

HM Brig the Braak

Converting a Cutter into a Brig and from Cannons to Carronades



RS Treasures of the Sea

By: Björn Dinjens, s1727249

Teachers: Dr. A. M. C. van Dissel and Drs. M. R. Manders.

Date: 11-12-2015

'In Memory of My belv'd Brother Capt. John Drew Drown'd 11 Jany. 1798 Aged 47'¹

Contents

3. Introduction

5. The Braak in the age of Revolutions.

7. Identifying the wreck.

8. British innovations.

14. Material and social changes.

16. To make a powerful cruiser.

18. Relevance.

20. Conclusion

21. Bibliography and Sources

22. List of Illustrations

¹ Inscription of the mourning ring belonging to James Drew found at the wreck site of the Braak.

Introduction

On a windy day in 1798 His Majesty's Brig-rigged-Sloop the Braak was passing along Cape Henlopen of the state of Delaware in the United States. Then a freak wind took the ship and its crew by surprise. The ship heeled far over and immediately began taking on water. Sometime later the ship was sunk, along with 35 members of its crew, 12 Spanish prisoners and its Captain, James Drew.² This was the end of the Braak. But its story starts further back in time. It started as a Cutter in the Dutch Navy in around 1781, and was later on converted into a Brig-rigged-Sloop when it was taken by the British in 1795. My main question is then as follows: What were the reasons for the British to convert the Braak? It worked as well as a Cutter it seems, for it served successfully in the Dutch Navy for over fourteen years all around the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean and Caribbean. Still the British chose to convert the Braak. What their reasons would have been is the main focus of this paper.

To come to a convincing answer to this question the following sub-questions will be asked and answered. Firstly what was the context of the history of the Braak? To answer this question the main events of the years from 1781 till 1798 will be described. These are mainly the two wars in which the Braak served. Secondly the clues that help identifying the Braak wreck as truly the Braak will be discussed. These are the remains of the wreck itself and the artefacts found pertaining to the wreck. Thirdly will come the answer to the question what the modifications applied to the Braak by the British were. These are mainly found in the conversion of the Braak from a Cutter to a Brig-rigged-Sloop and the rearming of the Braak with Carronades. The fourth question will be as follows: What did the modifications change about, and aboard, the Braak? Here I will look at what sort of implications the conversion of the Braak had on the role of the ship and what this, along with the different armament, meant for the crew aboard the Braak. Then the question will be answered as to why the Braak was converted? The expanding role of the British Royal Navy and the age of the Braak will be the main elements. Then lastly the relevance of the Braak will be discussed. What was its historical and archaeological relevance? This question will be answered twofold. This is because the historical relevance differs somewhat from the archaeological one. Also if further archaeological and historical research into the Braak would be of any use will be determined. Then to top it all off the conclusion will be given in which an answer will be given to the main question with the help of the answers to the sub-questions. My forehand conclusion would be that because of the rapidly expanding war at sea and the technological advancements the British were forced to convert the Braak in order to be able to keep up with her enemies. But before we come to that, I will start with the history in which the Braak lived and served.

Former research and sources

The Braak is mentioned only sporadically in other secondary literature. To date just one full monograph has been dedicated to the story of the Braak. In the rest of the literature the Braak is only mentioned in appendices in lists of ships of that period. Most attention given to the Braak's history has been by American authors. They are more interested in the subject, seeing as the shipwreck was found in American waters and how its recovery impacted American law. And after its recovery in 1984 the interest in the wreck and the history of the Braak died down.

² D. Shomette, *The Hunt for HMS De Braak: Legend and Legacy* (Carolina Academic Press 1993) 38.

The primary sources themselves are even more circumspect than the secondary sources. In the archives of the Admiralty of the Maze the Braak is only mentioned a couple of times. And then the Braak is only mentioned sparingly. The sources mention when the Braak was bought. A personal letter of the Commander of the Braak shows when the ship was put under embargo by the British, and lastly the drafts made by an English shipwright show us the changes made to the hull by the British. All in all not an abundant amount of archival data survived concerning the Braak.

The Braak in the age of Revolutions

The days in which the Braak lived were tumultuous ones. During her service the Braak encountered two revolutions and was subject to dramatic changes in the global balance of power. The Braak also lived in a time when technological advancements changed the design and survivability of ships. During its service the Braak also changed names, from the Brak to the Braak. To clarify this I will start with explaining this change in names.

Renaming

When The Braak was taken by the British, it was still called De Brak. Only after entering into British service did it change its name. Within the British service there is a tradition in, if possible, keeping the former name of the ship. Like the *Téméraire*, which was a French ship taken by the British. Keeping the name acted like an advertisement, showing the enemy their lost ships and with it their former defeat.³ Why The Braak was renamed with an extra A is not clarified. In Dutch Brak stands for Beagle. But Braak has no single clear definition or explanation. It remains a mystery why the British chose for The Braak

Development in Design

During the 18th century new theories were being put to use in shipbuilding. In the Royal Navy the theories presented by Isaac Newton were being put to the test.

Dutch navy ships were being built to more sturdier specifications than foreign ships. The opinion was that foreign designs were inferior to Dutch designs.⁴

The most significant change in the navies of the Netherlands, France, Great-Britain and Spain was the switch to the 3rd rate 74-gun ship-of-the-line as the workhorse of the navy. Instead of representing each rate of ship-of-the-line the individual countries chose to focus on a single type that was both strong enough to fight in the line of battle and could fulfil different tasks. From convoy duty to blockading enemy ports.⁵

The Fourth Dutch-Anglo war

When the Brak was purchased the political situation in Europe was all but volatile. Britain was in a state of war with not only its former colonies in the America's, but also with France and Spain. During 1779 the Dutch became more and more entangled in the war between England and the American rebels. In 1779 a Dutch squadron in the English Channel was forced to surrender and taken into

³ N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London 2004) 418.

⁴ A. J. Hoving en A. A. Lemmers, *In tekening gebracht: De achttiende-eeuwse scheepsbouwers en hun ontwerpmethoden* (Amsterdam 2001) 82-83.

⁵ *Ibidem.*, 79.

