

I think we captured 70 fine young fellows. When the ship was on the point of leaving, it was a sad sight; for boat-loads of women - wives, mothers, sisters, came alongside to say goodbye to their captured relatives. I have often felt ashamed.

Midshipman George Vernon Jackson (aged 16) was in charge of the press gang

Monday the sailors at Shields, to the amount of 500, assembled in a riotous manner, armed with swords, pistols, and other weapons, and made an attempt to seize the Eleanor tender, in order to rescue the pressed men on board which was resisted successfully by the efforts of the officers at this port. The seamen, next day, tried to come to Newcastle, but hearing that a strong military force was ready to resist them, they wisely abandoned their rash determination [plan], and went home, after having beaten up George Forster, one of the press-gang, with the utmost cruelty, at Howden pans.

28 March 1793

Newcastle, March 23

On Tuesday last, the sailors of this port chased the press-gang from North Shields, with the highest marks of contempt; - with their jackets reversed.

They were escorted by a numerous mob to Chirton-Bar, and who, on parting, gave them three cheers, but vowing that, should they ever attempt to enter Shields, they should be torn limb from limb. The next day their favourite, Captain Rothe, met and addressed [talked to] them, and from his assurance [promises], and the manner in which it was received, we have great reason to hope that all disquietude [anger] with the gallant tars will be removed; we are, however, since informed, that the seamen at Shields have forfeited their promise to Captain Rothe, and yesterday they again dismissed the gang.

Newcastle Courant

27 February 1793



A mug showing the press gang in action

National Maritime Museum, Green-