THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODE 187:
ISLANDS AND SEA

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Welcome to the History of English Podcast – a podcast about the history of the English language. This is Episode 187: Islands and Sea. This time, as we work our way through the story of English, we're going to focus on events in the second half of the 1620s. England and Scotland and Wales got a new king when Charles I succeeded his father James. And it immediately became apparent that he and Parliament were not on the same page. Meanwhile, settlers established the first English colonies in the Caribbean on the islands of St. Kitts and Barbados. This period also saw the publication of a couple of books from a well-known sea captain that described the essential elements of a life at sea, including the nautical terminology that was common at the time. So in this episode, we'll also look at how the language of sailing and the sea contributed words and phrases to the English language during the early 1600s.

But before we begin, let me remind you that the website for the podcast is historyofenglishpodcast.com. And you can sign up to support the podcast and get bonus episodes at Patreon.com/historyofenglish.

Now let's pick up this episode where we left off last time. In the last episode, we looked at the establishment of the Plymouth Colony in New England and the early Dutch settlement on the island of Manhattan. This time, we're going to turn our attention back to England, and we're also going to look to the Caribbean as English continued its gradual spread around the world. And the general time frame for this episode is the period from 1624 to 1630.

As we explore this period, I want to begin with a prominent English poet named John Donne. He was one of the most important poets of the early 1600s. He is renowned for his unique style which is often contrasted with that of the slightly earlier Elizabethan poets like William Shakespeare. Whereas Elizabethan poetry tended to be very elaborate and used a lot of flowery language, Donne tended to use language that was more conversational and direct. And whereas earlier poetry used fixed structures like the sonnet form and also used fixed rhythms and meters like iambic pentameter, Donne's poetry was different. It was much looser and flexible. His sonnets didn't have a fixed number of lines, and his passages didn't follow a strict rhythm or meter. He also tended to use unusual metaphors by comparing things that were very profound to things that were simple or basic or insignificant. Later scholars referred to this style of poetry as metaphysical poetry, and John Donne is considered to be the first and greatest poet of that genre.

Early in his career, Donne composed loves songs, sonnets and satires, but he had a religious awakening later in life after his wife died. After that, he became a prominent theologian and was probably the most well-known preacher in England in the 1620s. His later poetry reflected his commitment to the Church. Those works often addressed themes related to death and the reckoning of Judgment Day.

At the current point in our overall story in 1624, Donne published a collection of poems which he composed while recovering from a severe illness that nearly killed him. The collection was called 'Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions and Seuerall Steps in my Sicknes.' In a series of poems called Meditations, he included one which gives us two more common phrases that have

survived into Modern English. In the poem, he overhears death bells ringing and wonders who has died and considers if the bells were intended for himself. But as he contemplates death, he adopts a view that is more closely associated with eastern religions. He says that all humans are interconnected, and the death of one person is partially the death of all us. He writes:

No man is an Iland, intire of itselfe;
every man is a peece of the Continent,
a part of the maine;

And he concludes the passage by writing:

any mans death diminishes me,
because I am involved in Mankinde;
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

Of course, the phrase "for whom the bell tolls" was adopted by Ernest Hemingway as the title of his famous novel, and that allowed the phrase to pass into modern contemporary English. And that prior passage contained the line, "No man is an Iland, intire of itselfe," which gives us the modern proverb "No man is an island."

Again, it was written by this prominent Christian theologian, but it expresses an idea of interconnectedness that is often associated with eastern religions. And it also provides a good starting point for this episode which is about islands, seafaring, and also the role of England in the world in the early 1600s. When Donne was a young man during the early Elizabethan period, it seemed that England was destined to be an island nation largely isolated from the rest of the world. But over the course of his life, England started to acquire a colonial empire, and it gradually extended its power and its language around the world. Donne's assertion that 'no man is an island' could also be applied to the English monarchy itself. During this period, serious questions were starting to be raised about the nature of that institution. Was the English king an island unto himself appointed by God and free to govern as he pleased? Or was he compelled to accept the will of Parliament over certain matters? All of these questions came to the forefront in the late 1620s.

King James's realm encompassed all of the island of Britain. When he assumed the English throne in 1603, he was already the king in Scotland, so he ruled over England, Wales and Scotland. And the English had a tenuous presence in parts of Ireland. But that was the extent of his realm.

As we know, that started to change over the course of his reign. Trading posts were established in India, and the first permanent settlements were established in North America. That was the beginning of a process that would ultimately produce a massive global empire. And of course, that vast global empire was settled by people who spoke English – thereby making English a global language. But it is worth keeping in mind that, as the English language spread outward from the British Isles, it did so on ships. It had to spread that way because Britain was an island.

And all of its later colonial holdings were connected to the mother country by ships that plowed the seas and transported people and goods around the world. So it shouldn't come as a surprise that the English language that spread around the world was full of words and phrases that had their origin on those ships and on the high seas.

In fact, the prominence of nautical and maritime words in the English language has created a bit of a problem for modern scholars. For centuries, many people have tried to attribute nautical origins to just about every word or phrase they can think of, and that has produced a lot of dubious etymologies. Many common phrases are supposed to have originated on the ships that traveled across the oceans. And if you look through resources that trace the history of words and phrases, you will come across a lot of those purported etymologies. But it's a good idea to take many of those histories with a grain of salt. That desire to find a nautical origin in words and phrases is so prevalent in the scholarship that it has even produced a common acronym – CANOE (c-a-n-o-e). Depending on the source, it stands for either 'The Conspiracy or the Committee to Attribute Nautical Origins to Everything.' But despite that problem in the study of etymology, a lot of common words and phrase do in fact have nautical origins. And we'll encounter quite a few examples in this episode, specifically some of those that can be traced back to the first half of the 1600s. But I have tried to avoid the CANOE problem, so the examples I have included in this episode have verified nautical origins, and where there is some debate about the origin of the term, I will make a note of it.

Now, as an island nation, England historically relied on its navy for protection, but at the current point in our overall story in the 1620s, that vaunted navy was smaller and less effective that it had been for decades. The Dutch had surpassed England as a naval power, and Dutch ships were active around the world as far as East Asia and the Spice Islands in the eastern Pacific. Of course, the English tried to complete with the Dutch in the those same regions. During James's reign the English managed to establish a trading post in India, and they even sent representatives to Japan, but it was difficult to break the stranglehold that the Dutch had acquired.

