

## The Whalers of Honfleur in the Seventeenth Century

J. THIERRY DU PASQUIER\*

### INTRODUCTION

The Honfleur admiralty archives have a remarkable collection of reports made by captains returning from their voyages, among which have been found the accounts of 31 whalers and one other which did not return to Honfleur. These archives also contain some lists of crews, equipment, and provisions on board.<sup>1</sup> We have at our disposal therefore a very interesting collection of documents about 32 French whalers between 1668 and 1688. This principal source is complemented by papers from the Insurance Chamber of the City of Paris,<sup>2</sup> minutes from the notaries of Saint-Jean de Luz and various other documents from the Marine Archives and elsewhere.

To understand why there were whalers at Honfleur at all it is necessary to look at the context of whaling in this period. The Basques were the great whaling specialists of the seventeenth century, and they had taught their skills to the Dutch. Until 1665 the Company of the North held the whaling license. Once this privilege had expired, the number of whalers increased rapidly in the years following. A statement made in 1660 during a lawsuit against the Company of the North gives some indication of the produce of whaling: "It is known that of eighty thousand casks of whale oil produced every year, fifty thousand casks are brought back to France, of which Paris employs eight thousand, Normandy twenty thousand, Picardy eight to ten thousand, Brittany the same, Touraine a large number and the other provinces of the Kingdom the remainder".<sup>3</sup>

Thus we know that Normandy and Paris alone consumed between them more than half the oil imported into France. We can now understand why many Basque whalers went into Le Havre or Honfleur instead of returning to Saint-Jean de Luz or Bayonne where they would have had to reship their oil to other ports. From Honfleur the oil was sent to Rouen, thence some of it down the Seine to Paris.

The first part of this paper deals with the ships, their owners and crews; the second part describes the practice of whaling.

### THE SHIPS AND THEIR CREWS

#### *The Ships*

The standard French whaling vessel of this epoch was a 250-ton frigate on which the stem-post and timbers were reinforced to withstand ice pressure.<sup>4</sup> Some ships were smaller; for example, the *Marie* of 1680 and the *Vierge* of 1683 and 1684 only drew 100 tons, and the *Saint-Etienne*, fitted out at

Honfleur from 1681 to 1688, was 160 tons. The only two vessels in our sample with a tonnage over 250 are the *Espérance*, wrecked in 1671 (350 tons) and the *Saint-François* of 1677 (300 tons). The Basques also used a few fluits (flee boats) either bought or taken from the Dutch, but these are not listed among the ships which returned to Honfleur<sup>5</sup> (Table 1).

The ships were usually armed with 6-14 cannon, as France and Holland were often at war and the French were outnumbered almost ten to one by the Dutch whalers in Greenland waters.

#### *The Crews and their Provisions*

The muster-roll in 1684 for the 160-ton *Saint-Etienne*, also called *Saint-Charles and Saint-Etienne*, includes a list of the provisions and equipment taken on board.

The provisions consisted of: 100 quintals of bread, biscuits or cake; 25 tuns of cider; 19 quintals of dried cod; 6 hogsheads of peas; 2 hogsheads of bacon; 16 hogsheads of light wine; 60 hogsheads of water; 1 hogshead of olive oil; 1 hogshead of vinegar; 1 tierce of salt beef; and 1 tierce of brandy. This was meant to feed a crew of 39 men over a five-month period. The equipment for fishing was: 5 whaleboats with oars; 40 fishing lines (ropes to fix to the harpoons); 40 harpoons; 90 lances; and 26 knives (to cut up the whales). The ship also took the bricks, sand, and other materials needed to construct a boiler on board for melting the blubber, and coal was taken to provide heat in arctic waters. Besides the 160 casks of fresh water which acted as ballast but which were later filled with oil, the ship carried 200 disassembled casks and the hoops necessary to put them together again.

The armament consisted of 14 cannons, 30 guns, 30 cutlasses, 24 pistols and 40 grenades.

#### *The Ship Owners*

The reports, muster-rolls, and clearance certificates do not mention the names of the owners so their identity has to be gleaned from other sources (Table 2).

