

SOME NOTES ON COOK'S AND VANCOUVER'S SHIPS,  
1776-80, 1791-95

In March, 1778, Captain James Cook arrived at Nootka Sound in command of an exploring expedition consisting of two vessels H.M.S. *Resolution* and *Discovery*. In August, 1792, Captain George Vancouver anchored in that sound with his two exploring vessels, H.M.S. *Discovery* and *Chatham*. The name "Discovery" common to both expeditions has led some persons to conclude, hastily, that the ships were one and identical. And yet a moment's search would have shown the falsity of the surmise. Captain Cook says (*Voyage*, 1785 ed., vol. I, p. 2). "the Discovery of 300 tons burthen was purchased into the service," for the intended expedition; his third and last voyage; whilst in the Introduction to Vancouver's *Voyage* (1801 ed., vol. I, p. 44) it is stated that: "In the yard of Messrs. Randall and Brent, on the banks of the Thames, a vessel of 340 tons burthen was nearly finished; and as she would require but few alterations to make her in every respect fit for the purpose, she was purchased; and on her being launched, was named the Discovery."

Some information about these four historic vessels seems worthy of a place in our records. I have therefore compiled this short account and in so doing have made free use of Arthur Kitson's *Captain James Cook*, London, 1907, and Captain Walbran's *British Columbia Place Names*, supplemented by letters from the Secretary of Admiralty.

*Captain Cook's Resolution*

This vessel was built by Fishburn at Whitby and launched in July, 1770, as the *Marquis of Granby*. On 25th November, 1771, the Admiralty purchased her from Captain W. Hammond of Hull for £ 4,151, and named her the *Drake*. A month later by a subsequent order of the Admiralty that name was changed to *Resolution*. She was officially known as a sloop—that is a sloop-of-war. This classification had nothing to do with her rig, but related to her armament. She was ship-rigged, of 462 tons burthen, 110 feet long and 30 feet broad. She carried twelve 6-pounder guns and twelve swivels; her normal complement was 50 men. Zimmermann, however, says that under Captain Cook she had 112 men and sixteen guns; but the muster roll, as given in Kitson's *Captain James Cook*, names only 108 men, including twenty marines. Her first commission was as the flag-ship on Captain Cook's second voyage, 1772-1774. She was also the flag-ship on Cook's third voyage,

1776-1780. Zimmermann calls her "the old Resolution." After her return in 1780, she was in January, 1781, fitted as an armed transport. On January 9, 1782, whilst a part of Admiral Saffren's squadron in the East Indies, she was captured by the French. Though efforts have been made to ascertain it, her subsequent story is at present unknown.

#### *Captain Cook's Discovery*

This vessel was built by Messrs. Langborne of Whitby in 1774, and purchased by the Admiralty early in 1776 from Mr. W. Herbert of Scarborough for £ 2,450. Kitson says (p. 47) that the Admiralty records give her tonnage as 229; but Cook states that she was of 300 tons burthen, and this corresponds with the Secretary's letter. She is classed as a sloop-of-war; her rig was that of a ship. She carried eight guns and eighty men, including marines. She returned to England in October, 1780, and in the following December was made a store carrier. In 1797, she was condemned and broken up.

#### *Captain Vancouver's Discovery*

This ship was built in 1789 by Randall and Brent at their yard on the Thames. She was purchased by the Admiralty and commissioned 1st January, 1790, for a voyage to the Northwest Coast under Captain Henry Roberts. Upon the outbreak of the Nootka trouble the expedition was temporarily abandoned; but when that difficulty was settled she was re-commissioned under Captain George Vancouver. She was of 340 tons burthen and, though called a sloop-of-war (a term which has already been explained) was ship-rigged, and mounted ten 4-pounders and ten swivels. After the return of the expedition in September, 1795, she was transformed into a bomb vessel, and as such was one of the seven that were anchored in the Middle Ground off Copenhagen, where on that terrible, but glorious, April day of 1801 she did her bit in the celebrated battle, which broke the League of Northern Powers. About 1776 the practice re-commenced of using old, unseaworthy vessels as prison ships. So the *Discovery*, which had explored the coast from Cape Flattery northward, became in 1808 one of those hulks, familiar to all readers of Dickens' *Great Expectations*. One of the plates in E. W. Cooke's *Shipping and Craft*, published in London in 1829 shows the *Discovery* as a convict ship. By a curious error the author identifies her as Captain Cook's *Discovery*, instead of, as she was, Captain Vancouver's *Discovery*. After twenty-six years in

this service the *Discovery*, then forty-five years old, was in 1834 broken up at Deptford.

*Captain Vancouver's Chatham*

The *Chatham* is a vessel about which little is known. She was built at Dover in 1788 and brought into the Navy. Vancouver (*Voyage*, 1801 ed., vol. I, pp. 49 f) describes her as an armed tender, mounting four 3-pounder guns and six swivels; of 135 tons burthen, and sheathed with copper. She was rigged as a brig, and carried a crew of fifty-five men, all told. She remained in the Navy until 1830 when she was sold out of the service.

F. W. HOWAY