In 1623, the Dutch governor of one of the Spice Islands in Indonesia rounded up a group of English traders and executed them. The English were outraged, and the Dutch soon apologized to avoid war over the matter. But after that event, the English largely abandoned their efforts in Indonesia and East Asia, and that allowed the Dutch to dominate the region going forward. The English pulled back to India and focused their efforts there in the centuries that followed. [*SOURCE: A Brief History of British Sea Power, David Howarth, p. 205*]

That event points to the uneasy relationship between England and the Netherlands. The two nations had a long history of trade and maritime contact with each other in northern Europe, but a rivalry was emerging on the high seas, and it was a rivalry that would eventually lead to war. The close historical contact between the two nations on opposite sides of the North Sea is reflected in the English language to this day. A large number of nautical terms passed into English from Dutch. In the late Middle English period, English acquired Dutch words like *skipper*, *keel* for a flat-bottomed vessel, *rover* for a pirate, *whiting* for a type of fish, *shore* as in the seashore, *pump* originally in the sense of removing bilge water from a ship, *mesh* in reference to fishing nets, *school* in the sense of a group of fish, *roe* (r-o-e) meaning fish eggs, *freight* in reference to the

transport of goods by ship, *buoy* meaning a floating marker in the water, *deck* in the sense of the platform of a ship, and *dock* meaning a place where a ship is loaded or berthed.

In the early modern period of the 1500s and 1600s, new Dutch nautical terms came into English, like *reef*, *yacht*, *hoist* as in 'to hoist a sail,' *freebooter* meaning a privateer, and *splice* in the original sense of joining ropes or cables on a ship.

The very common word *split* was borrowed from Dutch in late 1500s. And even though we use that word in a variety of ways today to refer to the division of something, most of its original uses in the late 1500s and early 1600s were in reference to a ship's hull that had split or broken apart in a shipwreck or to sails that has split or ripped due to heavy winds or general wear and tear. So the word *split* appears to have passed into English thanks to sailors who heard the term being used on ships. I noted that sails on a ship might split or rip due to 'wear and tear.' Well that phrase '*wear and tear*' is first recorded in English around the current point on our overall story in the mid-1620s.

Over the course of the 1600s, more Dutch nautical terms passed into English like *commodore*, *sloop*, *smuggler*, and *cruise*. So a lot of nautical terms in English have their origin in Dutch.

And as we saw last time, the Dutch were also starting to compete with the English in North America by placing a colony in the Hudson Valley. Of course, during the reign of King James, the English had established a settlement at Jamestown in modern-day Virginia. That settlement was soon followed by settlements in Bermuda, Newfoundland, and as we saw last time, in Plymouth in modern-day Massachusetts. So at the current point in our overall story, England had started to extend its reach well-beyond the British Isles.

The English language also reflected the contact that had been made with those faraway places. In prior episodes, I gave many example of words that were acquired from other regions. And that process continued into the 1620s. During the first half of that decade, we find the first English reference to the word *paddy* for the rice plant. It comes from the Malay language of the East Indies. Again, it was a local word for the rice plant itself, so fields of rice or paddy were called 'paddy fields.' And that term was later shortened to simply *paddy*, meaning a field of rice, and that is usually how the word is used in English today. But its appearance in English in the early 1620s reflects that early English contact with the South Pacific, even if that contact came to an abrupt end thanks to the Dutch.

Thanks to contact with the indigenous people of North America during this period, we also find the first recorded references to Native American words like *wigwam* for a type of dwelling and *powwow*. The word *powwow* originally referred for a type of priest or healer or a type of ritual ceremony involving music and feasting. Since that type of ritual ceremony involved a gathering of people, the word *powwow* came to refer to such a gathering, and today is used to refer to a meeting or a conference. Those terms are probably more common in America English for obvious reasons, but again, their presence during this period reflects that early English contact with the indigenous people of North America.

The year 1624 also gave us the first recorded reference to a *rattlesnake* – a snake that was common in parts of North America.

In that same year, Captain John Smith published an account of his time in North America called 'Generall Historie of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles.' We encountered Smith in a couple of previous episodes. He was the early Jamestown leader who was taken captive and nearly executed by the chief of a local tribe, but supposedly, his life was spared when the chief's daughter Pocahontas intervened on his behalf.

This particular account of Virginia contains the first recorded use of the word *swamp* to refer to certain terrain in the region. It isn't entirely clear where the word came from, but it may be another Dutch word. It appears to be Germanic in origin, so it was either an Old English word that had not been preserved in writing or it was a word taken from Dutch or Low German. Again, John Smith is the first known person to use that word *swamp* in an English document.

Smith's account also contains the first recorded reference to a *pineapple* – a tropical fruit native to the Americas. The word *pineapple* had actually been around since the 1300s, but prior to this point, the word was used to refer to a pinecone and sometimes to a pine tree itself. It appears that English explorers applied the word *pineapple* to this particular fruit since the rough outer part of a pineapple resembles a pinecone. And during the 1600s, the word *pineapple* was used for both items – both a pinecone and the tropical fruit. The word *pinecone* didn't really come into use until the following century since the language needed a way to distinguish the two items. But John Smith's reference to the tropical fruit as a *pineapple* confirms that English sailors and settlers had encountered the fruit from the tropics, either directly or indirectly.

English contact with the Caribbean is also confirmed by the appearance of another new word around this same time – the word *allspice*. Like *pineapple*, it's another word formed within English to describe an item found in the tropics. In this case, *allspice* referred to the dried berries of the pimento tree, which was common in parts of the Caribbean, especially in Jamaica. The dried berries produced a spice that supposedly tasted like cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Since the flavor resembled all of those spices combined, the English called it *allspice*.

The appearance of words like *pineapple* and *allspice* around this time confirm that English speakers were encountering those Caribbean and South American products. And in fact, it was around this same time that English settlers arrived in the Caribbean and founded the first English settlement there.