Of the 32 whaling voyages studied, 22 were undertaken in ships which had left the Pays Basque and returned to Honfleur. The owners were therefore usually Basque, but the whale ships were often partly-owned by merchants from other areas. For example, the *Saint-François* from Ciboure, fitted out by Delalande who held a one-eighth share, was also owned by a Rouen merchant, Nicolas Mesnager, who possessed 7/24 in

\*6, rue de la Mission Marchand, 75016 Paris, France

TABLE 1. Honfleur whalers. All the returns indicated put in at Honfleur. Abbreviations: Gr = Greenland; Is = Iceland; t = tons; St-J de L = *Saint-Jean de Luz*; + = shipwreck

No.	Name	Departure	Return	Captain	Reports	Whales	Casks of Oil
1	<i>Ste-Ursule</i> (250 t)		68.08.30, Le Havre; September Honfleur	Fs Detcheverry	Left Gr 08.01, begin unloading at Havre		
2	<i>St-François</i> (180 t)	69.04.19 Ciboure	69.10.03	P. Daccarette	Gr from 05.07-08.07, damaged by ice		
3	<i>Ste-Catherine</i> (250 t)	71.04 Ciboure	71.09.10	M. de Conigant	Gr from 05.20 to 08.15		
4	<i>L'Espérance</i> (250 t)	71.04 Ciboure	71.09	D. de Haraneder	Gr from 08.06 to 08.15		
5	<i>L'Espérance</i> (350 t)	71.05.01 Honfleur	71.09 via Ostende	I. Le Cordier	Gr 05.26-07.29; Is 08.17-09.03		
6	<i>Notre Dame des Carmes</i> (250 t)	74.04.12 Ciboure	74.10.05 Le Havre 74.10.06 Honfleur	P. Descheres	Left Gr 08.26		
7	<i>Marie de St-Vincent</i> (250 t)	75.05.21 Ciboure	75.09.02	P. Daccarette le jeune	Gr 06.25 -end August		
8	<i>Ville de Bruxelles</i> (250 t)	75.04.30 Ciboure	75.10.12	D. de Haraneder	Gr 0.6.12-08.26. Frozen in 46 days. Took Dutch ship Is.	6	220
9	<i>St.-François</i> (180 t)	76.04.03 Ciboure	76.09.22	L. Deccarette	Gr. 05.12-08.20 Is. Collision, broke bowsprit. Surgeon died.		
10	<i>Ville de Bruxelles</i> (250 t)	76.04.04 Ciboure	76.08.22	J. de Gasteluzard	Gr. 04.28-07.08; damaged by ice Gr 05.28.		
11	<i>St-François</i> (300 t)	77.04.22 St-J de L	77.10.06	M. de Larreguy	Gr 05.27; left ice in Sept.	8	330
12	<i>St-François</i> (180 t)	77.04.18 St-J de L	77.09.07	J. Peritz de Hirigoyen	Gr 05.28; left ice 07.20	14	500
13	<i>Marie de St-Vincent</i> (250 t)	77.04.23 Ciboure	77.10.04	P. Daccarette	Gr 05.28; headed 81°N; left ice 08.23	19	620
14	<i>Notre Dame de Bonne-Nouvelle</i> (200 t)	Conge 77.04.21 St-J de L	77.09.15	B. Duhart	Gr end May-08.26	16	450
15	<i>St-François</i> (180 t)	78.04.02 Ciboure	78.09.02	P. de Bereau	Gr end June-07.18		440
16	<i>Notre Dame de Bonne-Nouvelle</i> (200 t)	78.04.12 St-J de L	78.09.03	B. Duhart	Gr 06.05; left ice 07.22	18	580
17	<i>St-François</i> (180 t)	79.04.01 Ciboure	79.09.21	P. de Bereau	Gr 06.06		440
18	<i>Notre Dame des Carmes</i> (250 t)	79.04.12 Ciboure	79.09.07	J. de Larralde	Gr 05.27-07.05. Seaman drowned.		750
19	<i>Marie</i> (100 t)	80.05.12 Bayonne	80.09	M. Lance	Gr 06.25-08.06. Lost 24 lines.	6	260
20	<i>St-François</i> (150 t)	80.04.08 Ciboure	80.10.09	P. de Bereau	Gr 06.24-08.12; Is. 09.07-09-17. Rudder broken by ice.	17	470
21	<i>Marie</i> (200 t)	80.04.03 St-J de L	80.08.21	J. de Gasteluzard	Left Gr 07.02; Is.		
22	<i>Notre Dame des Carmes</i> (150 t)	81.03.30 Passajes (Spain)	81.09.04	J. de Larralde	Gr 04.28-08.01; man drowned.	29	700
23	<i>St-Etienne</i> (160 t)	81.03.10 Honfleur	81.09.05	M. Martin	To Passajes 03.18-04.15; Gr 06.07-07.06; Is 07.21-08.07; man killed by whale.	22	670
24	<i>Marie</i> (100 t)	82.03.08 Honfleur	82.10.05	N. Piquet	Complete fitting-out St-J de L; Is. Repaired leak in Is.	8	273
25	<i>St-Etienne</i> (160 t)	82.04.12 Honfleur	82.09.13	M. Martin	Gr 06.30-07.17; Is.	17	570
26	<i>Vierge</i> (100 t)	83.03 St-J de L	83.09.22	J. de Larralde	Gr 05.19-07.13; Is.	13	425
27	<i>St-Etienne</i> (160 t)	83.04.13 Honfleur	83.10.03	M. Martin	Gr; fast in ice.	8½	206
28	<i>Vierge</i> (100 t)	Sea-brief 84.04.18 Honfleur	+?	M. de Larralde	No return report.		
29	<i>St-Etienne</i> (160 t)	84.04.23 Honfleur	84.09.23	M. Martin	Gr 05.19-08.01; Is.	11	360
30	<i>St-Etienne</i> (160 t)	85.04.17 Honfleur	85.10.01	M. Martin	Gr 05.22; fast in ice, 07.02-08.11; Is.	12	280
31	<i>St-Etienne</i> (160 t)	87.04.16 Honfleur	87.10.08	M. Martin	Gr 05.29; Is. Sick man died.	9	236
32	<i>St-Etienne</i> (160 t)	88.04.17 Honfleur	88.09.26	M. Martin	Fast in ice. 80° N. Sick man died. Only catch a narwhal.	0	

