultimately though decline in East Anglia was because of the rise of native shipping and shipbuilding in Yorkshire ports such as Newcastle, Scarborough and Whitby. It may well be that as the pace of growth in coal mining slowed in the late seventeenth century that mine owners in the North turned to shipping as a place to invest their capital.¹⁸ Whatever the reason in the eighteenth century all competitors, English or Dutch, had been driven from the trade by captains, crews, ships and shipowners from Yorkshire. Coal did not just go to London or to Holland. There were other markets such as France, lands on the Baltic and especially Norway. In total volume those shipments were significantly less than shipments to Holland but they offered employment for ships and opportunities to combine coal carriage with moving other goods. Dutch ships travelled directly to Newcastle and after taking on coal might touch a Low Countries port before going on, for example, to Rouen. The Dutch ships would go out in ballast and then take the coal to ports such as Lisbon or Hamburg. Rotterdam ships from 1660 to 1790 carried coal to ports near and far away, from Cherbourg and Fécamp to Copenhagen and even Philadelphia.¹⁹ Then they would have to return home in ballast or try to find some cargo, no matter how small, to carry home. Since coal was the bulky commodity it determined the quantity of tonnage used in the trade. Shippers tried a number of different schemes for getting around the problem of voyages with no paying cargo. The most successful solution was a threecornered trade with Dutch ships going to Norway in ballast to collect a cargo of timber and then carrying that to Newcastle where they took on coal for the Dutch market. The great advantage was that the timber trade was the only English trade

which had a volume comparable to that of the coal trade. Moreover the same older capacious and slow ships were suited to both trades. A Rotterdam merchant chartered the Hopewell of Bridlington of 110 tons in 1732 to carry unspecified goods to Sunderland and there to take on a load of coal for Bergen, Norway. In Norway the master was to deliver the coal and the goods from Rotterdam to the agent of the Rotterdam merchant and then within ten working days take on the goods specified by the agent and return to Rotterdam. She also carried a small quantity Rhenish brandy distilled in Germany on behalf of two Rotterdam wine merchants. In 1733 yet another charter sent James Willey, the master, to Sunderland to load 96 tons of coal for Kristiansand, Norway. At the same time the same Rotterdam merchant was chartering another Hopewell, also of Bridlington, this one of 80 tons to make similar voyages for him, one in 1732 and one in 1733. There was a third Hopewell, this one of 150 tons, chartered out of Rotterdam in 1732 in the coal trade. She was to go to Sunderland where the merchant's agent would load on as much coal as possible and then she was to carry that coal to Copenhagen. From there the destination was Kristiansand for a cargo of miscellaneous goods but probably largely wood.²⁰ It was not a coincidence. The similarities were caused by the intensity of the triangular trade – or rather triangular trades – created in the North Sea by the presence of massive English coal exports and demand for that coal throughout the region and especially in Holland. Foreign carriers dominated the English overseas coal trade from the second half of the sixteenth century. In 1593 seven out of every eight ships clearing Newcastle for a foreign port were not English. Foreign ships carried between 33% and 40% of coal coming to London from Newcastle in the 1590's, the equivalent of about 10,000 tons each year. The overwhelming majority of those foreign ships were Dutch. Domestic shippers were distressed at the loss to foreigners of employment for their ships while the English government saw potential foreign exchange slipping away along with a valuable training ground for seamen. The government embarked on a legislative programme to make the coal trade an English preserve. In 1563 all foreign shipping was prohibited from coastal trade. In 1615 the government issued a proclamation reminding Englishmen that acts of 1368, 1489 and 1541 were still in force which made it illegal to ship goods in or out of England in anything other than English vessels. In both cases the attack was on Dutch shipping and especially on Dutch carriage of English coal. There was a sharp rise in the proportion of English ships carrying coal