For several decades, English sailors had traveled to the Caribbean mostly looking for Spanish ships to plunder, so they were familiar with the region. And in the early 1620s, an Englishman named Thomas Warner had taken part in a venture to South America. On his way back home, he followed a tip from a friend and sailed to the island chain known as the Lesser Antilles. It's an island chain extending from Puerto Rico down to the northern part of South America, and it forms the eastern part of the Caribbean. Warner came across a small island that Christopher Columbus has called 'Saint Christopher.' The name *Christopher* was later shortened to *Kitts*, and the island became known as St. Kitts. Warner thought it would make a good location for a

settlement. So when he returned to England, he convinced a group of London merchants to finance an expedition and settlement there. And in 1624, a group of English settlers did just that – making St. Kitts the first permanent English settlement in the Caribbean. [*SOURCE: Hubs of Empire, Matthew Mulcahy, p. 32-3.*]

Interestingly, the French also found the island attractive, and a group of French settlers arrived a few months later. The English and French ended up sharing the island with the French living at either end and the English living in the middle. They actually worked together since they soon came under attack by the local indigenous people called the Caribs. The name Carib is the source of the word *Carribean*. [*SOURCE: The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492, David Watts, p. 142*]

Four years later, about 150 English settlers moved from St. Kitts over to the nearby island of Nevis. And shortly after that, just beyond the time frame of this episode, Thomas Warner organized expeditions to the islands of Antigua and Montserrat in the same region. So by the early 1630s, the English had established settlements on several islands in the northern part of that island chain called the Lesser Antilles. [*The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492, David Watts, p. 169*]

Now these settlements in the Caribbean were much like the earlier settlements in Jamestown and Plymouth and that trading post in India. They were all private enterprises established and organized by investors. They were not directly organized or settled by the English government itself.

In fact, during this period, the English navy was mostly confined to the British Isles and was largely a defensive force. And by the 1620s, the navy had experienced a bit of a decline. It wasn't the large fleet that had repelled the Spanish Armada a few decades earlier. The English navy spent much of its time and energy chasing pirates in the seas around the British Isles. Some pirates were British or Irish sailors who had turn to piracy, and others were from other countries on the continent who ventured northward to prey on ships passing through the English Channel. But the most active pirates weren't actually from Europe at all. They were from the coast of northern Africa called the Barbary Coast. Modern sources refer to those pirates as the Barbary pirates, but in the 1600s, they were often referred to as *corsairs* – a term borrowed from French and in common use in the Romance languages of southern Europe where the Barbary pirates were a constant threat. The word *corsair* is derived from a Medieval Latin word meaning 'pirate.'

Not only did the Barbary pirates sail in the waters around the British Isles, they even attacked coastal villages in England on more than one occasion and took English people as slaves. [*SOURCE: A Brief History of British Sea Power, David Howarth, p. 207*] In fact, in 1622, several English towns raised 70,000 pounds to ransom English captives that had been taken back to the Barbary Coast by pirates. [*SOURCE: The Pirate Dictionary, Terry Breverton,, p. 11*]

Now when a pirate or privateer or soldier took someone captive and held them for ransom, it was said that the person was held or kept in '*faire quarter*' or '*good quarter*.' This sense of the word *quarter* popped up in the early 1600s. It meant 'good conduct or fair treatment toward another person.' It isn't entirely clear how that sense of the word *quarter* emerged. The best guess is that is was derived from the sense of providing a person with housing or quarters, but the use of the word *quarter* during this period was broader than that. It could simply mean treating someone nicely or fairly. But just as '*faire quarter*' meant kind treatment, '*no quarter*' meant no such treatment was offered. So if a soldier or pirate provided '*no quarter*,' it meant that the people they attacked or conquered were killed on the spot. That phrase '*no quarter*' was first recorded in the 1640s, so it may very well have been in use on the high seas at the current point in our overall story in the 1620s.

Most ships flew a variety of flags. They flew the flag of their nation of origin, and an admiral's ship bore the flag of the admiral. A ship bearing an admiral's flag was called the *flagship*. That was the most important vessel in the fleet. The term was also applied to the most important vessel in a merchant fleet. The term *flagship* came into use in the 1600s, and of course, we still use that term today. We use it to refer to something that is considered to be the best among a group of things. So for example, a company's most highly valued model or product might be called its flagship model. Again, it's a nautical term that was first recorded in the 1600s.

Well, flags were also used to signal attacking ships, whether navy ships or those of pirates or privateers. A red flag was used to indicate that the ship was ready for battle. It was a sign of defiance. The first recorded references to that type of red flag were in the late 1500s and early 1600s, and of course, that term also acquired an extended meaning over time. By the mid-1700s, the idea of a red flag had been extended to a general warning. If something was perceived as a potential danger or problem, it was called a '*red flag*.' And that sense of the term is still with us today. Sometimes a person might do something which raises a suspicion or an alarm. In that case, we might say that the action was a '*red flag*,' and it ultimately comes from the red flags displayed on ships as a sign of defiance or readiness for battle.

A ship flying a red flag might be given room to move without a direct confrontation. In other words, it might be '*given a wide berth*.' That's another nautical expression that has its roots in the early 1600s. Around the current point in our overall story in the 1620s, the word *berth* (b–e-r-t-h) was recorded for the first time in English. It referred to the room that a ship needed to sail clearly and freely without interference from other ships or obstacles. That led to the phrase '*to give someone a wide berth*' meaning to keep your distance from someone to avoid a confrontation.

You might also give a difficult person a lot of *leeway* to avoid a conflict. *Leeway* is another nautical term that can be traced back to the early 1600s. It originally referred to the sideways drift of a boat due to the wind and ocean tides, specifically the drift of the boat in a leeward direction which means downwind. Ship captains had to account for that natural drift, so it was common to give other ships plenty of room to account for that drift. The term *leeway* is first recorded in English in the early 1600s, and of course, its meaning has been extended over time beyond that

original nautical sense. Today, we might give another person some leeway, meaning that we tolerate them or give them some freedom of action.