Portsmouth. Following this act of aggression the British declared war in December 1780, just before the Dutch joined the Armed Neutrality.⁶

The Dutch navy was totally unprepared for a full scale naval war with England. All the Admiralties combined could in total only bring 60 frigates and ships-of-the-line into play. With an age expectancy of twenty years for frigates and fifteen years for ships-of-the-line, and the Dutch ships averaging seventeen years of age, the Dutch Navy had some serious material problems. Also the experience of their personnel and recruiting new was a major problem. On paper the officer corps was at full strength. But most of these officers had little seagoing experience. Also the recruiting of petty officers and able seaman showed to be a problem. Even though these problems were apparent, some senior officers pleaded for taking the combined fleet from Texel to sea and engaging the British. Despite the fervour of those few, the Dutch fleet remained during almost the entire war at the roads of Texel. The only great naval action was on the fifth of August 1781, known as the battle of Dogger Bank. A trade convoy needed an escort to the Baltic, therefore a squadron consisting of six ships-of-the-line and as many frigates under command of Rear-Admiral Johan Arnold Zoutman set out from Texel. Soon they encountered a British squadron under command of Admiral Hyde Parker who was also escorting a trade convoy. After the action the Dutch claimed it was a victory and tried thus to boost the morale of their navy. Unfortunately the action changed nothing at sea. The Dutch remained at Texel and stopped trying to escort their trade convoys.⁷

The fourth Dutch-Anglo war, as came to be called, had two lasting consequences for the Dutch navy. Firstly a major shipbuilding program was started. In the years from 1780 till 1790 no less than 46 ships-of-the-line and 28 frigates were built. The navy gained a major boost in amount of ships and became one of the fastest growing navies of Europe. Unfortunately in absolute numbers a lot of the ships built replaced those lost to the British, so the navy grew only minimally. The second major consequence was the sending of squadrons of warships to the East-Indies. The fleet of the VOC was greatly reduced in numbers and requested help from the Navy. The navy sent in 1783 a squadron under the command of Captain Jacob Pieter van Braam to the East-Indies. Further the Dutch navy resumed its presence in the Mediterranean and was more prominently present due to its increased size and better relations with France.⁸

It was at the beginning of the Dutch-Anglo war that the Braak was purchased by the Admiralty at the Maze. In 1781 the admiralty wanted to quickly make up for losses by purchasing a few 'large Cutters' (Kotters). The Braak was one of these Cutters.⁹ It is a little unclear from where the Braak was bought. Some sources state that the Braak was built in England and then bought.¹⁰ Here the archives fall short, for nowhere is it directly mentioned where the Braak was built. It is only clear that it was bought and not built by the Admiralty at the Maze itself.

The Braak was to be armed with 14 guns and manned with a hundred seamen. It entered service in 1781.¹¹ Later on in 1782 it was sent to Amsterdam to receive repairs and have its hull coppered. After this little information is found between 1782 and 1795. It was sent into the

⁶ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 348; J. R. Bruijn, *Varend verleden. De Nederlandse oorlogsvloot in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Amsterdam 1998) 197.

⁷ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 349-50; Bruijn, *Varend verleden*, 198.

⁸ Bruijn, *Varend verleden*, 200.

⁹ NL-HaNA, Admiraliteiten / Aanwinsten, 1.01.47.39, inv.nr. 9, pagina 34.

¹⁰ See the list comprised by Mr. J. P. Asmus. Available in the library of the Maritime Museum Rotterdam. Inv. nr. 11515.

¹¹ Shomette, *The Hunt for HMS De Braak*, 15.

Mediterranean in 1784.¹² In 1787 it formed part of a squadron of small ships intended for securing the Dutch southwestern coastline.¹³ The last mention of the Brak in Dutch archives is when it was taken in 1795.¹⁴

The period ranging from 1780 till 1795 was a very active period for the Dutch navy. The Braak was not as active during this period. Until the French Revolution brought an unwanted change.¹⁵

The French Revolution

When the French Revolution started in 1789 the Dutch navy was still rebuilding and expanding its force. During the years from 1789 till 1795 the Brak goes unmentioned. Only in 1795 does it step back into the spotlight. During 1794 the Brak was sent to escort a convoy of East Indiamen. The Brak along with its convoy and other warships put into the harbours of Falmouth and Plymouth at the end of 1794.¹⁶

During that time the political situation was once again quite delicate. The French Republic, after executing its king, declared war on almost every sovereign of Europe. They did not declare war on other countries, but their despotic rulers. The French revolutionaries were of the opinion that their ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity should be exported to the rest of Europe. Therefore in February of 1793 the French were at war with Britain.

After losing the Glorious First of June the French navy was, for the time being, not a direct threat to the British. At land however the French did pose a direct threat to the Dutch. Revolutionary armies marched through Europe and were at the doorstep of the Netherlands. Therefore the British placed all Dutch warships and trading vessels under embargo. The Brak was unfortunate to be in a British port when this happened.

The time spent in Falmouth by the Brak shows an interesting phase in the time between peace and war between Britain and the Dutch. At first the Brak is only placed under embargo. The commanding officer, a Lieutenant J. A. Grootenraay, is asked to give his word that he will not attempt to sail away. After giving his word to a Captain Warren, six of his crew were pressed into British service. Afterwards two other men of his crew were put in prison because they were French. Grootenraay tries to get these two men back but is unsuccessful.¹⁷ After this the Brak is left in peace. Until the French conquer the Netherlands and the Batavian Republic is formed. Then all Dutch ships still in British ports are seized and taken into British service. The Dutch officers were allowed to go back to the Netherlands. What happened to the crew is a mystery.¹⁸ After this the Brak was put into British service and the last years of its life began. The ship was renamed and truly became His Majesty's Brig-rigged-Sloop the Braak.

The sinking

When the Braak put to sea from Falmouth she was tasked with escorting a merchant convoy to North-America. The journey started out quite uneventful. Only after a couple of weeks the convoy got scattered by foul weather and the Braak was lost from sight from the leading escort of the

¹² NL-HaNA, Admiraliteiten, 1.01.46, inv.nr. 846/ 1196 a.

¹³ T. Roodhuyzen, *In woelig vaarwater: Marineofficieren in de jaren 1779-1802* (Amsterdam 1998) 84.

¹⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁵ Bruijn, *Varend verleden*, 199-201.

¹⁶ NL-HaNA, Admiraliteiten / Van der Heim, 1.01.47.27, inv.nr. 431

¹⁷ KHA, prins Willem V, 261, correspondentie marineofficieren, brief van Grotenraay, 14 februari 1795.

¹⁸ Roodhuyzen, *In woelig vaarwater*, 126-127.

convoy. The Braak only turned up again when she arrived at the North-American coast, together with a Spanish ship the Braak had taken as a prize. Of the coast of Delaware the Braak took on a pilot for the last leg of the passage towards the port of Lewes. The pilot, Andrew Allen, advised Drew to take in more sail. Drew answered to this; "You look out for the bottom, and I'll look out for the spars." At about 4:00 pm the Braak made ready to lower the anchor a mile or from the Cape Henlopen Light. The six-oared cutter was already alongside when a "sudden flaw of wind" occurred. The Braak was taken unawares by the sudden gust and heeled far over and began taking on water. The crew that was still on deck threw themselves into the cutter that was alongside. Within moments the Braak was sunk, taking along with it the main part of the crew and her Captain. Only 35 people survived the sinking, including the pilot Andrew Allen. It is thanks to Allen's eyewitness account that we now know what happened to the Braak.¹⁹

A unique fate?

