





***Swan and Isabella. C. 1835.***  
**John Ward, Hull Maritime Museum**



**'William Lee of Hull'. John Ward  
c. 1831. Hull Maritime Museum.**



*Viewforth, Jane and Middleton*  
beset in ice: 1836. Thomas  
Binks. Hull Maritime Museum.

# The Greenlanders: Arctic whaleships and whalers

Dr Bernard Stonehouse

Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge  
and  
Maritime Historical Studies Centre, University of Hull



***This presentation...***

- 1. Tells of the ships involved in British Arctic whaling from 1750 to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and...***
- 2. Outlines how whalers worked, and how whaling contributed to the ports and communities involved.***



***British Arctic whaling began on a small scale in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. From 1749 it became a major industry, stimulated by a government bounty of 40/- per ship ton.***

***At its peak in the 1780s, over 200 ships and 10,000 men were sailing annually to the Arctic from many ports, notably London and Hull, but also Liverpool, Newcastle, Whitby, Yarmouth, Lynn, Exeter, Ipswich, Aberdeen, Dundee....***



*Men and ships were called ‘Greenlanders’ because they operated in Arctic seas immediate north and north-west of Britain, west and east of Greenland.*







*Greenland whaleships*

*Ships of 250-380 tons  
burthen, typically cats.*

**A measure of capacity**

**$(L - 3/5B) \times B \times 1/2B$**

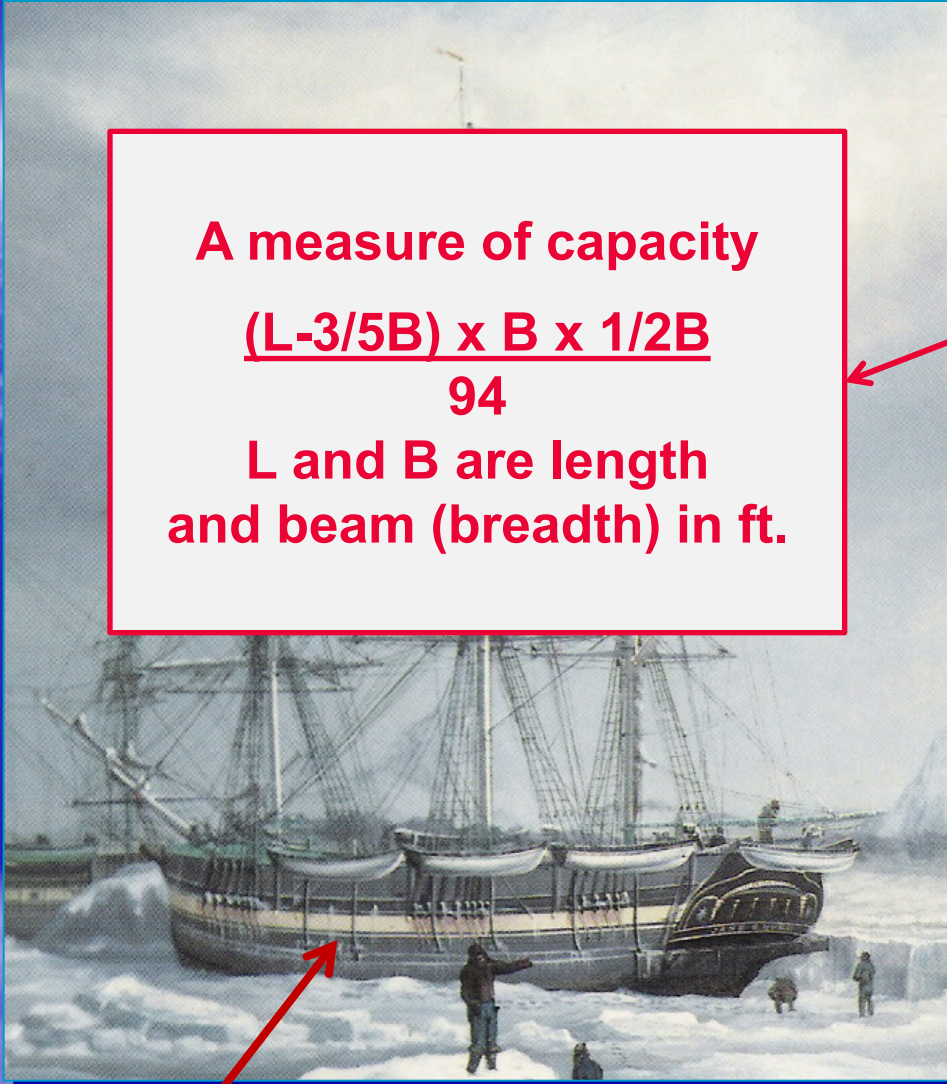
**94**

**L and B are length  
and beam (breadth) in ft.**

**Greenland whaleships**

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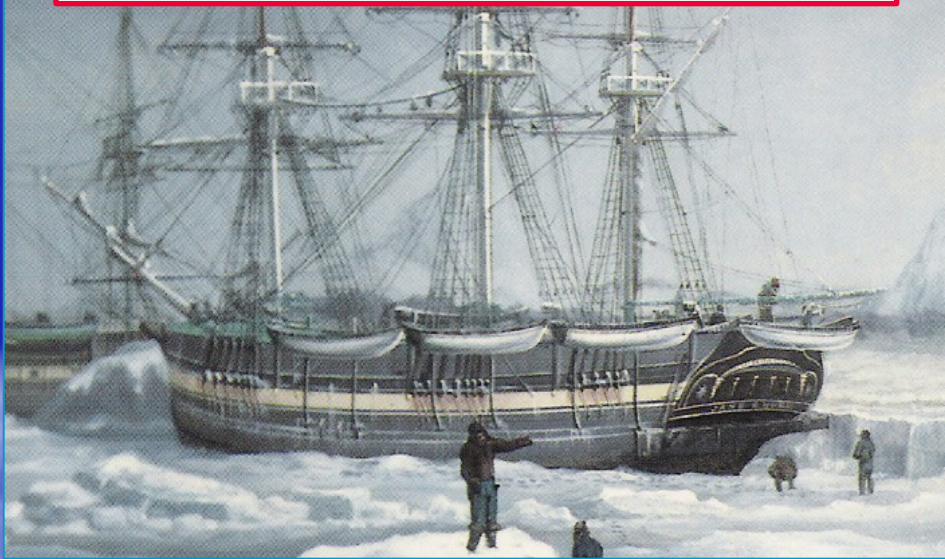