to Dutch ports in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. The proportion increased through the century first because of the greater use by English shippers of Dutch-designed ships and second because of more and more restrictive legislation. In 1661 for example 158 of 190 cargoes from Newcastle went out in English bottoms. The tax structure worked to the disadvantage of foreigners as well. Non-English shippers had to pay a higher export duty than their English counterparts. In 1694 Dutch shippers paid 233% more than natives. At times the differential was even higher. Since taxes and duties were about half the cost of duties became more and more complex over time. Because of a tax on imports into London imposed in 1666 English coal delivered in Rotterdam in that year was cheaper than coal delivered in London. Again in 1739 there was a complaint that the Dutch could buy coal cheaper in England than could English manufacturers because of the tax structure. No matter the confusion and inconsistency of government the seventeenth century policy of excluding foreign shippers and taxing shipments by foreigners at a higher rate when and if they were permitted in the coal trade was effective. In the years 1711–1713 less than 5% of exports went out of England in foreign bottoms.²¹ The English legislation was designed to retain the carriage of coal for natives. It succeeded and increasingly so from the 1660's. One major effect was to drive Dutch shippers for much of the seventeenth century to seek other less expensive sources of coal, places where they could use their relatively more efficient ships. They found a major source along the shores of the Firth of Forth. Scotland enjoyed a thriving coal export trade to Holland during the seventeenth century. The duties and restrictions common south of the Tweed did not apply in Scotland, that is until the Act of Union of 1707. Scottish great coals which looked something like slates were much preferred in Holland for home heating. They were cleaner in burning and also much cleaner to use, a major consideration for Dutch housewives. From the late sixteenth century coal production rose rapidly in Scotland and exports appear to have grown even faster. One reason was the rising duties on English coal exports. In 1614 Scotland sent out about 15,000 tons of coal. Dutch ships carried the overwhelming majority of that coal. In the 1620's it was said that Dutch ships were queueing in the Firth of Forth to get their coal cargoes. Though exports fell to about 18,000 tons per year in the 1680's they were back up to around 45,000 tons by the end of the century. Moving the coal took about 75 ships, mostly Dutch. The chief foreign market was unquestionable Holland.²³

But in the last years of the seventeenth century sales there failed to grow despite the increase in total exports. In part it was because the English lowered their export duties so Dutch buyers tended to go to Newcastle and Sunderland instead. Dutch shippers took some of the increase in Scottish output to customers in third countries. The preference for the Dutch market was a long standing one in Scotland, one not broken until late in the eighteenth century. The lack of a domestic merchant marine forced Scottish coal producers to rely on foreign shippers and the Dutch were the most efficient. The efficiency of the Dutch acted as a break on the development of the Scottish merchant marine in the seventeenth century, much more than the similar effect which it had in England. Many Scottish ships were in fact built in Holland. Ships were always smaller in the Scottish coal trade than the English simply because of the poorer quality of ports in the Forth. Investment in improving facilities by local landowners and by some Dutch merchants who were also mineowners did not overcome that handicap. Vessels from Rotterdam visited many small ports up and down the Forth shores. "Borrowstouness" for example turns up as a destination for Rotterdam ships much more frequently in the late seventeenth century than would be warranted by its size. The importance of such ports rose and then fell as miners exhausted coal seams close to the water. There was some re-export of Scottish coal, especially south to Brabant and Flanders. But high duties on Scottish coal in the southern Netherlands served to keep much of the coal in Holland. Ships carrying coal from Scotland also on occasion were involved in a triangular trade taking coal to Rotterdam and then going in ballast but with cash to Norway where they got a cargo of wood for Scotland.²⁴ The Scottish coal trade and indeed the coal trade in general was very simply organized. A bulky commodity that was neither highly differentiated nor subject to deterioration did not require an extensive system of factors and agents. In the English coastal trade it was the masters of the old leaky colliers who did the buying of the coal at Newcastle and the selling at London. That made possible stockholding and the regularization of sales. The simple commercial arrangements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suited Dutch shippers perfectly. In the timber trade and the Baltic grain trade they bought goods on the spot for cash and thus kept prices low. It was a simple matter to transfer that practice to Newcastle and to all the small ports along the Firth of Forth. Dutch merchants from the second half of the seventeenth century had to gradually abandon direct dealing. They turned to chartering English or Scottish ships to bring cargoes of