TABLE 2. Ownership\* and crew of certain whaling campaigns. Numbers refer to Table 1

Campaign No.	Year	No. of Cannon	Crew	Shipowners
2	1669	8		Pierre Daccarette
3	1671	12	48	Dusault
5	1671	6	52	A. Lecordier and others
6	1674	14-15	55	Fabien de Bruix ( $\frac{1}{4}$ )
7	1675	12	50	Widow of Joannis Daccarette ( $\frac{1}{4}$ )
8	1675	14	50	
9	1676	8-10	35	Delalande ( $\frac{1}{6}$ ), N. Mesnager ( $\frac{1}{4}$ )
10	1676	12	48	Jacques Alleaume ( $\frac{1}{6}$ )
11	1677	14		Delalande ( $\frac{1}{6}$ )
12	1677	8-10	40	Delalande ( $\frac{1}{6}$ )
13	1677	14		
14	1677	10	40	
15	1678	8-10		Jean Casebielle, Delalande ( $\frac{1}{6}$ )
16	1678	10		Joachim de Turbide ( $\frac{1}{2}$ )
17	1679	8-10		Delalande
25	1682	6	43	
27	1684	14	39	
28	1684	6	30	
30	1685	6	40	
31	1687	12		Pallier ( $\frac{1}{2}$ )
32	1688	6	41	Claude Giffard

\*Principal source: Polices d'Assurances de la Chambre des Assurances de Paris, Archives Nationales Z1D 75-80; for 31 and 32: Z1D 81; for 25, 27, 28, 30, and 32: rôles d'équipage, Amirauté de Honfleur, 2(II):273.