**Jane was 359 tons**



**Strongly-built sailing ships with round bow and square stern, produced mainly in Northumbria and Yorkshire, capable of carrying up to 600 tons of coal or general stores.**

*Greenland whaleships*

*Ships of 250-380 tons burthen, typically **cats**.*





## **Greenland whaleships**

*Ships of 250-350 tons burthen, typically cats.*

***30-35 m long, 9-10 m wide.***

***Three-masted, ship- or bark-rigged.***

***Oak-built, capacious, used as bulk-carriers.***

***As cargo ships, manned by crew of 10-12; as whalers, 40-50, as privateers 80-100.***



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*As colliers, manned by crew of 10-12; as whalers, 40-50.*

*Simple to sail, and required no fuel beyond coal for the galley stove*

**Australian replica of HM Bark  
*Endeavour***





## **Replica of HM Bark *Endeavour***

<b>Length</b>	<b>106 ft (32 m)</b>
<b>Beam</b>	<b>29 ft (8.9 m)</b>
<b>Burthen</b>	<b>368 3/4 tons</b>
<b>Sail area</b>	<b>3300 sq yds</b>

## **HM Bark Endeavour**

***Launched in 1764, a cat for carrying general cargo – built to the same plans as many other Whitby-based whaleships.***

***One of three Whitby-built ships selected by Lt. James Cook RN for his round-the-world voyages of 1772-79.***



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*One of three Whitby-built ships selected by Lt. James Cook RN for his round-the-world voyages 1772-79.*

*Endeavour was never a whaleship, but this modern Australian-built replica is as close to a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Arctic whaleship as we are likely to see afloat.*