Of course, if you give some people a wide berth and a lot of leeway, it doesn't work, and you still end up in a confrontation. If an argument ensues, you might let out your frustrations and '*deliver a broadside*' against that person. '*To deliver a broadside*' is to engage in a verbal attack. Well, that's another nautical term that was first recorded around the current point in our overall story, and it's a specific reference to naval warfare or a ship that has come under attack at sea. The word *broadside* originally referred to the side of a ship or the line of cannons that were positioned along the side of a ship. And if those cannons were fired simultaneously at another ship, it was said that the firing ship '*delivered or gave a broadside*.' Again, that phrase is first recorded in the early 1620s, and by the end of the century, the meaning had been extended to a verbal attack.

Of course, not all ships at sea were prepared for battle or wanted to engage in battle. And if that was the case, instead of raising a red flag, the ship might raise a white flag. A white flag indicated that the ship desired peaceful passage, or in the face of an aggressor, it was willing to surrender rather than fight. Sometimes the flag was raised after a battle was underway. Again, we find the first recorded English reference to that type of while flag used on the high seas in the late 1500s. Today, we might use the term as a synonym for 'surrender.' If someone '*raises a white flag*,' it means that he or she gives up and surrenders.

Well, rather than surrender, a ship and its crew might choose to '*cut and run*.' Again, that's another nautical term first recorded in the 1600s. It refers to cutting the anchor line on a ship to make a fast retreat or get-away. It could take quite a while to pull up the ship's anchor, so it was faster to simply cut the anchor line and leave the anchor on the bottom of the sea. And even today, when someone makes a fast getaway, we might say that they '*cut and run*.'

A ship that didn't have time to '*cut and run*' might find itself in a difficult situation with no good options available. We might say that the ship found itself between '*the devil and the deep blue sea*.' That phrase was around in a slightly altered form in the early 1600s. The earlier version was '*betwixt the devil and the dead sea*.' In fact, that earlier version was first recorded in English around the current point in our overall story in the 1620s – in the year 1621 to be exact. But a little over a decade later, we find a more familiar version as '*betwixt the devil and the deep sea*' instead of the 'dead sea.' And from there, it was a short jump to '*between the devil and the deep blue sea*.' The original version meant essentially the same thing as the modern version. It meant that you were faced with two bad or unpleasant choices – either face the devil or the depths of the ocean.

Now this is one of those expressions that may have been affected by that CANOE acronym that I mentioned earlier – the 'Conspiracy or Committee to Attribute a Nautical Origin to Everything.' That phrase '*between the devil and the deep blue sea*' is inherently nautical given its reference to the 'deep blue sea,' but maritime scholars claim a deeper and more specific nautical meaning. They note that the word *devil* was also applied to a specific part of a ship. The beam that runs along the bottom of a boat or ship is called its *keel*. And the seam between the keel and the next

highest board that attaches to it was called the *devil*. It was notoriously difficult to apply caulk to that seam because it was on the very bottom of the ship. And that pitch had to be applied while the ship was beached during low tide before the tide came back in. So it was a difficult job that had to be done very quickly.

Well, remember that that seam was sometimes called the *devil*, and according to some nautical scholars, applying caulk to that seam was referred to as '***paying the devil***,' specifically in the extended phrase '***the devil to pay and no pitch hot***.' And they argue that that is how we got the phrase '***the devil to pay***' meaning that you're facing a difficult situation or serious trouble. And they also argue by extension that that is how we got the phrase '***between the devil and deep blue sea***.' Supposedly, the phrase referred to the precarious position of the sailor who had to perform the difficult and dangerous work between the devil or lowest seam of the ship and the deep blue sea or that it was simply a reference to the thickness of the ship's hull being all that separated the ship's crew from the ocean depths.

The problem with all of those proposed etymologies is that the earliest clear and specific reference to that seam as a *devil* isn't found until the 1800s. And that phrase '***the devil to pay and no pitch hot***' is first recorded in the 1700s. But the more general phrase '***the devil to pay***' has been around since the 1500s, and as I noted earlier, the phrase '***between the devil and the deep sea***' is found around the current point in our overall story in the early 1600s. So those phrases are considerably older than the surviving references to that seam of a ship as a *devil*. But these are good examples of how these phrases are often attributed to parts of a ship or some specific aspect of sailing.

Now returning to naval warfare, if a ship surrendered and didn't have time to '***cut and run***,' it might face the ultimate fate of being sunk, in which case everyone would flee the ship, including any rodents which might happen to be on board. And that led to the expression '***like rats deserting a sinking ship***.' William Shakespeare is the first known English writer to use a version of that phrase in his play The Tempest about a decade before the current point in our overall story. Over the course of the 1600s, the expression became common, and is still with us today to refer to people fleeing a bad situation.

If a ship was abandoned at sea and left afloat, it was called a *derelict* – a Latin term that is first recorded in English in the 1630s. In fact, it is first found in the writings of the poet John Donne who I mentioned at the beginning of the episode. The word also had a broader meaning to refer to anything that had been abandoned or neglected, and that is the common sense of the word today, but many of the earliest uses of the word *derelict* were in regard to abandoned vessels. So as those few examples illustrate, the English language acquired quite a few common words and phrases in the early 1600s related to ships and sailing. And a lot of those words and phrases had to do with warfare and piracy on the high seas. And as I noted earlier, the English navy tended to patrol the British Isles with a focus on defending its own shores from pirates and other threats.

But in 1625, King James decided to expand the role of the navy. War had recently broken out on the European continent. It was the war that became known to history as the Thirty Years War. I mentioned the origin of that war in the last episode. It was largely a war between the Catholic and Protestant powers of Europe – at least at first. France sat out the war initially. Even though France was a Catholic nation, it was also a rival of the other great Catholic power Spain, so France didn't get involved at first. It later joined the war to fight against Spain, so at that point the war turned into more of a classic struggle between the great powers of Europe. But initially, the war was rooted in religious differences. And early in 1625, King James decided to join the war effort in support of the Protestant regions of northern Europe.

James also had a personal motivation. I noted in an earlier episode that his daughter Elizabeth had married the ruler of a small territory within the larger Holy Roman Empire. His name was Frederick and he was a Protestant. And at the very beginning of the Thirty Years War, the Protestants in Bohemia chose him as their king. Bohemia was a part of what is today the Czech Republic. Well, Frederick and his forces were quickly defeated by the Catholic powers, and he was forced into exile, and of course, that included his wife Elizabeth – the daughter of King James. So James was motivated to return his daughter and son-in-law to the throne in Bohemia.