That ships sink is a sad fact that cannot be denied. During the French Revolutionary wars and the Napoleonic wars the British Royal Navy lost a total of 306 ships. Of this total, only 95 were lost by enemy action. And of the remaining 211 lost at sea by foundering or capsizing, only 66 were Sloops- or Brigs-of-War. But during 1798, the Braak was the only Brig-of-War lost at sea due to foundering or capsizing. It is a sad fact that of these 66 ships the majority, namely 48, lost all their crew when the foundered. The fate of the Braak was not at all unique. Ships like the Braak were at sea for long lengths of time during the entire year. Therefore they were exposed to all kinds of weather and stood a high chance of foundering.

Identifying the wreck

When the wreck of the Braak was found, it first needed to be positively identified as the Braak. The ship itself gives several clues as to where it came from and how old it is. The artefacts found aboard give clues about whom were present aboard the ship and from what time they were. The following is an analysis of the wreck of the Braak and the objects found and why they help to identify the Braak as truly the Braak.

A British Brig

Firstly to start off with the wreck itself. The Braak as it was found and raised in 1986 is only a part of the original ship. The remains were a part of the keel of the ship. On several pictures it is visible that the keel was coppered. This only became standard for European ships during the 1780's. Not only is the hull coppered, it is also nailed with 'Broad-arrow' nails.²⁰ These were used by the Royal Navy and stamped with arrows to prevent theft.²¹ Via the copper sheets and nails alone the ship is positively identified as being a British Royal Navy ship of war. Further helping the identification is the remaining timbers and the way they were joined. In a small documentary about the Braak it is clearly visible

¹⁹ D. Shomette, *The Hunt for HMS De Braak*, 33-38.

²⁰ <http://www.fileybay.com/debraak/artefacts2b.html> , see the recovered nails on the website of the wreck of the Braak.

²¹ J. M. Bingeman et al., 'Copper and other sheathing in the Royal Navy', *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* (2000) 29, 2, 226.

that wooden trenails were used to fasten timbers within the ship together.²² This use of wooden trenails was done only by the British and the Dutch during the eighteenth century.²³ This narrows the field, but does not give a conclusive answer.

British Armament

The second part that identifies the Braak as typically British are the artefacts found on board or near the wreck site. The largest of these artefacts are the Carronades. Several 24-pounder Carronades were found lying near the Braak. Also a six-pounder long gun has been found bearing the mark of the king of England. These two finds identify the Braak as well as British. For the British were the only ones who carried Carronades aboard ships during the period from 1782 till 1800. Only after the eighteenth century did France copy the British in producing a similar weapon. Secondly the mark of the king of England on the long gun is of course a dead giveaway.

An artefact that helps a lot in placing the ship in a certain time period is the gunlock which was found. This gunlock, used for one of the Carronades, bears the inscription of a certain 'H. Nock' with the year 1795. This helps significantly in dating the ship. It is certain that the wreck dates from 1795 or later.

British sailors

Several objects found aboard the ship give us clear information that it was indeed an British Royal Navy vessel. The found Monmouth hat was worn by the British sailors. But what almost certainly closes the book is the mourning ring found. This ring was found near the wreck of the Braak. The inscription on the ring read: '*In Memory of My belv'd Brother Capt. John Drew Drown'd 11 Jany. 1798 Aged 47*'.²⁴ This ring was worn by the Commander of the Braak, namely James Drew. This find makes it certain that the wreck found was indeed the Braak.

Several items give circumstantial evidence as to the wreck of the Braak being actually the Braak. First the wreck itself with its surviving signs of the building techniques used. Secondly the armament found aboard. These pieces of evidence make it clear it was a British built and serviced ship from the late eighteenth century. But only the ring found by the wreck, directly belonging to the last commander of the ship, confirms the wreck as being the Braak.

British innovations

When the Braak entered service in the British Royal Navy it underwent some drastic changes. What follows is an outline of these changes.

An Armed Cutter and a Brig

It has been mentioned that the Braak was purchased as a 'large Cutter'. This designation does of course give little clarification as to what a Cutter looks like, let alone what a 'large Cutter' then should look like. Also the modification of the Braak to a Brig-rigged-Sloop only adds to the confusion.

²² http://www.contentdelaware.org/?page_id=32&FID=174, see at around 1:08 min and 1:17 the wooden trenails still fixed in the timbers of the hull.

²³ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 222.

²⁴ D. G. Shomette, *Shipwrecks, Sea Raiders and Maritime Disasters along the Delmarva Coast, 1632-2004* (Johns Hopkins U. P. 2007) 300.

Therefore I will start with giving a small description of how these two ship types differentiate from one another.

A Cutter

The word Cutter leaves too much to doubt. A cutter could be a small boat, carried aboard larger ships such as frigates and ships-of-the-line. These boats could place a mast and thus sail to a destination if it were worthwhile. Normally they were rowing boats. The Braak does not fit into this category. The Braak was a 'large Cutter' of 84 feet long and 28 feet and eleven inches wide. It had a burthen of around 255.3 English tons.²⁵ It carried only a single mast and had a bowsprit which stuck out horizontally from the bow. This fits with the standard description of a Cutter. It was single masted with at its topmast a single square sail. The rest of the sails were lateen sails. The ship was designed for speed and used mostly inshore for anti-smuggling activities.

Despite this standard format of Cutter, the ships did differ per build. Some cutters carried more square sails. Others did not carry any square sails at all. Unfortunately a complete description of the Braak as a Cutter did not survive. Only the single mast and horizontal bowsprit remain, making it possible to identify it as a Cutter.

A Brig-rigged-Sloop

First off, what can be identified as a Brig? The Oxford dictionary gives the following definition: 'A two-masted square-rigged ship, typically having an additional lower fore-and-aft sail on the gaff and a boom to the mainmast.'²⁶ The term Brig originates from somewhere in the eighteenth century. It was a two-masted ship carrying square sails and stay sails between the fore and mainmast and foremast and bowsprit. At the stern of the mainmast was also placed a gaff to carry a spanker. Its water displacement could range from 198 tons to 527 tons.²⁷ The Braak, with its 255.3 tons, does then fit perfectly within this type.