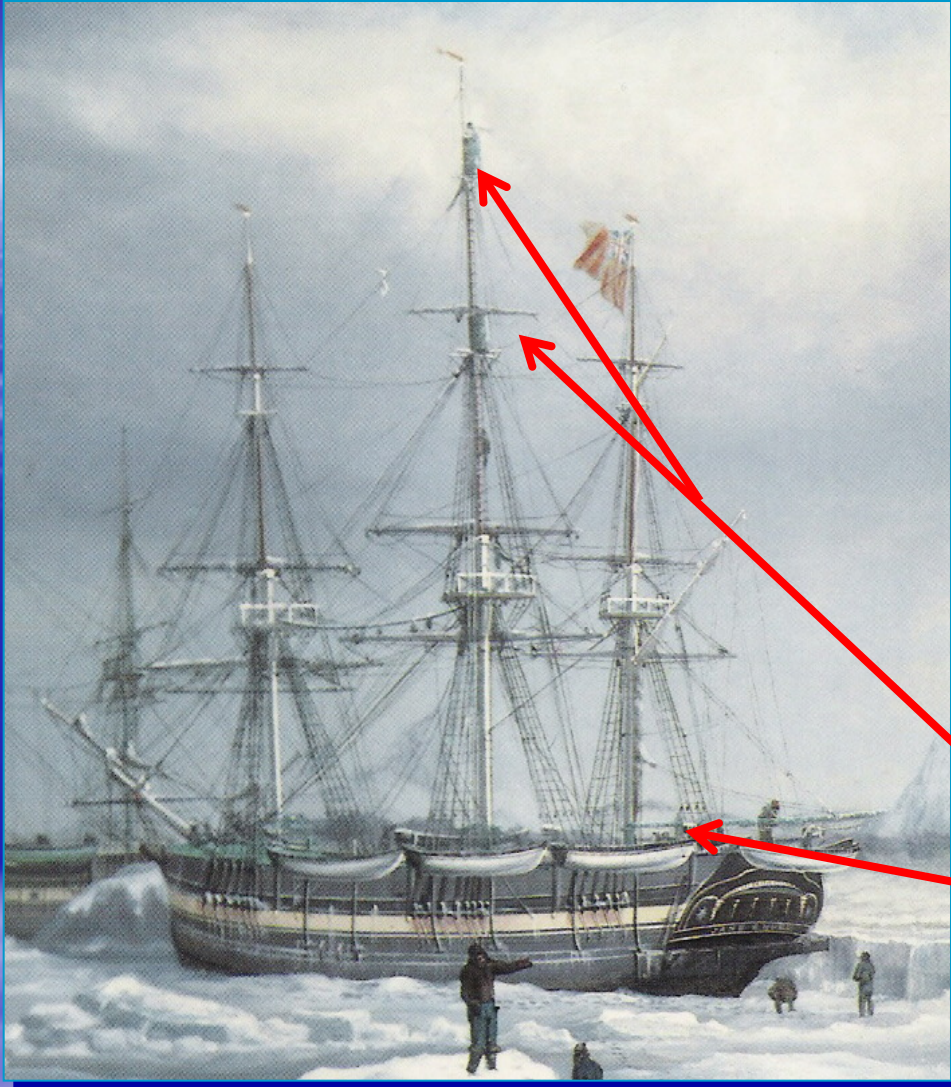




## *Greenland whaleships*

*To convert a cat to a  
whaleship -*

*Reinforce the bow ;  
Double-plank the waterline;  
Fortify internally with  
12" square-section oak  
cross-beams;*



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*Reinforce the bow ;  
Double-plank the waterline;  
Fortify internally with  
12" square-section oak  
cross-beams;*