So in the early months of 1625, James and his advisors put together a military plan for England's participation in the war. The Dutch city of Breda was under threat from the Spanish, so the plan was to send English forces there to relieve the city. The English Parliament was not thrilled with plan though. They didn't want England to get bogged down in a land war in Europe. And ultimately, the king was going to need Parliament to approve the financing for the war effort. So assurances were made to Parliament that the primary focus of the English military effort would be at sea. The English navy would disrupt Spanish shipping, and where necessary, would attack Spanish ships at sea. Parliament was more comfortable with that part of the plan, and hoped that the naval effort would be the primary focus of England's participation in the war. [*SOURCE: England in Conflict: 1603-1660, Derek Hirst, p.110*]

But that's not how things turned out. The primary focus ended up being the expedition to the Netherlands, and it turned into a disaster. England didn't really have the troops to fight a ground war in Europe. It was a challenge to muster a sufficient number of men to send. And the ones they gathered were poorly trained and poorly equipped. Within a few months, three-quarters of the 12,000 men that had been sent to the Netherlands had died. [*SOURCE: Rebellion, Peter Ackroyd, p. 91*]

At the exact same time, King James was very sick and experiencing his last illness. He had a stroke in late March of 1625, and he died a couple of days later at the age of 58. He had ruled England for 22 years, and he had ruled Scotland for over 57 years since he assumed the throne there as an infant. It was the longest reign of any monarch in Scotland. With the death of James, the thrones of England and Scotland passed to his son Charles.

Now as those of you familiar with English history know, Charles had a troubled reign to say the least. He constantly feuded with Parliament, and it was a feud that eventually erupted into Civil War. It was a war that Charles lost, which meant that he also lost his head. And the entire

monarchy of England came to an end for a little over a decade until it was eventually restored. So as you can see, with Charles at the helm, England was headed into some choppy waters.

Charles had a strong belief in the divine right of kings – the idea that kings were chosen by God and derived their authority directly from God, and therefore a king's power could not be held to account by an earthly authority like Parliament. Adding to the conflict was the fact that Charles believed strongly in the Church of England, of which he was the head, and he strongly opposed the reforms of the Puritans – part of which were designed to do away with the hierarchy of the Church in order to let each congregation choose its own leaders. And when Charles became king, the Puritans had a very strong and powerful voice in the House of Commons. So there was also a religious element to the conflict between Charles and Parliament.

But initially, the conflict centered around money and the competence of Charles's primary advisor. That advisor was George Villiers, who was the duke of Buckingham and is known to history as simply Buckingham. He had been a court favorite of the recently deceased King James, and he was also very close to the new king Charles. In fact, they were so close that Buckingham rarely left the king's side. But many people outside of the royal court thought Buckingham was arrogant and incompetent. Many of the members of Parliament blamed him for the failed expedition in the Netherlands, so they wanted him gone. [*SOURCE: Rebellion, Peter Ackroyd, p. 107*]

While kings and queens had their own sources of revenue, those sources weren't really large enough to fund a large-scale war effort. So if an English monarch wanted to go to war, he or she had to go to Parliament and ask for the money. But Charles resented having to go to Parliament with his hat in his hand – essentially begging for money. And Parliament wasn't in any mood to give him the money. When his first Parliament met in June of 1625, they only agreed to give him a small portion of what he had asked for. During that session, Buckingham was also threatened with impeachment. It was a slap in the king's face right out of the gate. And Charles dissolved Parliament a few weeks later. [*SOURCE: Regicide and Republic: England 1603-1660, Graham E. Seel, p. 40*]

Charles and Buckingham then decided to use the English navy to launch a raid on the Spanish coast, but without the necessary funding and with a naval fleet that had been somewhat neglected over the prior couple of decades, it was another disastrous expedition. About 12,000 troops were sent to Spain, but only about 5,000 returned, and they accomplished nothing of consequence during the expedition. The whole venture might be described a '***fool's errand***,' which is a term that appeared in print for the first time in English around this same time frame in the 1620s. Again, Buckingham was largely blamed for the failure, though Parliament had refused the funds that might have made the raid more successful. [*SOURCE: Regicide and Republic: England 1603-1660, Graham E. Seel, 37*]

The split between the king and Parliament stretched into the following year (1626) when Parliament met again. This time, Parliament moved to impeach Buckingham, and once again, they refused to grant the king any funds for his war effort until Buckingham was gone. And once, again, Charles dissolved the assembly a few weeks later. To get the money he needed, Charles

tried to go around Parliament. He forced the nobles, gentry and other wealthy landowners to loan him the money, which only served to alienate them further. [*SOURCE: Rebellion, Peter Ackroyd, p. 126*]

Charles and Buckingham then got the navy involved in a messy conflict with France when they sent naval forces to France to protect Protestants who were under siege at the French port city of La Rochelle. The two countries were already engaged in a low grade war at sea by raiding and capturing each other's ships. [*SOURCE: Rebellion, Peter Ackroyd, p. 128*] So, in summary, the many of years of relative peace that England had enjoying during the reign of King James quickly came to an end when his son Charles took the throne.

Now around this same time in 1626, we have an anecdote about a man whose name survives in a common phrase that is still used today. The man's name was Thomas Hobson. And in this year of 1626, he donated an early edition of the King James Bible to St. Benet's Church in Cambridge. So why is Thomas Hobson a notable figure? Well, Hobson owned a stable in Cambridge where he rented out horses to people who needed them. But supposedly, he had a rule that customers who needed a horse had to take the horse that was nearest to the stable door – even if they didn't really want that particular horse. So when it came to their choice of horses, they didn't really have a choice. And that has given us the term a '***Hobson's Choice***,' which is basically a choice where the result is predetermined. So the only choice is to take the option provided or walk away. Take it or leave it. And that means that a '***Hobson's Choice***' is based on the name of a real person who lived in England during the early 1600s.