coal back for them for a fixed fee.²⁵ The need to use native English shippers was part of the reason for the increased use of chartering. The practice was also common in the three-corner trades where other goods were involved. Though there was a rise in chartering in the late seventeenth century the independent shipper did not disappear. In the eighteenth century that businessman was replaced in the Dutch coal trade however and for the same reasons as his scope was reduced in the English coasting trade. The growth in the scale of operations, the simple increase in the tonnage carried put the trade beyond the skills of such men. Coal supplied more than energy in the golden century. The coal trade gave employment to shipping both along the rivers of the Low Countries and across the North Sea to Yorkshire and the Firth of Forth. The approximately 6,000 tons of shipping used to bring coal back to Holland from the British Isles in the 1630's was small in a merchant fleet which totalled well over 300,000 tons. The proportion grew up to the 1660's and then fell as English protectionist legislation became effective. The figures understate the value of the trade to shippers however. It gave them a place to put older ships and a trade where it was always possible to put in an extra voyage while waiting for a cargo. For England the coal trade was more important to the total of shipping tonnage than for the Dutch merchant navy. By the 1770's for example the coal trade from Newcastle to London employed more shipping than all the rest of English trades.²⁶ The coal trade was important for England because it offered employment to a large number of seamen. That was true for the Dutch merchant navy but again it was not as significant in Holland. There were other advantages reaped by both Dutch and English shipping from the coal trade. The existence of the coal trade meant the opportunity to use ships for moving other goods. The emergence of three-cornered trades in the North Sea in the course of the seventeenth century was a direct result of the presence of bulky coal shipments. The coal trade fit into and contributed greatly to the creation of a trade network in the North Sea and the English Channel, a network which stretched in some cases to the Baltic and the Biscay coast of France. The coal trade contributed to the drive to develop and to build efficient bulk carriers which incorporated in their design lower labour requirements, even lower than for the grain trade which was the most important bulk trade for the Dutch. The Dutch coal trade did not have the glamour of the trade in spices to the East Indies. It did not compare in value to the wine trade to Bordeaux. It did not compare in volume to the grain trade to the Baltic. But it did with

its frequent sailings create marginal employment for shipping and it did bring to the Dutch Republic an important source of energy, an alternative to local

peat supplies and an invaluable input to domestic industries.

Notes

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R.C. Smout, *Scottish Trade...*, 54-44, 74, 155. English shipowners were worried during negotiations for the Act of Union about the more efficient Scottish ships which were largely Dutch built being allowed to trade freely to England. Many Dutchmen were part owners of Scottish ships as well as coalmines.
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Roof, geweld en drankmisbruik onder de vissers op de Noordzee in de tweede helft van de 19e eeuw.

Bouwe Hijma

Inleiding

Dit artikel gaat over vissers op de Noordzee in de tweede helft van de 19e eeuw. Centraal staan ten eerste de toenemende roof en gewelddadigheid, zowel langs de kusten als in open zee en ten tweede de handel in en het misbruik van sterke drank op zee. Zoals we zullen zien zijn deze twee zaken nauw met elkaar verweven. Direkt hiermee hangen ook samen de pogingen van verscheidene regeringen om paal en perk te stellen aan deze misstanden. Eerst geef ik een beknopt overzicht van de Nederlandse zeevisserijen in de 19e eeuw. Daarna verschijnt het eigenlijke onderwerp van dit artikel op het toneel. Ik zal een beeld schetsen van de gewelddadigheden op zee en de rol die het gebruik van sterke drank daarbij speelde. Ik zal aandacht besteden aan een over deze toestanden door W.H. Higgin in opdracht van de Engelse regering vervaardigd rapport en aan andere bronnen en literatuur waaronder ook Nederlandse. Vervolgens komen de internationale konferenties aan de orde die in 1881 resp. 1886 gehouden werden om aan de veronderstelde misstanden een halt toe te roepen. Tenslotte zal ik ook de effecten van de op deze konferenties ondertekende traktaten nagaan.