*Add crows' nests;*

*Add davits for whaleboats*

*Costs c. 1790:*

*Ship c. £7500*

*Conversion c. £700*

*(£1 in 1800 = c. £80 today)*

## *The whaling bounty*

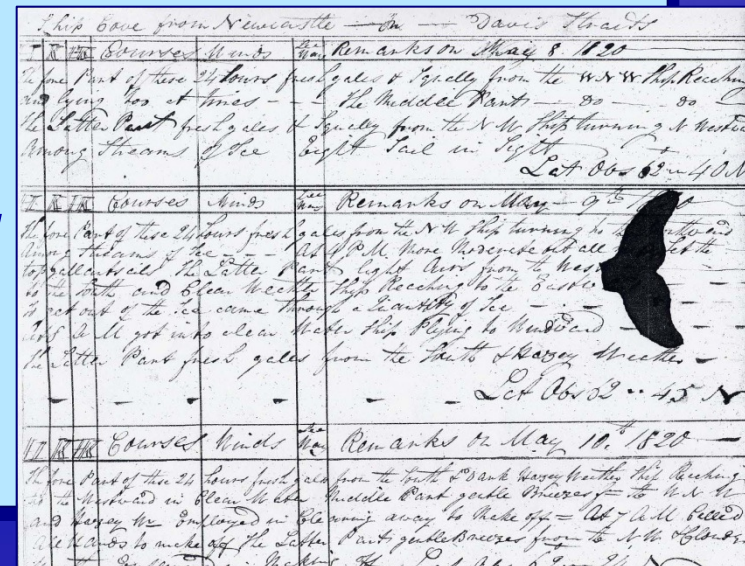
*British Arctic whaling began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century but stayed small until 1749, when a government bounty of 40/- per ship ton stimulated new interest among ship owners. The bounty was intended to encourage an industry that would provide skilled seamen for the Royal Navy in wartime.*



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The bounty was administered by Customs and Excise. The ship's master had to show that his ship, provisions and crew were adequate, and provide a detailed log of the voyage.



This page is a handwritten logbook entry from a whaling voyage. It is divided into two main sections, one for May 8th and one for May 10th, 1828. Each section has a header for 'Coursed Winds' and 'Remarks'. The handwriting is in cursive and somewhat faded. A large, irregular black ink blot obscures a significant portion of the text on the right side of the page, particularly in the May 9th section. The text describes the ship's course, wind directions, and observations of the sea and sky.

Coursed Winds	Remarks
Ship came from Newcastle on May 8. 1828	Remarks on May 8. 1828
The fore part of these 24 hours fresh gales & squally from the W & W by N. Reaching 40° 45' N at 10 AM	The Middle Part - 30
The latter part fresh gales & squally from the N.W. by W. blowing & weather being strong & the sight sail in sight	Lat Obs 32 45 N
Coursed Winds	Remarks on May 9. 1828
The fore part of these 24 hours fresh gales from the N.W. by W. blowing to the N.W. by N. at 10 AM. There was some squally weather at 10 AM. The latter part fresh gales from the N.W. by W. blowing to the N.W. by N. at 10 AM. There was some squally weather at 10 AM. The latter part fresh gales from the N.W. by W. blowing to the N.W. by N. at 10 AM. There was some squally weather at 10 AM.	Lat Obs 32 45 N
Coursed Winds	Remarks on May 10. 1828
The fore part of these 24 hours fresh gales from the North & dark heavy weather till 10 AM. There was some squally weather at 10 AM. The latter part fresh gales from the North & dark heavy weather till 10 AM. There was some squally weather at 10 AM.	Lat Obs 32 45 N

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An Account of the Number of Ships which have been employed in the Whale Fishery to Davis's Straights and the Greenland Seas with their respective Names and Burthens, from whence they were fitted Out and at what Port in Great Britain they were discharged also the Number of Whales, Seals and Quantities of Blubber Imported by each Ship in 1780