1676. This probably explains why this ship came into Honfleur in 1669, 1676, 1677, 1678, 1679, and 1680.

The case of the *Marie de St-Vincent* is a little different, for the Basque owner had an agent at Honfleur. In 1675, 13/14 of the ship belonged to the widow of Joannis Daccarette; she arrived at Honfleur "loaded with oil and whalebone for the account of Mr. Charles Thierry, of this said town . . ."6. The ship returned again to Honfleur in 1676 but was so badly damaged that it could not be repaired.

Very often the insurance policies of the whalers which left the Pays Basque stated that they could return to Le Havre de Grâce, to Honfleur, or even to other ports. Several whalers made port at Honfleur when they should have gone to Le Havre. The *Sainte-Ursule* in 1668, the *Notre Dame des Carmes* in 1674, and the *Marie* in 1680 all put into Honfleur instead of Le Havre for unexpected reasons. The *Soleil*, which had left Cherbourg in May 1683, should have returned to Le Havre or Honfleur, and since its name is not in the Honfleur reports, it must have gone to Le Havre.7 All the available indications tend to show that a large number of whalers returned to Le Havre, a view which is reinforced by a rapid glance through the admiralty papers in Le Havre, though there is unfortunately no complete run of reports.8 We know of a total of 57 whalers which returned to port at Le Havre from 1668-1689.

On seeing the profits made by the Basques on unloading their cargoes at Honfleur, the merchants of this port soon considered the advantages of furnishing their own ships. In 1671 Abraham Lecordier and some other Honfleur merchants equipped the *Espérance* (350 tons), whose captain was Isaac Lecordier. This ship was wrecked abeam off Ostende on the

return journey and it was not until 1681 that another whaler took to the water from Honfleur. This was the 160-ton *Saint-Etienne* under the command of Michel Martin, which made seven trips from Honfleur, leaving each year from 1681 to 1688 with the exception of 1686. In 1681 she went to the Spanish port of Passage to complete her fitting-out, where she also took on a pilot, some harpooners, and other expert whalers. In 1687 half the ship belonged to Monsieur Pallier; in 1688 it was listed as the property of Claude Giffard.9

In 1682 another ship, the *Marie*, set sail from Honfleur but she went to complete her equipment at Saint-Jean de Luz and the name of the owner is not known.

In 1684 the *Vierge*, which had returned the previous year from Saint-Jean de Luz to Honfleur, weighed anchor from the Norman port. The lack of any further report indicates that this ship was probably lost.

The ships which had left the Pays Basque and put in at Honfleur left again under ballast for their home ports, for example the *Marie* in 1675, the *Ville de Bruxelles* in 1675 and 1676, and the *Saint-François* in 1676.10

### The Crews

For 14 out of the 32 whaling campaigns we know the number of sailors in the crew (see Table 2). The smallest number was that of the *Vierge* (100 tons), which in 1684 had a crew of only 30 men and carried only four whaleboats. The other ships carried at least five whaleboats and had crews of between 39 and 55 men. The muster-rolls for the *Saint-Etienne* are preserved for 1682, 1684, 1685, and 1688, and for the *Vierge* for 1684.11

In 1684 the master of the *Saint-Etienne* was Michel Martin, aged 46, who was probably not Basque. The crew consisted of 19 Basques from Bayonne or Saint-Jean de Luz, and 19 Normans. All the skilled whaling jobs were held by Basques: the pilot, five harpooners, the first mate, two carpenters, three coopers, two coxswains, one chief valet, two with no precise job, and a 17-year-old boy. The Normans included the ship's doctor, two carpenters, one gunner and one cooper, the others being ordinary seamen from Honfleur, Le Havre de Grâce, or Cherbourg.

In the case of the *Vierge* (see muster-roll in appendix A), 24 of 30 men were Basques, including the master, Michel de La Ralde. Only six men were Norman: the gunner and the ordinary seamen.

Apart from Michel Martin, only two of the other 32 whaler captains were not Basque, one being Isaac Lecordier, the commander of the *Espérance* in 1671. According to his report, the Basque members of the crew abandoned ship during the shipwreck without making any effort to help him try to save her. The other non-Basque captain was Nicolas Piquet of the *Marie*, which went to complete her fitting-out at Saint-Jean de Luz in 1682. All the other captains were Basques, and some of their careers can be followed over a period of many years.