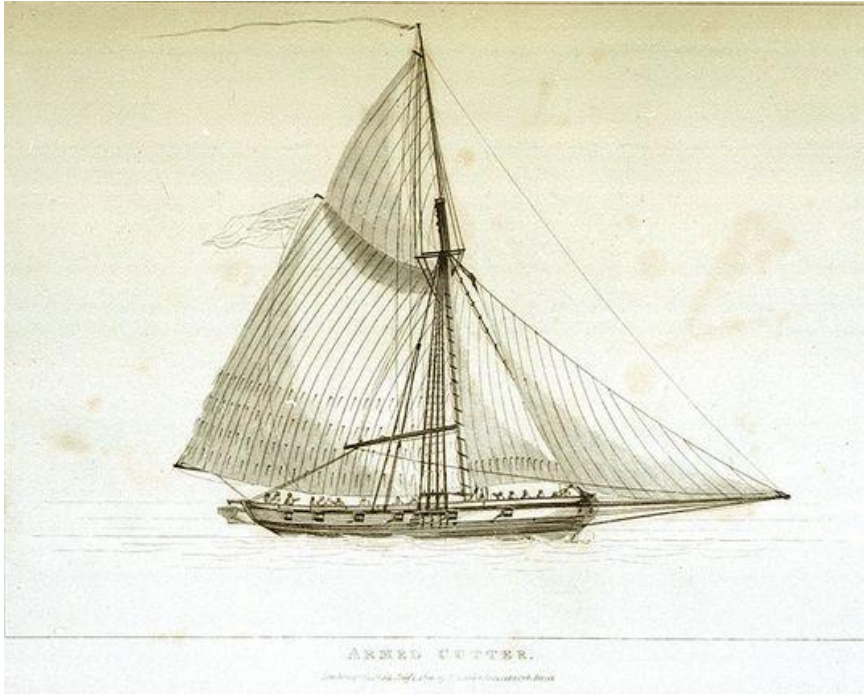
*Here you see a Cutter with three square sails rigged.*²⁸

²⁵ Library Maritiem Museum Rotterdam. Microfiche T2646.

²⁶ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/brig>.

²⁷ G. Asaert, et al., *Maritieme geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (Bussum 1976-1978) dl. 3, 23.

²⁸ 'An armed cutter chasing a smuggler' by Montague Dawson.



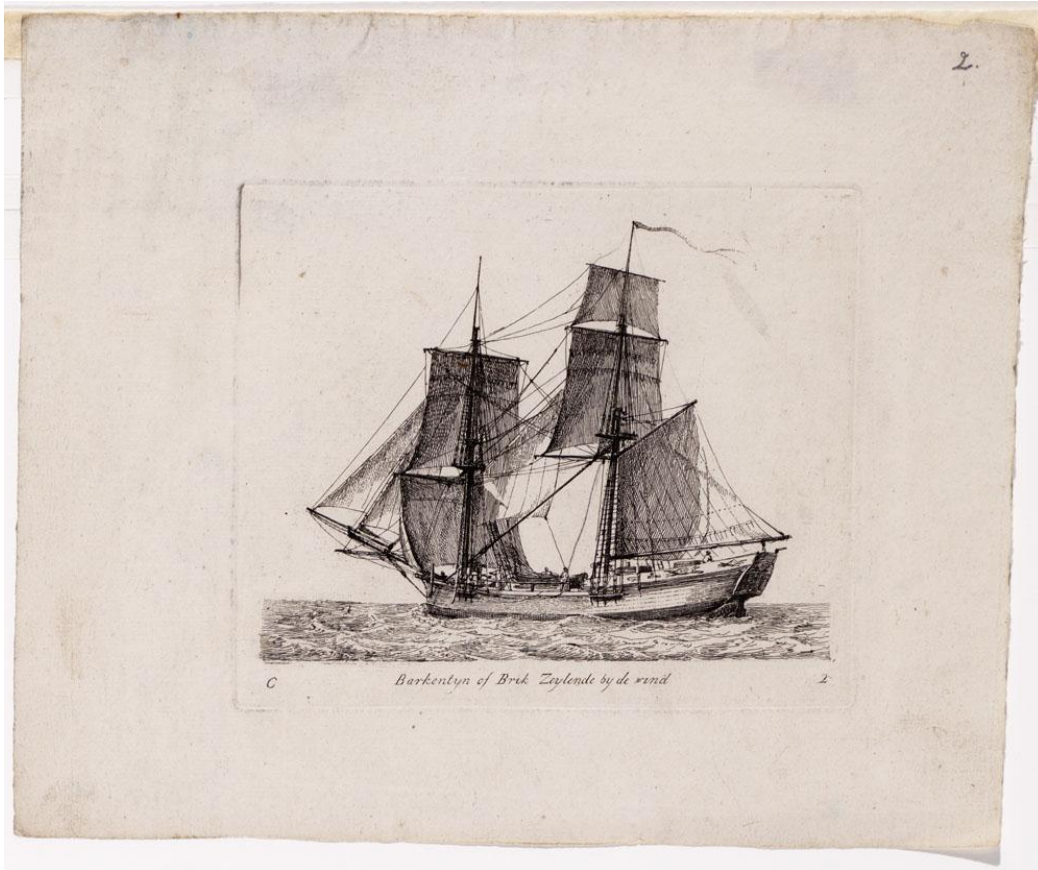
Here the Cutter does not carry any square sails. Nor does it seem it has the capability to do so.²⁹



The standard format of an Armed-Cutter. Note the oversized square topsail and spanker. These sails gave the ship the advantage of sailing close to the wind as well as sailing before the wind without having to set the spanker completely outward.³⁰

²⁹ 'Armed cutter', etching in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

³⁰ 'Crispo and the Telemachus', National Maritime Museum Greenwich.



Here you see an example of a Dutch Brigantine or Brig. As is required, it carries two masts with square sails and stay-sails, and a gaff to carry a spanker.³¹



Here you see a Brig, built in 1782, with its courses brailed up. This ship, as you can see, was even capable of carrying five square rigged sails on each mast.³²

³¹ 'Barkentyn of Brik zeylende bij de wind' G. Groenewegen, Rotterdam 1789.

It is clear that giving a clear cut definition of a single ship type is very difficult. For there are always exceptions to the rule. What is clear is that the type of the ship is not always defined by its shape or size, but by its rigging. That was why the Braak could be so easily converted from a Cutter to a Brig.

The Braak modifications

The First modification, which is clear from the technical drawings, is the addition of an extra mast.³³ This was highly necessary for the Braak to be able to be classified as a Brig. Without it, it would have stayed a Cutter. After this addition the bow was modified as well. The bow received an ornamental beak head, upon which an elevated bowsprit rested. It also received larger catheads. This together with the addition of a capstan shows that the Braak was capable of carrying larger and heavier anchors.

The other peculiar additions are the two superstructures at the stern of the ship. These are not clearly visible in the drawings, but on the model of the ship as displayed at the Zwaanendael museum in Delaware they are clearly visible. These appear to be deck cabins, which would be reserved for the only two officers aboard the ship, namely its Captain and first-Lieutenant.

It is clear that the Royal Navy did nothing internally to the hull of the ship, but did everything necessary to convert the Braak from a Cutter to a Brig. These changes might seem cosmetic, like the addition of an ornamental beak head, but they were necessary. Another change, which was not cosmetic and also not really necessary, gave the Braak an edge over its sister ships.

