

[Seminar: Peter Hooker \(Newcastle\), “Given up from the Royal Navy”: Reconsidering American sailors in the British Royal Navy during the War of 1812](#)

Announcement published by Sacha Davis on Wednesday, October 5, 2022

Type:

Seminar

Date:

October 14, 2022

Location:

Australia

Subject Fields:

American History / Studies, Atlantic History / Studies, British History / Studies, Maritime History / Studies, Military History

The Historical, Cultural and Critical Inquiry Group at the University of Newcastle (Australia) is pleased to announce the next paper in our 2022 seminar series, on 14 October 2022, 10-11am Australian Eastern Standard Time (GMT+10). The seminar will be simultaneously held on campus and broadcast live via Zoom. (Details and Zoom link below.) Our presenter is

Peter Hooker (University of Newcastle), *“Given up from the Royal Navy”: Reconsidering American sailors in the British Royal Navy during the War of 1812*

This paper examines American sailors who were serving in the British Royal Navy at the outbreak of the War of 1812. Although commonly seen as a conflict fought in response to the British practice of 'pressing' American sailors into serving the Royal Navy, few studies have actually examined the plight of American mariners in British service during the war. Indeed, most studies have focused on events leading up to the war with the general conclusion that once war broke out a large number of these men simply surrendered themselves as Americans and either had their surrender refused or were transferred to prisoner of war facilities until the conclusion of the war in 1815. This article gives voice to these sailors through their letters, journals, and official documents. It argues that the decision to surrender one's self as an American varied between mariners, and was often carefully calculated based on circumstances facing the individual. Some even decided to stay in the British service in spite of the war, and only gave themselves up at the end of the conflict or were discovered by the British to be foreigners. This paper also explores the experience of

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imprisonment for men who had their surrender accepted, focusing in particular on how they tried to reconcile their service to a country now at war with their homeland. In spite of the political rhetoric in support of impressed mariners, this article highlights that some felt torn over their allegiances or disillusioned with the United States government. Finally, this paper discusses the complex memorialisation of American prisoners and men formerly serving in the Royal Navy, revealing how a general trope of American sailors under the oppression of British officers emerged in the years after the war that persists to this day.

Dr Peter Hooker was awarded his PhD with the University of Newcastle, Australia. He specialises in maritime history from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. His PhD thesis examined American maritime prisoners of war during the War of 1812. Previously, he has contributed to the British Library James Cook: The Voyages Exhibit, as well as published articles within his field of research. He has also written an award-winning Honours Thesis, which comparatively examined German and Japanese naval strategy during the interwar period. He also devotes his time to the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney.

For in-person attendance: Room W202, Behavioural Science Building, Callaghan Campus, University of Newcastle (Australia).

For online attendance:

Zoom meeting ID: 870 4036 3272 (Open from 9:45am)

Password: 783069

To Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android:
<https://uonewcastle.zoom.us/j/87040363272?pwd=QTJQait4ZFFMa1pKYVgzQzhPTHF5Zz09>

This event will be recorded. Presentation recordings will be available from our YouTube channel, [History@Newcastle](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiju7vKLANeSX4QxBpMwJow):
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiju7vKLANeSX4QxBpMwJow>

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