The documents consulted so far give no indication as to the payment of the crews but we know that the Basques were paid with the lay-system, which means with a share of the catch.

The 24 Normans taken on as ordinary seamen on the *Soleil* from Cherbourg in 1683 were paid a fixed monthly wage which varied from £10 to £22. They were advanced two months' wages from which interest was deducted on their return, at the rate of 30% (38% in the event of war).

Life on board was extremely hard, mainly because of the cold when whaling in the ice; and it is somewhat surprising that there were so few deaths aboard the whalers. Every death is mentioned in the reports. There were six in all during the 31 fishing campaigns — three from sickness, two from drowning, and one man was killed by a whale.

When a ship foundered in the ice, which did not happen to any of the ships in this study, the crew was rescued by other whalers in the vicinity. In 1680 the *Saint-François* took on board 10 men from the Basque whaler *Saint Michel*, "wrecked in the ice", who had first been retrieved by a Dutch whaler. In 1685 the *Saint-Etienne et Saint Charles* just escaped being broken up in the ice. The crew had put the boats and survival rations on the ice in case their ship was completely wrecked, "having seen the ship lifted in the air several times by the ice". However, the ice relaxed its grip and the ship was freed on 23 August.

In 1681 *Saint-Etienne* saw several Dutch whalers wrecked and took aboard five men from the *Lion Noir* from Rotterdam.

#### THE CONDUCT OF THE WHALING EXPEDITIONS

##### *Dates of Departure and Return (see Table 1)*

A spring start was necessary in order that the whalers could arrive in the Arctic as the pack ice was breaking up, to facilitate fishing in the ice. The ships left the Pays Basque between the end of March and the beginning of May. In theory the whalers from Honfleur could have left later, but in practice they usually left towards the middle of April. The *Saint-Etienne* and the *Marie*, both of which competed their fitting-out in the Pays Basque, sailed on 10 March 1681 and 8 March 1682, respectively.

The whalers returned as soon as they had completed their cargoes, which for the *Marie* was 21 August in 1680, for the *Ville de Bruxelles* 22 August in 1676, and for the *Sainte Ursule* 30 August 1668.

If the catch was insufficient, however, the ships stayed as late as possible in the ice, but it made good sense to leave this area by the second half of July or the beginning of August. Fishing was still possible in Icelandic waters, so the return was sometimes delayed until September or the beginning of October. The latest recorded return was that of the *Saint-François* on 9 October 1680.

##### *The Whaling Grounds*

Information on the whereabouts of the whaling grounds is fairly imprecise, but generally speaking they were around Greenland or Spitsbergen during the seventeenth century. Whaling was no longer carried out in the bays but out at sea (pelagic whaling) where the whales were cut up alongside the ship. The whaling vessels felt their way along channels in the

floating ice, a process which often invited damage. For example, the *Saint-François* was "battered by the ice" in 1669, the *Ville de Bruxelles* was damaged in 1676, and the rudder of the *Saint François* was broken by ice in 1680. It is stated in a report that the *Marie de Saint Vincent* reached 81°N in 1677 and the *Saint-Etienne* 80°N in 1688, which suggests they were fishing between Spitsbergen and Greenland. The whalers were often held fast in the pack ice for varying periods. The *Ville de Bruxelles* was frozen in for 46 days, escaping only on 26 August 1675. The *Saint-Etienne* was trapped in 1683, 1685, and 1688 — which explains her mediocre catches in these years.

If the cargo was not complete by the end of the season in the ice, it was still possible to fish for the smaller "Sardes" in Icelandic waters until September.

Of the 31 fishing campaigns mentioned in this study, 21 were carried out in Greenland and in the ice. In addition, nine ships fished around Iceland on the way back. The *Marie*, which had completed her preparation at Saint-Jean de Luz in 1682, had to repair a leak in Iceland. She then continued fishing "near to the place called Sarde, because it was too late to go to the Grande Baie". Did they call this region of Iceland "la Sarde" after the name of the species of whale that they hunted there? It is not at all certain that this is the case, for the captain who wrote the report was not a Basque and could well have been muddled over this point. The "Grande Baie" was the name the Basques gave the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, where they had found a new species of whale, bigger than the "Sardes" they had hunted up until then, which they labelled "the Great Bay whale", "baleine de Grande Baie". This was the name of the species that they hunted in the ice, so "aller à la Grande Baie" at that time did not mean to go to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but to fish for the Great Bay whale in the northern ice.