No  
of Ships Names

1. Neptune
2. Berry
3. Lyon
4. Weymouth
5. Chance
6. Duke of York
7. Suffolk
8. Friendly Adventure
9. Young Eagle

Microsoft Excel - Eng1772

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	A	B	D	E	G	I	K	M	O	P	R	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
41	35	King of Prussia	344	31	Hull	Hull		6	261	78			1772					
42	36	British Queen	346	90	Hull	Hull		1		24	0.5		1772					
43	37	Humber	221	9	Hull	Hull		4	695	66			1772					
44	38	Jenny & Polly	198	40	Liverpoole	Liverpoole		9		90	0.5		1772					
45	39	Golden Lyon	310	44	Liverpoole	Liverpoole		7	202	160	0.5		1772					
46	40	Grampus	318	13	Liverpoole	Liverpoole		5	1360	120			1772					
47	41	Winnington	119	25	Liverpoole	Liverpoole		6		58			1772					
48	42	Betty	266	16	Liverpoole	Liverpoole		3		46	0.75		1772					
49	43	Perservance	332		Liverpoole	Liverpoole		3	3333	93			1772					
50	44	Dolphin	274	28	Liverpoole	Liverpoole		5		73	0.75		1772					
51	45	Lord Mollineaux	190	10	Liverpoole	Liverpoole		4	25	79			1772					
52	46	Pennant	218	23	Liverpoole	Lost		5					1772					
53	47	John & Margaret	397	25	Newcastle	Newcastle		9	19	80	0.5		1772					
54	48	Royal Exchange	342	27	Newcastle	Newcastle		7		80			1772					
55	49	Priscilla	340	40	Newcastle	Newcastle		5	500	117	0.5		1772					
56	50	Exeter	328	28	Exeter	Exeter		8		127			1772					
57																		
58		Totals	15381	54				273.5	21884	3801								
59		Computed Totals	15351	2112				273.5	21884	3846	11							
60		Adjusted for 94ths	15373	44				273.5	21884	3857	0							
61		Difference	8	10				0	0	-56	0							
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63		Source by page																
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75		Tonnage of Blubber																
		Eng1772.csv																

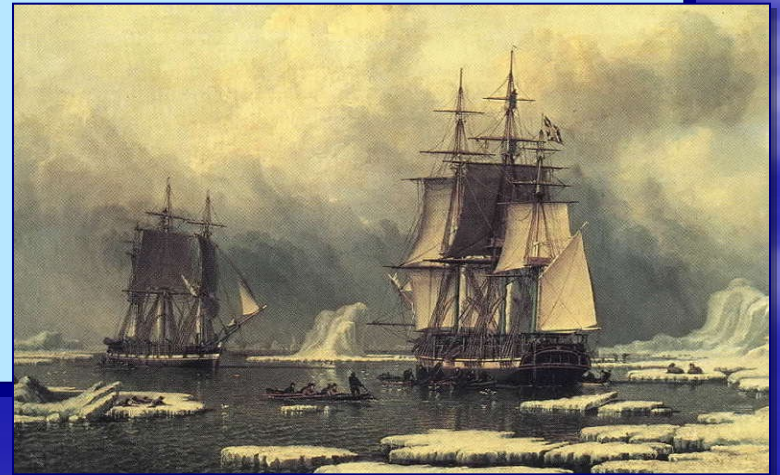
**Logs, muster rolls and other records required under the bounty Acts now provide – when we can find them – material for much of our research.**

## **The whaling bounty**

***The bounty of £700 on a ship of 350 tons would pay for converting a cat to a whaleship, or much of the fitting-out cost of a 3-6 months' whaling voyage, payable whether or not the voyage was successful.***

***In 1749 a few London ship-owners were already in the trade on a small scale: now owners in Newcastle, Liverpool and other ports took up whaling.***

***The bounty varied from time to time between 40/- and 20/-. It was finally discontinued in 1824.***



Leith, Aberdeen, etc. ↑

1733-1760

Newcastle/Shields  
1752

Whitby 1753

Hull 1754

Liverpool 1750

Yarmouth  
1749

Milford 1756

London  
1733

Bristol 1751

Exeter 1756

## Whaling ports

*London had begun in 1733 with little success, but improved after 1749.*

*Other ports started from 1749, but gave up during the Seven-years' War (1756-63) when contracts with the Government Transport Service offered more certain returns.*

*After the war, whaling resumed and spread to involve other ports...*

**1749-1915**

1173-1915



*Overall, 37 ports became involved, some for only two or three trial years, others for up to a century, e.g.:*