De Nederlandse zeevisserijen vóór 1857

Het belangrijkste onderdeel van de zeevisserijen in ons land was gedurende lange tijd de haringvisserij. Sukses en teruggang wisselden elkaar in deze visserijtak af, maar in de loop van de 18e eeuw ging het heel sterk bergafwaarts. De Napoleontische oorlogen zorgden voor een vrijwel volledige stillegging. Tussen 1814 en 1830 had een opleving plaats, die echter na 1830 weer overging in een achteruitgang o.a. ten gevolge van de afscheiding van België. Deze achteruitgang duurde voort tot in de jaren '50 van de 19e eeuw. Het antwoord op de vraag hoe deze teruggang te verklaren valt, kan ten dele verkregen worden uit de discussie over de oorzaken van de herleving vanaf het einde van de jaren '50. Aan deze discussie besteed ik enige aandacht, omdat zij verband houdt met het eigenlijke onderwerp van dit artikel. Volgens Rahusen kwamen velen tot de overtuiging dat de achteruitgang van de zeevisserijen kwam door het "keurslijf, haar door wetten en reglementen aangelegd"¹. Buys, evenals Rahusen een fel tegenstander van dit z.g. keurslijf, maakte duidelijk wat dit inhield: "geen duim breeds grond was als speelruimte voor

zijn eigen genie en zijne persoonlijke ervaring den industrieel overgelaten; de reglementen hadden in alles voorzien en alles voorgeschreven"². Geregeld waren o.a. het soort schepen, hun inrichting en bemanning, de omvang van de netten en het materiaal daarvan, de periode en de plaats waar de visserij moest worden uitgeoefend.

Verder werden aan de verschillende takken van de zeevisserij premies toegekend. Op de begroting van 1848 was daarvoor een bedrag van f 180.000 gereserveerd. In datzelfde jaar besloot het parlement deze premies geleidelijk af te schaffen, omdat deze kunstmatige bescherming niet strookte met het principe van handel vrij van overheidsbemoeïning. De bestaande reglementering bleef vooralsnog, maar bij K.B. van 9-2-1854 werd een commissie benoemd bestaande uit vier leden waaraan genoemde heer Buys als sekretaris werd toegevoegd. De commissie diende een Ontwerp van Wet in waarbij werd voorgesteld alle belemmeringen op te heffen waaraan de zeevisserijen tot dusverre onderworpen waren geweest. Ieder kreeg volkomen vrijheid om de verschillende takken van zeevisserij naar eigen goedvinden uit te oefenen. Op 12-6-1857 verscheen de nieuwe wet in het Staatsblad.

De breuk met de oude wet van 1818 lijkt vrij radikaal en was dat volgens Buys en Rahusen ook. Door het afschaffen van de premies en het aannemen van deze nieuwe wet hadden de liberale vrijhandelsprincipes in hun meest klassieke vorm gezegevierd en werd de staatsinvloed op de zeevisserij tot een minimum beperkt. Rahusen stelde in 1898 dat de herleving van de Nederlandse zeevisserijen dagtekende van de benoeming van deze commissie³. Dat het vanaf het decennium 1860-1870 beter ging is duidelijk, maar lag dat aan het intrekken van de oude wetgeving?

De Nederlandse zeevisserijen en in het bijzonder de haringvisserij na 1857

Voor een beter begrip van het onderwerp dient nog vermeld te worden het onderscheid tussen de 'grote- of zoutharingvisserij' en de 'kustvisserij'. De 'groote visscherij' was de belangrijkste tak van de Nederlandse visserij. Zij werd bedreven vanuit Vlaardingen, Maassluis en andere plaatsen aan de Maas. Vóór 1857 bezaten deze vissers als enigen de bevoegdheid haring te kaken en deze dus als pekelharing