Now in this same year of 1626, Captain John Smith published another book related to his many travels. Remember that he was the former leader of Jamestown and had also explored the coast of New England while he was in North America. I noted the book he wrote about those experiences earlier in the episode. Well, this new book wasn't an account of his many travels. It was something quite different. It was a nautical guide for aspiring sailors called 'An Accidence, or The Path-way to Experience, Necessary for All Young Sea-Men.' The book summarized the duties of a ship's crew, outlined battle tactics to be used at sea, and provided a list of common sailing terms. And that list of sailing terms is particularly interesting given the theme of this episode.

The following year, another version of the book was published. This second version was really just an enlarged version of the first book and was called 'A Sea Grammar.' And those books are provide a great deal of insight into sea-faring and the language of used by sailors in the early 1600s.

For example, the first of those two books was the first English text to refer to the front of a ship as the ***bow***. The origin of that word is unclear, but it appears to be a Germanic word. The best guess is that English sailors picked it up from other sailors in the North Atlantic who spoke Low German, Dutch or Danish. But again, the source is not known with certainty.

The very front part of a ship was also sometimes called the ***beak-head*** or simply the ***head*** of the ship, and this helps to explain how the word ***head*** came to refer to the bathroom or toilet on a ship. In his Sea-Grammar, Smith wrote, "The Beak-head is without the ship before the fore Castle..and of great vse, as well for the grace and countenance of the ship, as a place for men to ease themselues in." Now this requires some explanation. The beak-head referred to the platform or projection that extended outward from the very front part of the ship like a bird's beak, thus the name ***beak-head***. Well, on most ships of the period, that part of the ship was framed, but it wasn't fully enclosed. So if a sailor needed to urinate or defecate – or 'ease themselves' as Smith put it – they could go to the beak-head and do their business there, and it would fall straight down into the water below. So the beak-head or head became associated with the place where sailors went to relieve themselves, and that term ***head*** was preserved and applied to toilet facilities when they became part of the standard design of ships.

And speaking of parts of a ship, I mentioned earlier that the beam that runs along the bottom of a ship is called its ***keel***. The keel provides stability and counterbalances the pull of the sails. That stability and balance was essential for a ship, and a ship that was level or horizontal sitting in the water was said to have an '***even keel***.' John Smith is actually the first known writer to use that term in his Sea Grammar. Of course, this is where we get the term '***even keeled***' referring a person who remains calm and stable in a difficult or trying situation.

Of course, if something falls over, we might say that it '***keeled over***' using that same nautical word ***keel*** in the sense of keeping a ship stable. Smith described a boat that keeled over too easily as being '***crank-sided***.' Some people claim that this nautical use of the word ***crank*** in reference to something unstable is where we get the term ***cranky*** referring to someone who is very irritable. But there is no clear connection between that adjective and the nautical usage. So this may be another CANOE example where the connection is based on the Conspiracy to Attribute a Nautical Origin to Everything.

Sometimes a ship was intentionally placed on its side during low tide to make repairs to the hull. A ship placed on its side in this way was called a ***careen***, from the same Latin root word that gave us the word ***keel***. Of course, this nautical use of the word ***careen*** ultimately gave us the more common sense of the word today as a verb – '***to careen***' meaning to sway or lurch from side to side.

Now some repairs were easier than others. A difficult repair was required when a ship's mast broke. The mast is the large vertical pole that extends upward from the ship and holds the sails up. If it broke or snapped, a temporary mast had to be put up in its place. In his Sea Grammar, Smith tells us that that type of temporary mast was called a '***jury mast***.' He is the first English writer to record that term. In this context, the word ***jury*** meant 'makeshift or temporary.' It doesn't appear to be related to the word ***jury*** in the legal sense of a group of people who decide a legal dispute. The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that the word ***jury*** in '***jury mast***' is probably a corruption of someone's name or some other word. But for our purposes, it is notable because that word ***jury*** meaning 'makeshift or temporary' survives in the term '***jury-rigged***,' meaning essentially the same thing – 'something that has been repaired or constructed in a makeshift or temporary manner.'

Now John Smith also tells us that it was common for ships of the period to have a series of barriers placed on the deck of the ship between the masts. These barriers were positioned in a grid-like manner so that sailors could hide themselves within them when the ship came under attack, and they could also fire back at the enemy from inside of those protective barriers. Those barriers were called '*close fights*.' Smith writes, "A ships close fights, are smal ledges of wood laid crosse one another like the grates of iron in a prisons window, betwixt the maine mast, and the fore mast, and are called gratings." Well, by the middle of the following century, those barriers called '*close fights*' became known as '*close quarters*.' And this is where we get the modern term '*close quarters*' to refer to a people sharing a tight or restricted space. The word *close* in that context doesn't really mean *close* in the sense of 'very near.' It really means 'closed' or 'enclosed,' like those barriers that protected sailors when they came under attack. So, the term '*close quarters*' is also a nautical term that originated on the decks of ships in the 1600s and 1700s.

In his books on sea-faring, John Smith was one of the first English writers to use the word *fender* to refer to material hung over the side of a ship to protect it from damage caused by contact with a dock or another vessel. Of course, we use the same word today as part of a car or other vehicle, but originally, the term was used for ships. It's a shortened form of the word *defender*, and that shortened form of the word *defender* had been around for a couple of centuries. But there is no evidence that the word was applied to a barrier on a ship until John Smith used it here. This type of fender usually consisted of old cables or another type of material hung over the side of vessel to protect it from chafing or rubbing or contact with other objects.

Smith was also one of the first English writers to use the phrase '*anchor aweigh*' meaning 'the lifting or raising of a ship's anchor before proceeding to one's destination.' By the way, the phrase is often rendered today with the preposition *away* spelled 'a-w-a-y' meaning 'movement from one place to another' as in 'get away.' But that's a more modern version of the phrase. The original version was pronounced the same way, but actually used a different word – spelled 'a-w-e-i-g-h.' Again, it was also pronounced /a-way/, but it is unrelated to our common preposition *away*. The original version was derived from the word *weigh* (w-e-i-g-h) meaning 'to hoist or lift or hold up.' '*To weigh anchor*' was to raise the anchor before sailing. So that's how the phrase '*anchors aweigh*' came about. It was literally a reference to the lifting of the anchor. But landlubbers were a little confused by that term and weren't as familiar with the nautical usage. So they converted it to the preposition 'a-w-a-y,' which implies that the ship is departing or moving away once the anchor is raised. But either way, John Smith is one of the first to record that phrase '*anchor's aweigh*' in this particular training manual for sailors.