The 1675 report of the *Ville de Bruxelles* also uses a curious geographical expression: the ship "left the ice to come to Sarde, to a country called Philleur or Ilan" — by which it almost certainly meant Iceland.<sup>12</sup>

##### *The Method of Whaling*

The whaleboats were crewed by six men — the harpooner, four oarsmen, and the coxswain in charge of the boat. They had to get sufficiently close to throw the harpoon so that it hooked its barbs into the whale's flesh. Normally the whale sounded and the fishermen let the line run. As soon as the whale surfaced to breathe the line was hauled in until the whale was close enough to be speared with leaf-shaped lance whose points came out easily. It sometimes took several hours to kill a whale and many escaped, either because the harpoon became unhooked, the line broke, or the men had to cut the line if the whale plunged under the ice.

The reports give little detail about fishing but do describe two accidents. In 1680 the *Marie* "lost 24 lines which she had used for whaling". That must mean that many lines had been broken or cut, and in some cases that they had to be let go if the whale fled further than the length of rope; or perhaps that

some whaleboats had overturned or broken up with the loss of equipment on board.

On board the *Saint-Etienne* on 29 July 1681 "the said Biastrie of Siboure was knocked out of the whaleboat by a whale, carried off and drowned without us being able to help".

### The Produce from Whaling

We have no information on the quantity of whalebone brought back. The whalebone (or baleen) which can be up to three metres long, is a hard but flexible fibrous horny strip which had many uses, e.g. as umbrella ribs or corset stays.

Whale oil was used primarily for illumination. The Dutch barrelled the blubber for trying out on their return to Holland, while the Basques boiled it down on board ship in ovens brought along for that purpose and took back the oil in casks.

It appears that the Dutch hunted only the Greenland right whale, known by the name of bowhead to the Americans and called the Grande Baie whale by the Basques. This whale was found in the ice or near the pack ice. In addition, the Basques hunted the "Sarde" whale in Icelandic waters; this was probably the smaller Biscay right whale, which gave less oil and shorter whalebone.

We know the results of 21 of the 31 whaling expeditions (Table 3), and in 17 instances the number of whales caught is stated. The campaigns from 1675-1688 produced in total 8808 casks (barriques) of oil, an average of 440.4 for each of the 20 expeditions. The best results were those of the *Notre Dame des Carmes*: 750 casks in 1679 and 700 casks in 1681. The *Saint-Etienne* was less successful, with 206 casks in 1683, 280 in 1685, 236 in 1687, and nothing at all in 1688. The bad years were almost always those in which the ships had been blocked in the ice for long periods. The best catch was that of two ships which made port in 1681 with totals of 29 and 22 whales, respectively.

These results are quite remarkable if one considers that even in the nineteenth century it sometimes took several years to achieve the same results in distant waters.

In one report no distinction is made between whales taken off Greenland and those taken off Iceland, but in 16 other cases the number of whales caught in each area is detailed together with the corresponding number of casks of oil. Theoretically, the whales caught in the ice off Greenland were the Grande Baie whales and those near Iceland were the Sardes. On average the Greenland whale produced 31.8 casks of oil per whale and the Iceland whale 26.8 casks.