*London: 1733 - 1836*

*Liverpool: 1750 - 1823*

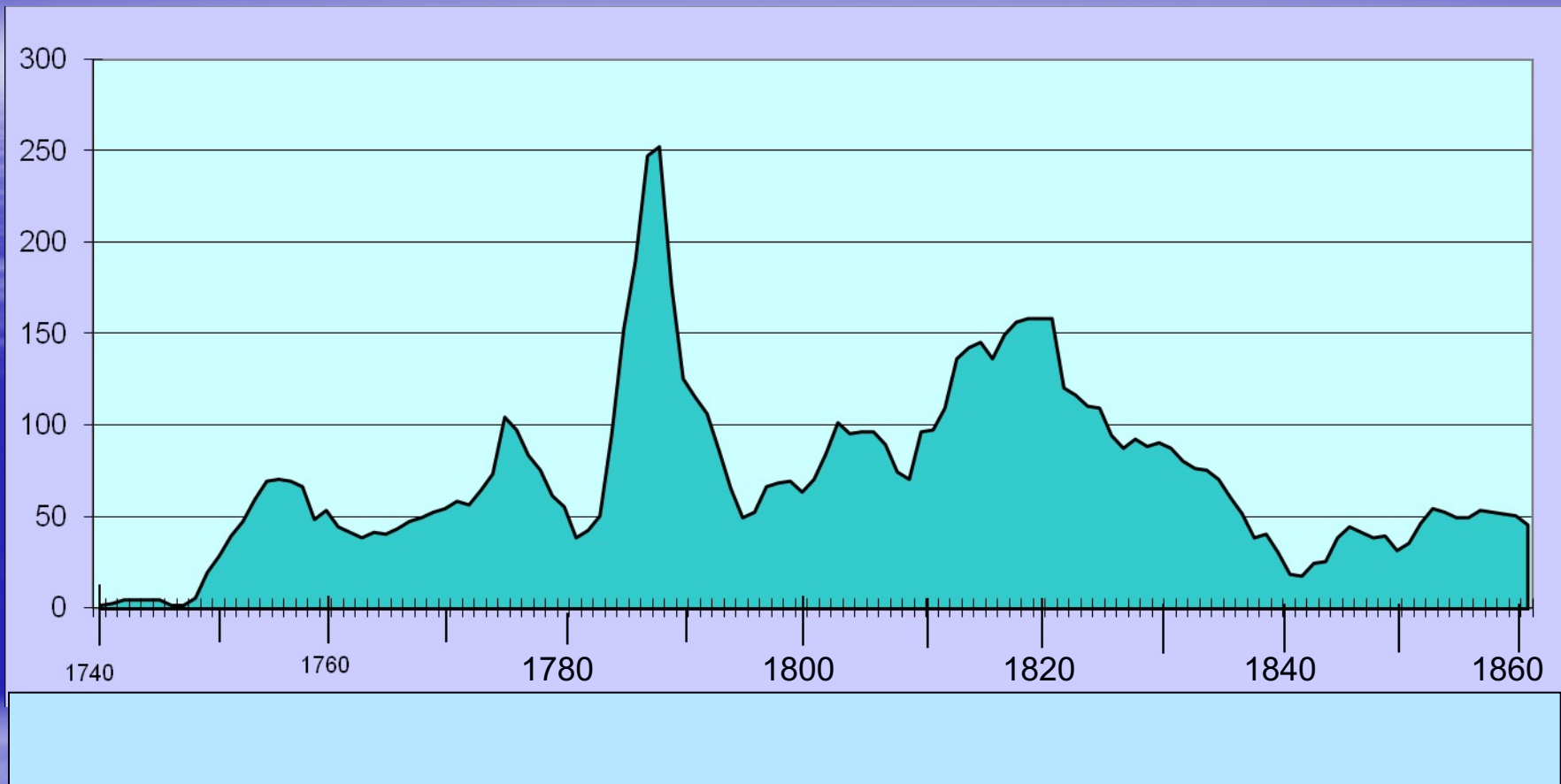
*Newcastle: 1752 - 1849*

*Whitby: 1753 - 1837*

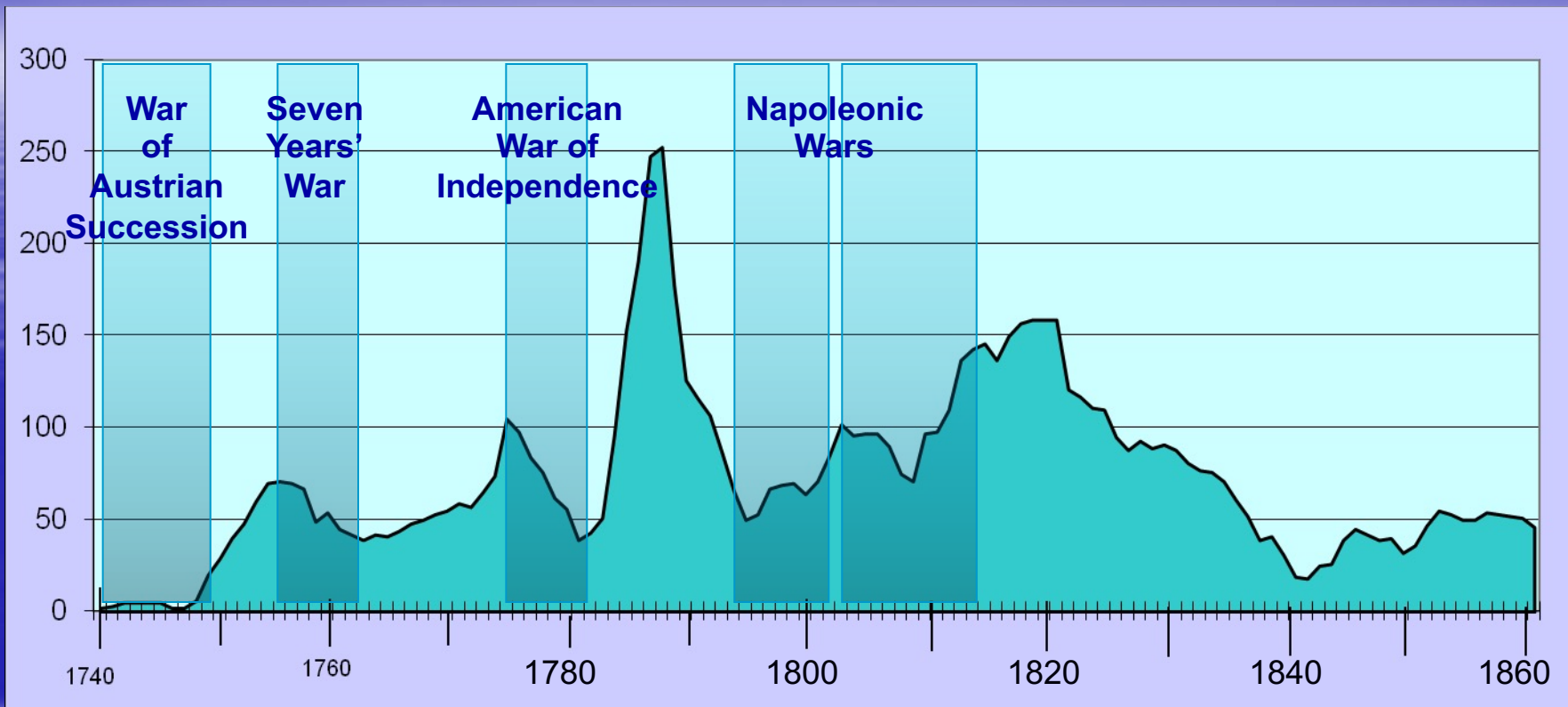
*Hull: 1754 - 1843.*

*The industry peaked during the period 1750-1850, then declined as alternative fuels and lubricants became available.*