From Long Guns to Carronades

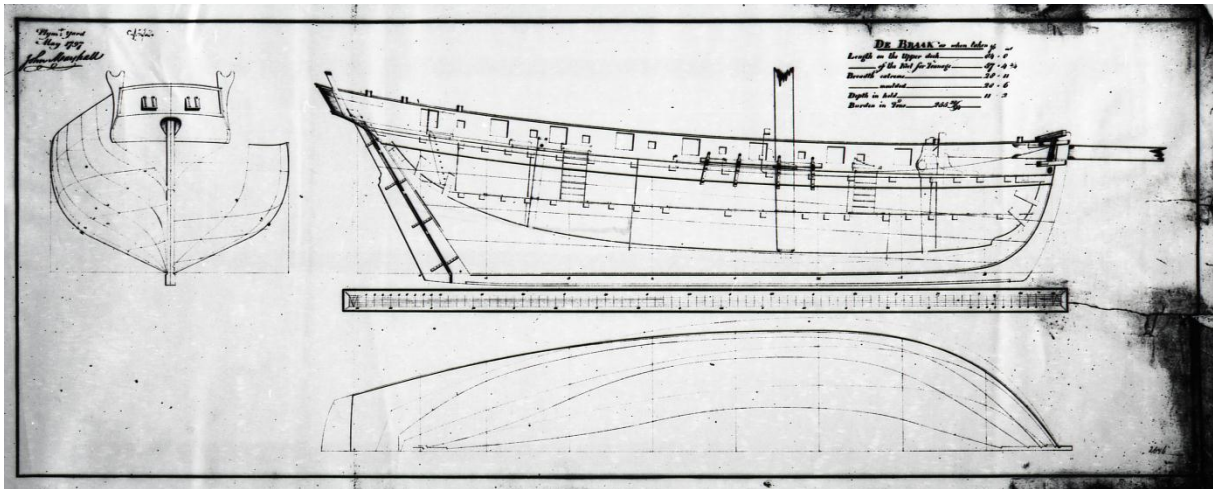
Another modification applied by the Royal Navy is the exchange of the Braak's six pounders for 24 pounder Carronades. First an explanation of what a Carronade is. The Carronade was a short version of the normal cannon. It was first successfully built by the Carron Company, hence the name Carronade, in Falkirk. After few trials the Carronade was adopted by the Royal Navy as first an addition to the normal armament of the ships. Later ships were fitted with Carronades as their main armament. Because the Carronade was much shorter it was also much lighter. A 64-pounder Carronade took up far less space and manpower than an eighteen-pounder long gun. A rather spectacular story about the testing of the Carronade gave it its popularity. In 1782 an old frigate was rearmed completely with Carronades. In September 1782 it encountered a French frigate of the same size. After firing only the forecastle Carronades, which were 32-pounders, the French frigate assumed, correctly, that it was outmatched in firepower and astutely surrendered.³⁴ The Braak was fitted with sixteen Carronades. In terms of broadside weight, via which contemporary Navy officers judged the fighting potential of their ships, the Braak went from 84lbs to 384lbs. That puts it at the same height as a 32 gun frigate carrying twelve pounders.

The rearming of the Braak might not be cosmetic or necessary. But by replacing the long guns with Carronades the Braak gained significantly in firepower. Also the addition of its mast, capstan, bowsprit and deck cabins completely changed the outlook, function and station of the Braak.

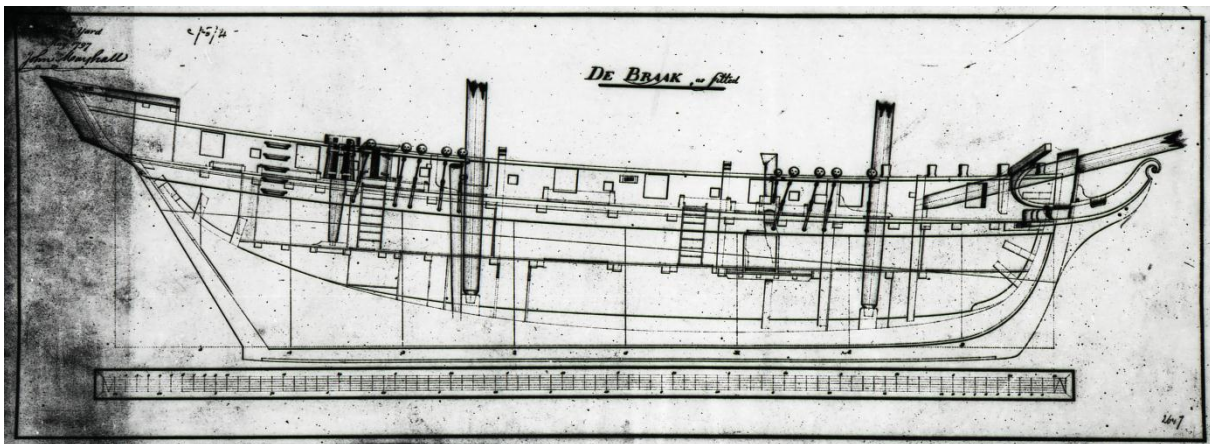
³² 'HMS Speedy falling in with the wreck of Queen Charlotte March 21 1800 at Leghorn', National Maritime Museum Greenwich.

³³ Library Maritiem Museum Rotterdam, Microfiches T2646 and T2647.

³⁴ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, 420-421.



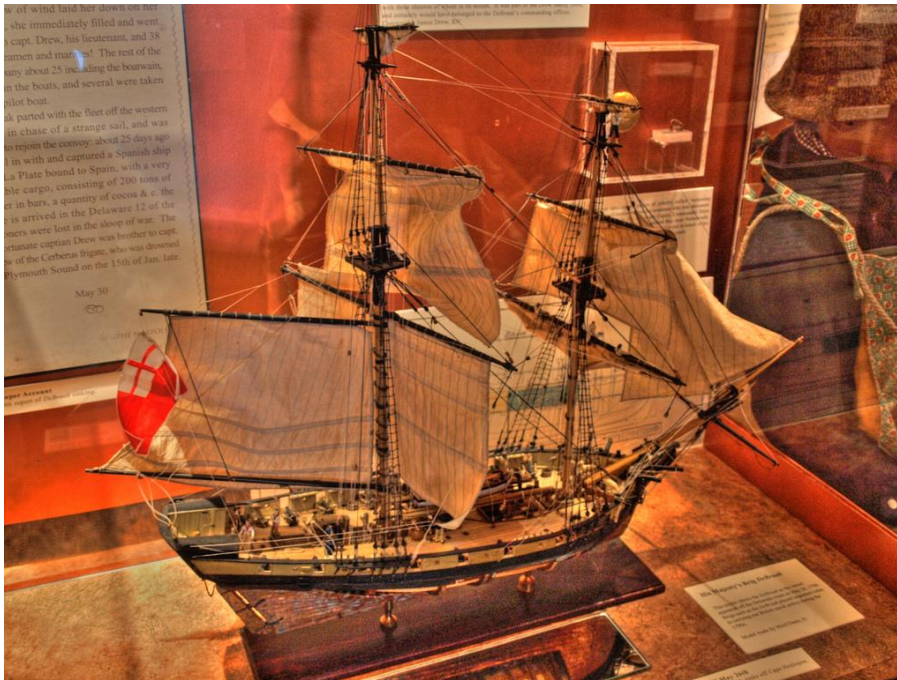
The Braak as taken.³⁵



The Braak as fitted.³⁶

³⁵ 'The Braak as taken', Library Maritiem Museum Rotterdam, T2646.