It is interesting to compare briefly the whaling of the French and the Dutch ships, for precise statistics exist for the latter.<sup>13</sup> The Basques always prided themselves on catching more whales than their rivals, the Dutch. But one reason for this might have been that since they boiled down the blubber on board, their ships had room for the produce of more whales than the Dutch ships which returned with the blubber.<sup>14</sup> According to our statistics, the average number of whales taken by French ships is nearly always higher than that of the Dutch in the same year (see Table 3). According to C. de Jong, the

TABLE 3. Results of 21 whaling expeditions between 1675 and 1688. Number of expedition refers to Table 1

No.	Year	Greenland whaling		Iceland whaling		Total		Average no. of whales taken by Dutch
		Whales	Casks of oil	Whales	Casks of oil	Whales	Casks	
8	1675	5	220			5	220	6
11	1677	8	330			8	330	
12	1677	14	500			14	500	
13	1677	19	620			19	620	5.3
14	1677	16	450			16	450	
15	1678		440				440	
16	1678	18	580			18	580	10.2
17	1679		440				440	
18	1679		750				750	6.6
19	1680	6	260			6	260	
20	1680	12		5		17	450	9.1
22	1681	29	700			29	700	
23	1681	17	550	5	120	22	770	5.1
24	1682			8	273	8	273	
25	1682	14	500	3	70	17	570	7.5
26	1683	11	375	2	50	13	425	
27	1683	7½	176	1	30	8½	206	5.6
29	1684	7	260	4	100	11	360	4.8
30	1685	11	280	1	0	12	280	6.5
31	1687	2	76	7	160	9	236	3.2
32	1688					0	0	1.6
Total						226.5	8808	
Average		31.8 casks per whale		26.8 casks per whale		13.3	440.4	per expedition

Dutch hunted only the Grande Baie whales and not the Sardes. Even if one excludes the whales taken near Iceland, and compares only the French catch near Greenland with the annual average catch of the Dutch, one generally arrives at a higher number for the French. To confirm this theory one needs to know how to make the conversion between the casks of blubber of the Dutch and the oil casks of the French. Meanwhile one can conclude that the Basque whalers' claim to superiority over the Dutch was probably justified. Dutch strength lay in the cheaper cost of their equipment and their better commercial capacity.

### The War at Sea

The war with Holland which broke out in 1672 was not unexpected, and the French whalers were strongly armed. Nevertheless, no whaling vessels put in to Honfleur in either 1672 or 1673, a year in which the number of Pays Basque ships had considerably diminished.

The *Notre Dame des Carmes*, which came into Honfleur in 1674, had written into her insurance policy the right to fly the Spanish flag in case of need, which would have enabled her to escape any Dutch ships. However, no Netherlands whaler had permission to sail in 1672, 1673, and 1674, for the States General did not want to risk the ships' being taken by the enemy, and the seamen were needed for the war fleet.

The *Ville de Bruxelles*, which was frozen in the ice in 1675, took a Dutch ship in the same situation, but since none of the French sailors were willing to crew their capture, they let her go after they had removed the blubber of one whale which was on board.

After the peace of Nimeguen in 1678 the spirit of mutual aid

was renewed, and in the event of shipwreck French sailors were rescued by Dutch crews and vice versa, as had been previously done in 1680 and 1681.

The renewal of the war in 1688, added to the bad whaling results of the previous years, discouraged the owner of the *Saint-Etienne* from sending her out from Honfleur again. The number of Basque whaling ships rapidly diminished until there were only one or two left in the early eighteenth century, in contrast to the nearly 40 French whalers which had taken to sea in the 1680s. No whalers came into Honfleur again.

The 32 whaling campaigns described in this paper give an impression of what the industry was like in a time of prosperity. Unfortunately, the wars towards the end of Louis XIV's reign dealt it a fatal blow.

Only after 1714 did the whaling activities recover noticeably, and then only in the Pays Basque — and they returned only to their home ports. There were fewer experienced seamen in this region, so the Spanish Basques were called upon for their services. A new period of prosperity culminated towards 1730 with the sending out of more than 30 whalers each year. This was followed by a rapid decline, accentuated by the competition of the Dutch and Spaniards, until Basque whaling ceased completely with the outbreak of the Seven Years War. The industry never recovered in spite of several unsuccessful attempts to revitalize it.

#### APPENDIX A

##### *Muster-Roll of La Vierge in 1684*

Amirauté de Honfleur 2 II 273

Roster of the Christian and surnames, ages, occupations and addresses of the officers and seamen on *La Vierge* under Captain M. de la Ralde on the whaling voyage to Greenland 1684.