Now the rope that was tied to the anchor obviously had to be tied to the ship as well. It was typically tied to a stout post on the deck of the ship call the *bitt* (b-i-t-t). And the turning or releasing of the rope around the bitt was called the *bitter*. When the anchor was lowered into the water, the bitter of the rope around the bitt would continue until the anchor reached the bottom of the sea or until the end of the rope was reached. At that point, the rope was said to be at the '*bitter end*.' And this is where we get the expression '*the bitter end*.' It's the same idea found in the expression '*the end of your rope*.' If you are 'at the end of your rope,' you've reached the 'bitter end.'

Believe it or not, the first recorded use of the term '***bitter end***' was in John Smith's Sea Grammar. He wrote, "A Bitter is but the turne of a Cable about the Bits, and veare it out by little and little. And the Bitters end is that part of the Cable doth stay within boord."

Now an anchor wasn't the only thing that was lowered over the side of the ship with a rope. Sometimes a weight was attached to a rope and dropped over the side of the ship to measure the depth of the water. The Middle English term for that weight was a ***plummet***. And around the current point in our overall story in the early 1600s, that noun was converted into a verb. When a weight was dropped in the water in that manner, it was said to ***plummet***, giving us a new verb that survives to this day with the more extended sense of something falling very quickly.

And also around the current point in our overall story in the early 1600s, we find the first recorded reference to the nautical sense of the word ***knot*** (k-n-o-t) – as a measurement of a ship's speed on the ocean. A piece of knotted rope was dropped over the side of the ship while the ship was moving. The knots were placed at regular intervals and the rope was allowed to run out while an hour glass kept time. The faster the ship was traveling, the more knots that would be taken out during a given period of time. And that's how nautical speed came to be measured in knots. And again, the first reference to that measurement was in the 1630s.

Of course, the ropes on a ship were not only lowered into the water for various reasons, they were also used to raise the flags and sails of the ship. So ropes – and knowledge of ropes – was essential to sea-faring in the age of sailing. So if you 'know the ropes,' you have extensive knowledge about a particular topic.

But those ropes on a ship weren't always called ***ropes***. When a rope was attached to the bottom of a sail, it was called a ***sheet***. And that might come as a bit of surprise because it seems like the word ***sheet*** should refer to the sail itself, not the rope attached to the sail. But those ropes were often referred to as ***sheets***, and John Smith repeatedly used that term in his nautical books to refer to the ropes attached to the bottom of a sail. But if two or three of those ropes had too much slack or were left loose, then the sail would flap about in the wind, and the ship would lurch around. This ultimately led to the phrase '***three sheets to the wind***.' That term is first recorded in the 1800s, and of course, it is used to refer to someone who is drunk and stumbling about much a like a ship that has a sail flapping about with three sheets or ropes in the wind.

Of course, those ropes were used to keep the sails in place, and also to raise and lower the sails or the flags of the ship. To lower a sail or flag was to ***strike*** it. On a ship, it was common to hear someone say, 'Strike the sail' or 'strike the flag.' Another similar term was the word ***amain***, which was a loanword from Spanish. By the time John Smith composed his Sea Grammar, those terms had been extended to the lowering of the ship's cargo down into the hull of the ship. Smith confirmed that when he wrote, "When you let any thing downe into the Howle [hull], lowering it by degrees, they say, Amaine; and being downe, Strike." Well, that nautical sense of the word ***strike*** has left a surprising legacy in English. In the 1700s, that sense of lowering a ship's sails or flags or cargo was extended to workers putting down their tools and refusing to work. And that gave us the modern sense of the word ***strike*** as in a 'worker's strike' or 'to go on strike.' Again, that sense of the word has a nautical origin.

Now as I said, the word *strike* was initially used on a ship to refer to the lowering of a sail or a flag. And with respect to the ship's flags, I mentioned earlier that various flags were used on ships, and I noted that those flags conveyed certain information to other ships. Of course, those flags were different colors. A ship also flew a flag to indicate its country of origin. And John Smith's book reminds us that sailors often referred to those flags – or flag combinations – as the *colors*. The term was especially common when referring to a national flag. According to many maritime historians, when a ship wanted to be deceptive – like when an enemy ship wanted to pretend to be from a friendly nation – it might put up the flag of that friendly country. It was a '*false flag*,' and in common sailing parlance, the ship was said to be 'sailing under false colors.' However, if the ship was flying its true and proper flag, it was said to 'showing its true colors.' So today, if you reveal your true self, someone might say that you are showing your '*true colors*.' Those terms – '*false colors*' and '*true colors*' – had been around since at least the 1500s, but a new phrase appeared around the current point in our overall story in early 1600s, and that was the phrase '*with flying colors*.' It first appeared in the literal sense as a ship that flew the flag of its country. So if a ship was sailing 'with flying colors,' it was displaying its flags. But a national flag was sometimes taken down in the course of a retreat or surrender, so if a ship was sailing 'with flying colors,' it was a sign of confidence and success, and sometimes a sign of victory. And that figurative sense of the phrase '*with flying colors*' is first recorded in the 1620s. So if you pass a test 'with flying colors,' it means you passed it easily with confidence and success.

And let me conclude this discussion about John Smith's nautical books with another common term that is often alleged to be related to the lowering of a ship's flags. I noted earlier that an admiral's ship flew his flag and was called the *flagship* of the fleet. Well, according to some legends, commanders of lesser authority had their own flags. And the various flags were flown at different heights depending upon the rank of the commander in charge of the ship. The rope was secured to one of several pegs on the mast of the ship. Well, if the commander in charge of the ship turned over control to one of his subordinates, the commander's flag was taken down and the subordinate's flag was raised in its place, but it was flown at a lower level, so the rope attached to the flag was placed a peg or two lower on the mast. And supposedly, this is where we get the phrase '*to take someone down a peg or two*,' meaning 'to humble someone.' The main problem with that etymology is that there really isn't any solid evidence to connect that phrase with that nautical story. And in fact, many other proposed etymologies for that phrase are also commonly cited. So the story connecting that phrase to flags on a ship is probably another example of CANOE – 'The Conspiracy or Committee to Attribute Nautical Origins to Everything.'