³⁶ 'The Braak as fitted', Library Maritiem Museum Rotterdam, T2647.



The Braak Model in the Zwaanendael Museum in Delaware, America. Here the two superstructures at the stern are clearly identifiable as little deck cabins.³⁷

Material and social changes

After the Braak was modified by the British it became a new type of ship. Now I will discuss what sort of implications these changes had for the Braak and those aboard her.

New Rigging

Firstly the rigging changes turned the Braak into a ship fit as a command for a Commander. An armed Cutter would have been more economical in manpower, having fewer sails and thus needing fewer men to handle, but would have needed expert handling.³⁸ The conversion from Cutter to Brig therefore required a bigger crew, but less expertise. But when we look at the archival data it states that the Braak maintained a crew of around 80. When it was bought it was even planned to equip a hundred. So this modification changed little aboard in terms of manpower. It meant only that the same amount of people was used for more work. But because a Brig was easier in handling than a Cutter, it made up for the extra work.

Still the conversion meant that the dynamic aboard was changed. Instead of a single officer, as would be aboard a Cutter, a Brig-rigged-Sloop carried a Commander and a Lieutenant.³⁹ This meant an extra level in the social hierarchy of the ship. The actions of a bad Lieutenant could easily incite a mutiny aboard, even though the Commander was free from blame. But a bad Commander could just as easily incite mutiny, despite the actions of a competent and experienced Lieutenant. Life aboard such a small ship meant everyone would get to know one another very intimately quite

³⁷ 'Model of the Braak in the Zwaanendael Museum, Lewes, Delaware, U.S.A.

³⁸ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 417.

³⁹ J. Henderson, *Frigates, Sloops and Brigs* (Barnsley 2011) 366.

fast. A harmonic relationship between the Commander and First-Lieutenant and between the First-Lieutenant and crew would be of the utmost importance.⁴⁰

New Armament

The replacement of the long guns by Carronades implied a lot for the Braak itself and for its crew. First off, it greatly increased the firepower of the Braak. A 24-pounder Carronade could easily smash through the hull of a third-rate at close range. Secondly, Carronades needed far less men to service them. For each Carronade, no matter its calibre, only three men were needed to service them. A 24-pounder long gun needed at least eight men to service them. A six-pounder long gun, the former armament of the Braak, needed five men to function. The release of a portion of the crew from manning the guns meant a lot more men became available for handling the sheets and setting new sails when changing course. Why the Carronades were so much easier to handle was mainly because of its innovative carriage. Instead of a normal gun carriage, the Carronade rested on, what is called, a slide. Thanks to this the Carronade recoiled, as it were, in place. The Carronade could easily be reloaded and run out again thanks to this innovative design.⁴¹

Another innovation applied by the Royal Navy was the addition of gunlocks. These mechanisms, in principle the same as those used on eighteenth century muskets, used a flint to ignite the cartridge instead of a linstock. This greatly increased the firing reliability of the guns. The British were the first to experiment with gunlocks and apply them to their ships.⁴² Despite this innovation, a linstock with a tub of water, around which a slow match was coiled, was still near the guns. This in case the gunlock failed to ignite the charge. The charge brings the next change aboard the Braak. Due to its reduced charge, the Carronades used up far less powder per broadside.⁴³ Therefore the Braak was able to maintain action far longer than when it was armed with long guns. Even though the Braak was mainly armed with Carronades, it also carried a couple of long guns. These would have served as chase pieces. For the Carronade was a great gun at close range, but it suffered significantly in terms of accuracy. This also meant that the Braak was required to engage its enemy at a closer distance than a ship with long guns would have to.

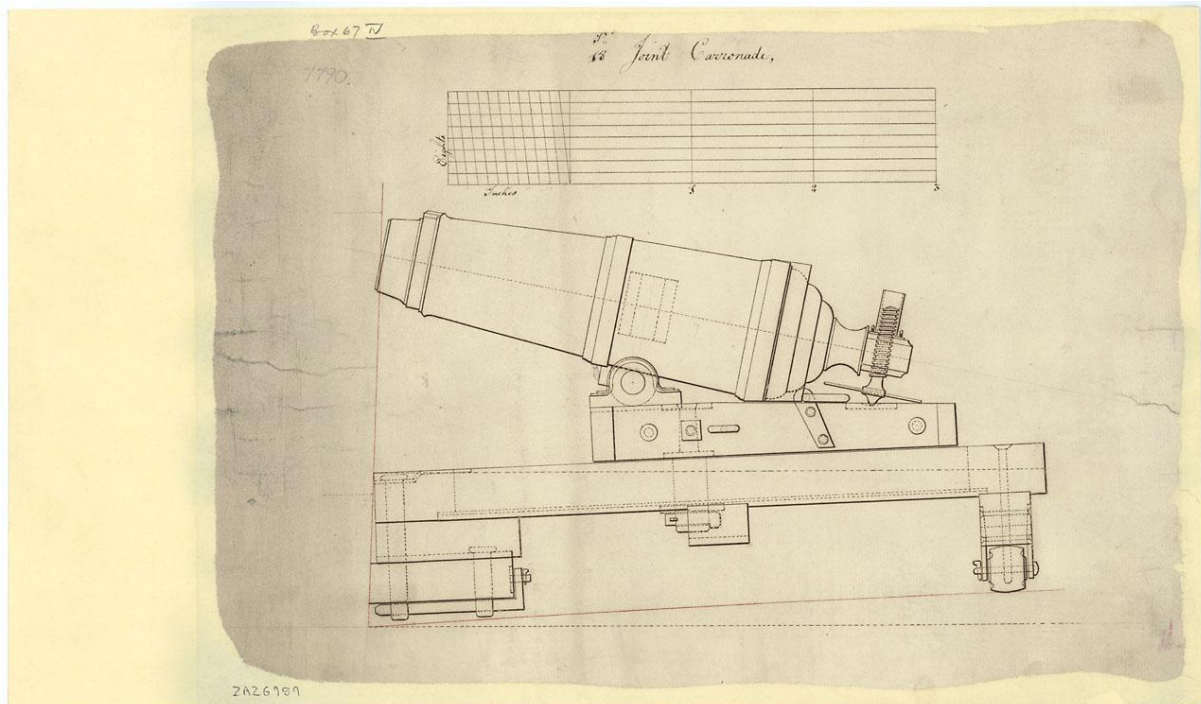
All the changes applied to the Braak changed many things about its appearance, function and life aboard. Some changes were beneficiary, such as the increase in firepower due to the Carronades and the easier handling due to its extra mast. But these points also incurred certain negative effects. The extra mast meant it needed extra crew. The Carronades meant the Braak was less effective at long range. And the extra level in command meant it made life aboard the Braak a little bit more complex. But these extraordinary changes made by the Royal Navy meant also that the Braak is easier to be recognised when found as a wreck.