Michel de La Ralde, from Bayonne, aged 43	Captain
Michel de La Ralde, from Bayonne, aged 38	Pilot
Betry Dibarboure from St. Jean de Luz, aged 32	First Mate
Joannis Dutchique, from Bayonne, aged 28	Carpenter
Martin Diriac, from Bayonne, aged 31	Carpenter
Joannis de Hirribaren, from Bayonne, aged 29	Carpenter
Joannis de Suldycagon, from Bayonne, aged 30	Cooper
Joannis Detcheгарay, from Bayonne, aged 38	Cooper
Martin Detchevery, from Bayonne, aged 27	Coxswain
Michel de Bidard, from St. Jean de Luz, aged 32	Coxswain
Betrico de Bidard, from Bayonne, aged 34	Coxswain
Martin Dargaygarasse, from Bayonne, aged 36	Harpooner
Bernard de Lissague, from Bayonne, aged 25	Harpooner
Pitre de La Freschie, from Bayonne, aged 56	Surgeon
Joannis de Penoya, from Bayonne, aged 39	Flenser
Joannis de Borda, from St. Jean de Luz, aged 41	Seaman
Jean de Laffon, from Bayonne, aged 43	Seaman
Pierre de Liquider, from Bayonne, aged 29	Seaman
Joannis de Liquider, from St. Jean de Luz, aged 38	Seaman
Martin de Salamon, from Bayonne, aged 45	Seaman
Pierre de Thoro, from St. Jean de Luz, aged 23	Seaman
Martin Duruty, from Bayonne, aged 34	Seaman
Martin Daux, from Bayonne, aged 13	Boy

Officers and ordinary seamen from Normandy:

Gilles Maubrac, from Honfleur, aged 33	Gunner
Charles Desmoliers from Honfleur, aged 28	Seaman
Jean Tillet, from Havre de Grace, aged 25	Seaman

Isaac Hébert, from Havre de Grace, aged 28	Seaman
Pierre Marie, from Havre, aged 31	Seaman
Pierre Lengeigneur, from Honfleur, aged 12	Boy

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Archives from Honfleur, Honfleur Admiralty Reports, 1665-1668, 2(II):287-296; Congés 1671-1688, 2(II): 246-255; Rôles d'équipage 1681-1688, 2(II):271-277.

<sup>2</sup>Archives Nationales, Polices d'Assurances, Z<sup>1D</sup>:75-80.

<sup>3</sup>Bibliothèque Nationale, Thoisy 148 f<sup>o</sup> 148.

<sup>4</sup>B.N. Cinq Cents de Colbert 199, inventory of ships in French ports in 1664. (St. Jean de Luz).

<sup>5</sup>The *Saint-Etienne*, called *Estienne Charles*, was English-built. Marine B<sup>3</sup> 55 f<sup>o</sup> 300.

<sup>6</sup>Report of 3 September 1675, 2(II):293.

<sup>7</sup>Manuscript of the *Service Historique de la Marine*: the signing on of the sailors for the *Soleil*.

<sup>8</sup>Archives of the Seine Maritime 216B, 188 articles from 1590-1789.

<sup>9</sup>Marine B3 55 f 300, 20 mars 1688. The proprietor had great difficulty completing his crew as few Basques were available.

<sup>10</sup>Congés, 2(II):249.

<sup>11</sup>The *Saint-Etienne* of 160 tons had a crew of 40 and carried 5 whaleboats. The vessels of 250 tons with a crew of 50 generally carried 6 whaleboats. See Marine D2 48, mémoire du 12 février 1716.

<sup>12</sup>The fishing ground often mentioned in other documents is "Norouègue" which should not be taken in a literal sense for Norway, but more in a general sense for the whole region in the same latitude as Norway. Fisland is also mentioned, which could be a deformation of Iceland, but it should be treated with some suspicion, geographically speaking.

<sup>13</sup>Cornelis de Jong, *Geschiedenis va de oude Nederlandse Walvisvaart, deel Drie* (Johannesburg, 1979):157.

<sup>14</sup>See, e.g., the Mémoire of 1751, Marine C 10.