Despite the questionable origins of that particular phrase, we have seen that a lot of common words and phrase are indeed attributable to nautical origins, and many of them can be traced back to the early 1620s. And John Smith's nautical-themed books from 1626 and 1627 are a goldmine for researchers who are interested in the history of maritime terms in English.

Now around the time the second of Smith's nautical books was published, English settlers once again boarded ships and headed out to sea. And this time, they were headed to a new island in the Caribbean. In 1627, those settlers made their way to Barbados – another island in that chain of islands known as the Lesser Antilles stretching from Puerto Rico down towards South America.

Barbados was more than twice the size of St. Kitts, which the English had settled a couple of years earlier. It was and would remain England's largest territory in the Caribbean until Jamaica was acquired about three decades later.

Much like the earlier settlement at St. Kitts, the English had come across Barbados during trading expeditions to South America. The Spanish had occupied the island a century or so before, and it was during that earlier period that the indigenous people on the island were killed or removed. So by the time the English arrived there, it was unoccupied. That meant the settlement was established with little or no opposition. Those first settlers arrived as part of an expedition funded by a group of London merchants. As an aside, one of the first colonists to arrived on Barbados in 1627 was Henry Winthrop. His father was John Winthrop, and we'll encounter him in the next episode because he led a large group of English colonists to Massachusetts in the next decade. [*SOURCE: Hubs of Empire, Matthew Mulcahy, p. 35*]

Now, as it turned out, Barbados was a very popular destination for men and women who left England in the mid-1600s. Within a decade, about 6,000 English men and women had migrated there, and within another decade, the island was inhabited by nearly 20,000 Europeans and another 5,000 African slaves. [*SOURCE: The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492, David Watts, p. 151*] Those are pretty incredible numbers for such a short period of time on such a small island. In fact, to put those numbers into some perspective, that number is roughly the same as all of the English men and women who migrated to North America during that same period of time. So, over the next couple of decades, the migration to Barbados was roughly equal to the migration to Virginia and New England combined. [*SOURCE: Hubs of Empire, Matthew Mulcahy, p. 44*]

Around the same time that those first English settlers arrived in Barbados in 1627, King Charles and his close advisor Buckingham were putting the final touches on another expedition to France to help the French Protestants who were under siege there at the port city of La Rochelle. And I want to conclude this episode by examining those military and political developments in England because they set the stage for the next episode and the episodes that follow.

As I noted, Charles and Buckingham were eager to protect the French Protestants in La Rochelle, so a fleet of nearly 100 ships was assembled at the English port city of Portsmouth. The ships were gathered to transport the English troops across the Channel. Since housing was limited, local families were forced to accommodate the soldiers leading up to the expedition, and that caused quite a bit of resentment. In June of 1627, the fleet left Portsmouth under Buckingham's personal command. But it proved to be yet another disaster. [*SOURCE: Regicide and Republic: England 1603-1660, Graham E. Seel, p. 38, 41*] The English forces made it on land, but their ranks quickly dwindled due to disease and lack of food. In late October, they were forced to retreat. About 4,000 Englishmen died on the expedition. Again, Parliament blamed Buckingham, even though it had refused to grant the much-needed funds for the effort. [*SOURCE: Rebellion, Peter Ackroyd, p. 130*]

The following year (1628), Charles was forced to call another Parliament, his third in his three years as king. Charles's forced loans had raised quite a bit of money, but not enough to continue his war efforts on the continent. The loans had also caused a lot of discontent with numerous people being arrested for refusing to pay the amounts demanded. [*SOURCE: Regicide and Republic: England 1603-1660, Graham E. Seel, 41*] Nevertheless, Charles and Buckingham wanted to send another expedition to La Rochelle in France, and they needed the money.

When Parliament met in March, they expressed their frustrations at the king and Buckingham by preparing a document called a Petition of Right. It condemned many of the king's policies like the forced loans, the forced housing of soldiers, and the imprisonment of people without trial. Parliament demanded that Charles acknowledge the Petition and refrain from violating its terms. Charles reluctantly agreed in order to get the funds he was asking for. [*SOURCE: The Story of Britain, Rebecca Fraser, p. 329*]

In the spring, an English fleet once again left England for France, and once again, it met with little success. In late summer, Buckingham tried again. He assembled yet another fleet. The fleet was assembled at Portsmouth. But by this point, public opinion against Buckingham was palpable. As he was reviewing the fleet in Portsmouth, a man named John Felton attacked Buckingham and stabbed him to death. The fleet sailed a short time later, and it too failed to lift the siege against the Protestants in France. The city surrendered to the French king in October. [*SOURCE: Regicide and Republic: England 1603-1660, Graham E. Seel, 38*]

For three years, Charles had been trying to fight the two great powers of Europe – France and Spain – both at the same time. And he had been doing it without the funds he needed from Parliament. So at this point, he had little choice but to conclude peace with both countries. [*Regicide and Republic: England 1603-1660, Graham E. Seel, 38*]

The following year (1629), Charles called his fourth Parliament. Again, he hoped for a resolution of the ongoing dispute over money, and with Buckingham now dead and that source of conflict out of the picture, he apparently thought that Parliament would be more amendable. But it wasn't. The well had been completely poisoned by that point. After presenting three resolutions which condemned the king's policies, Charles ordered the arrest of nine Members of Parliament and dissolved the assembly. It would not meet again for eleven years. During that period, Charles ruled without any Parliaments. This was the period of Charles's personal rule and was essentially an experiment in absolute monarchy. It would last as long as Charles could get by on his own income and didn't need any funds from Parliament. [*SOURCE: Regicide and Republic: England 1603-1660, Graham E. Seel, 43*]

We'll leave the story there for now, and consider the consequences of those political developments over the next few episodes.

Next time, we'll move the story into the 1630s, and we'll look at one of the most significant events of that decade for our purposes. That was the massive migration of people from England to a newly established colony in Massachusetts. And we'll also examine the linguistic links between Old England and New England.

So until then, thanks for listening to the History of English Podcast.