⁴⁰ R. Adkins and L. Adkins, *Jack Tar: The extraordinary lives of ordinary seamen in Nelson's navy* (London 2012) 25-27.

⁴¹ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 420.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.



Eighteen-pounder Carronade, circa 1790.

To make a powerful cruiser

When the Braak was taken by the British they were at war with France for over a year. With this war the British were not only concerned with protecting their mainland and interests abroad, but also with expanding their interests. The colonies in the West-Indies were of particular interest to the British. To keep up with their growing ambitions the navy needed constant expansion. The Braak was therefore swiftly converted. This conversion had several functions and reasons.

The expanding tasks of the Royal Navy

With the expansion of the ambitions of the British the Royal Navy was tasked beyond its capabilities. The trade of the British went all over the world. And now with the French and Spanish navies being enemies, this trade was endangered. To secure this trade, cruisers were needed to escort convoys. These escort cruisers were mainly Brig-rigged-Sloops or Ship-rigged-Sloops.

Besides being used as escorts, the smaller warships were also employed in securing the coastal waters from smuggling. Fast sailing ships like Cutters were preferred for this task.⁴⁴ The Braak would have been ideal in fulfilling this task, since it was built as a Cutter and therefore had fast sailing capabilities. Besides countering smugglers, ships like the Braak were also used in combatting foreign privateers. These ships, funded by individuals and given letters of marque by their governments, were always present to harass trading ships. To counter this the Royal Navy frequently sent cruisers out to counter those privateers, but also to harass the enemies' trade. Waging war by attacking the enemies' trade was frequently used by the French, mainly because it was relatively cheap seen as the government did not need to invest in new ships. This was called the 'guerre de course'. The British of course played a part in this as well. But instead of focusing completely on

⁴⁴ Ibid., 417.

harassing trade, the British had designs further afield. All over the world the British were intent on expanding their interests and trade.⁴⁵

A powerful cruiser

Besides the conversion of the Braak from a Cutter to a Brig, it also got new armament. It has already been explained what the benefits and downsides of arming a ship with Carronades are. More fire power but less range are the consequences. But the reason for this conversion is also interesting.

By replacing the long guns with Carronades the Braak became a lot more powerful. This was necessary to keep up with the trend in shipbuilding and ships armament in the late eighteenth century. Larger and stronger frigates were being built all over the world by England's enemies and rivals. The frigates not only grew from carrying on average 32 guns to 40 guns, the calibre also changed. Whereas 12-pounders were normally carried by frigates, the larger frigates started to carry at least 18-pounders.⁴⁶ To keep up with this change the armament of the Braak needed to be enhanced as well. Being only a converted Cutter, it was incapable of carrying 18-pounder long guns. The deck timbers of the Braak would not have handled the strain of the recoil of the guns. Let alone the sheer weight of the guns and the amount of crew it would have needed. Therefore changing to Carronades would have been the ideal choice. The Braak now carried 24 pounders, with only needing a small crew to service them. The Braak was now capable of outgunning any of its sister ships carrying only long guns. Along with the new gunlocks, the Braak was able to compete again at sea with its more modern sister ships. This needs to be taken into account as well, for the Braak was a relatively old ship. Being built in around 1781 it was nearing the end of its lifespan. The British needed therefore to update the ship in any way they could to make it still a serviceable ship.

All the changes applied to the Braak dramatically changed its position in the Royal Navy. These changes were necessary to keep up with a rapidly changing world in which the Braak was getting outdated very fast. New rigging and new guns made certain that the Braak could still fulfil its role within the growing tasks and ambitions of the Royal Navy.

Relevance

When researching the Braak and its wreck, one of the aspects one must consider when starting research is if it is worthwhile to research this object. Or more importantly, what aspects make it relevant for research. The Braak has a double relevance, being both of a historical and an archaeological nature. They stand apart but also function when taken together is I will show below.

Historical relevance

Because the Braak was part of two different navies during its lifetime it makes the historical relevance interesting for several reasons. Firstly the historical relevance of the Braak when it was in Dutch service as compared to its time in the British Royal Navy. In the Dutch navy the Braak was merely a Cutter with a complement of around 80 men. In the British navy it was converted to a different type of ship but retained its original complement. This shows how the need of the separate navies defined the function of the ship. When the Braak was taken by the British, the Royal Navy was desperate for cruisers and other small warships.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 573.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 417.

The foodstuffs, clothing, personal items and ceramics found aboard give us an insight into life aboard a eighteenth century warships.⁴⁷ They were a part of the crew and show how they lived during their time. These artefacts are an addition to the archival sources. For they make the sources that already exist on paper more reliable because they are now directly linked to physical objects from the period about which the archives speak. Without these items the archives would remain just words. The objects help to take the narrative of the archives one step closer to an empirical reality.

Secondly the conversion of the Braak shows how ship types were a malleable concept. During the eighteenth century these types were not strictly fixed. By applying modifications the ship changed its type but not its inherent form. Like a chameleon changing its colours, the Braak was modified to be able to serve its new function. The Braak shows how the rigging of a ship was more crucial in defining the type of the ship.

Another relevant aspect of the Braak is that it gives insight into the experimental technologies applied by the British Royal Navy. A brig completely armed with Carronades was a rare thing in the late eighteenth century. The addition of the gunlocks shows how the Braak fits into the rapidly changing nature of the Royal Navy. The new technologies were rapidly changing the nature of the Royal Navy and other navies in Europe. It would be only a matter of years before steam engines were applied to sailing warships. The Braak was part of the last period in history in which the sailing warship had its glory time. Technology was taking the potential of the sailing ship to its maximum potential.

Archaeological relevance

The Braak is of importance for archaeology not only for its remains, but as well for the implications in daily life the wreck had. The company that 'salvaged' the wreck, namely Sub Sal Inc., did this in such an appalling bad way that many archaeologists made a case of it. When Sub Sal lifted the wreck from the seabed it did this with only profit in mind. Any artefact deemed of little value, like an eighteenth century stove of which there was ever only one found, was thrown back into sea.

Not only artefacts were cast back overboard, but also the human remains of the perished crew members. This way of salvaging was partly the reason why archaeologists went to congress to make their complaints. Several examples of sloppy salvaging without any respect for the archaeological value of the wrecks and artefacts were given to make their case. The matter of the salvage of the Braak was given as a worst case scenario. Thanks to this and other wrecks the United States Government passed the Abandoned Shipwrecks Act (ASA) in 1988.⁴⁸ This meant that any shipwrecks found in United States waters were automatically property of the government and could not be sold to salvaging companies.

Besides the legal implications the Braak had, the artefacts found are also of interest. The wreck itself is the only Brig-rigged-Sloop from the late eighteenth century ever found and raised. Further, the gunlock found aboard ship is as well the only one ever found. The Braak is also the only Brig found with Carronades as its main armament. Further the items of clothing found aboard are of interest. The found Monmouth hat worn by British sailors is the only surviving one ever found aboard a wreck. Other objects are of a more sentimental value. Namely the mourning ring of James Drew. This object not only helps identify the ship, it also is tied directly to a specific person. It puts the finder in contact with the past life and experiences of James Drew. This is a matter which should not

⁴⁷ <http://www.fileybay.com/debraak/artefactsb.html>, several miscellaneous items for the storing of victuals were found.

⁴⁸ Shomette, *The Hunt for HMS De Braak*, 294.

be forgotten when researching shipwrecks. The items found were not only of material value but also of sentimental and emotional value. By only looking towards the intrinsic value of an object you lose perspective on what certain objects meant to the people who wore, carried or used them. They not only give insight into the past of nations, but also into the personal past of people.

The Braak has relevant aspects across different disciplines. The history of the ship and the wreck as it was salvaged are interesting examples of its importance for history and archaeology. But the Braak also shows how historical research and archaeological research can complete one another. The data that was missing in the archives was found in the archaeological finds. And where the archaeological finds did not give a complete picture, the data found in the archives helped completing this picture. Trying to give a coherent story of the Braak via only archival or archaeological research would have been impossible. Only through the almost symbiotic use of historical and archaeological research is the full importance of the Braak and its remains purposed. It would seem further research into the Braak would be superfluous. Just historical research in the archives or only archaeological research would be just that. But it is my belief that a combination of both will still help in shedding more light on the wreck and its artefacts. The Dutch archives might still hold some hidden clues, but the British archives of the Royal Navy would be the best chance of finding new information. Also further research into the hull of the wreck could be of use to determine for once and for all if the ship was built in England or the Netherlands. Still too much doubt exists about the origin of the Braak.

Conclusion

The life of the Braak is an interesting story. For historians and archaeologists alike. The context of the period in which the Braak lived is full of exciting and interesting events. The Braak saw service during two wars, in service of two different nations. The modifications that were applied to the Braak also show how ship types in the eighteenth century weren't a clear cut concept. These modifications themselves also show how the Braak fitted in an age in which new revolutionary technologies were being developed and applied to ships. These technologies not only changed the ships themselves, but also changed the relations aboard these ships. The reasons for converting the Braak are another interesting aspect. The growing demand for ships, heavier armed and fast sailing, made the conversion of the Braak a logical decision. The new rigging and the new armament of the Braak made it a more manageable and far stronger ship than it first was. This was necessary for the Braak to be able to fulfil its tasks. It has been shown that the wreck itself and the objects found aboard and around it help in identifying the wreck as truly the Braak. And it is personal items which give eventually the most solid evidence. These can be linked to persons who appear in the archives. The cooperation between historical and archaeological research was vital in this.

Furthermore the wreck of the Braak shows how objects of the past can still influence our daily lives. The Braak and the way it was so amateurishly salvaged made sure a new law was passed which would in future safeguard shipwrecks in United States territorial waters. It should also be remembered that in researching these shipwrecks that the ethical aspects need to be respected. They may be merely objects lying on the seafloor, but they were once the homes of living human beings. The personal items even more so, they need to be handled with respect and care. Researching these wrecks with the simple intention of making a profit would destroy any archaeological value they have. The Braak is clear proof of this. Valuable items were cast aside because the salvagers saw no intrinsic value in them. The historical and archaeological value was neglected and this must not happen again. It is in that light a good thing the Braak was so sloppily salvaged, for else there might have never been an Act passed to help safeguard these wrecks.

Bibliography

Adkins, R. and L., Jack Tar: The extraordinary lives of ordinary seamen in Nelson's navy (London 2012).

Asaert, G., Bosscher, M., Bruijn, J. R., Hoboken, van W. J., Maritieme geschiedenis der Nederlanden (1977 Bussum) dl. 3.

Bingeman, J. M., et al., 'Copper and other sheathing in the Royal Navy', *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* (2000) 29, 2.

Bruijn, J. R., Varend verleden. De Nederlandse oorlogsvloot in de 17de en 18de eeuw (Amsterdam 1998).

Henderson, J., Frigates, Sloops and Brigs (Barnsley 2011)

Hoving, A. J. en Lemmers, A. A., In tekening gebracht: De achttiende-eeuwse scheepsbouwers en hun ontwerpmethoden (Amsterdam 2001).

Rodger, N. A. M., The Command of the Ocean: A Naval history of Britain, 1649-1815 (London 2004).

Roodhuyzen, T., In woelig vaarwater: Marineofficieren in de jaren 1779-1802 (Amsterdam 1998).

Shomette, D. G., Shipwrecks, Sea Raiders and Maritime Disasters along the Delmarva Coast, 1632-2004 (Johns Hopkins U. P. 2007).

- The Hunt for HMS De Braak: Legend and Legacy (Carolina Academic Press 1993).

Sources

Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Admiraliteitscolleges L Aanwinsten 1828-1923, 1681-1795, nummer toegang 1.01.47.39, inventarisnummer 9.

Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Admiraliteitscolleges XXXVII Van de Heim, 1591-1786, nummer toegang 1.01.47.27, inventarisnummer 431.

Nationaal Archief, Den Haag, Admiraliteitscolleges, nummer toegang 1.01.46, inventarisnummer 846.

- 1196 a.

Koninklijk Huisarchief 's-Gravenhage, Archief prins Willem V, 261, correspondentie marineofficieren, brief van Grotenraay, 14 februari 1795.

Maritiem Museum Rotterdam, Microfiches T2646, T2647, T2648.

Content Delaware, 'Delaware's Shipwrecks',
http://www.contentdelaware.org/?page_id=32&FID=174.

HMS De Braak, 'The Legend of Delaware', <http://www.fileybay.com/debraak/debraakb.html>.

Illustrations

- p. 1 Artistic rendition of the capsizing of the De Braak by Peggy Kane, 1990.
- p. 9 'An armed cutter chasing a smuggler' by Montague Dawson.
- p. 10 'Armed Cutter', National Maritime Museum Greenwich.
- p. 10 'Crispo and the Telemachus', National Maritime Museum Greenwich.
- p. 11 'Barkentyn of Brik zeylende bij de wind' G. Groenewegen, Rotterdam 1789.
- p. 11 'HMS Speedy falling in with the wreck of Queen Charlotte March 21 1800 at Leghorn', National Maritime Museum Greenwich.
- p. 13 'The Braak as taken', Library Maritiem Museum Rotterdam, T2646.
- p. 13 'The Braak as fitted', Library Maritiem Museum Rotterdam, T2647.
- p. 14 Model of the Braak in the Zwaanendael Museum, Lewes, Delaware, U.S.A.
- p. 16 Plan showing the port profile for an 18 pounder Joint Carronade on its Slide Mounting. Circa 1790. National Maritime Museum Greenwich.