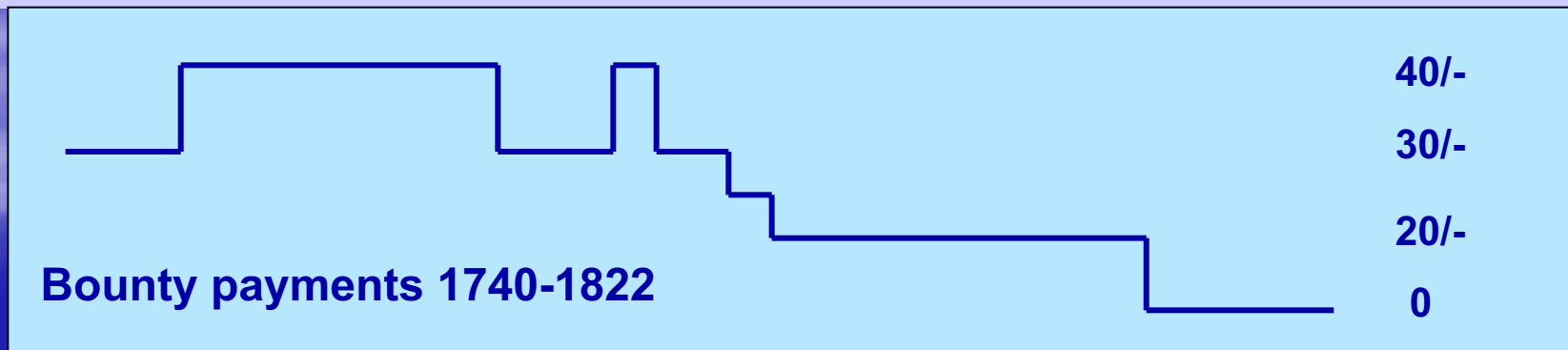
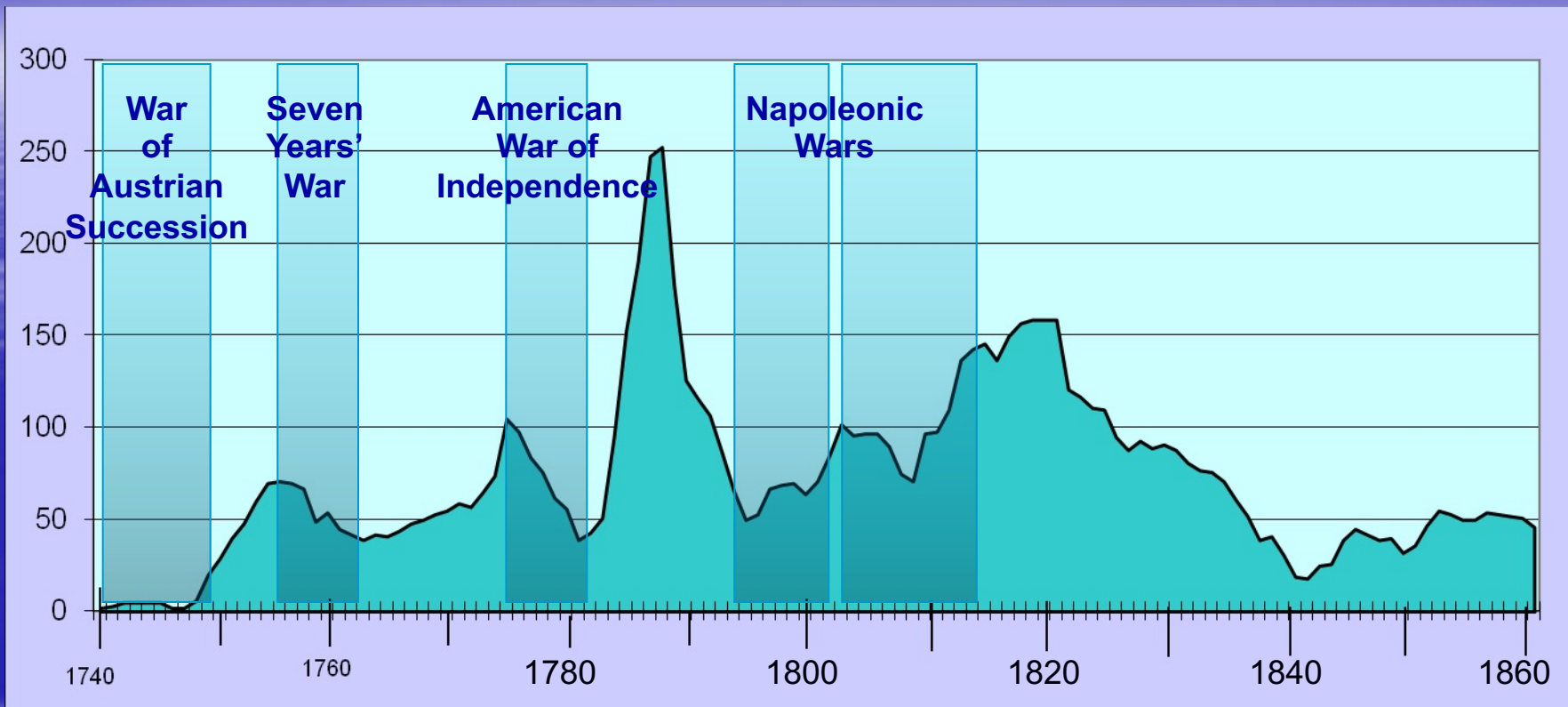




***Numbers of British whaling ships sailing annually to the Arctic, 1740-1862.***



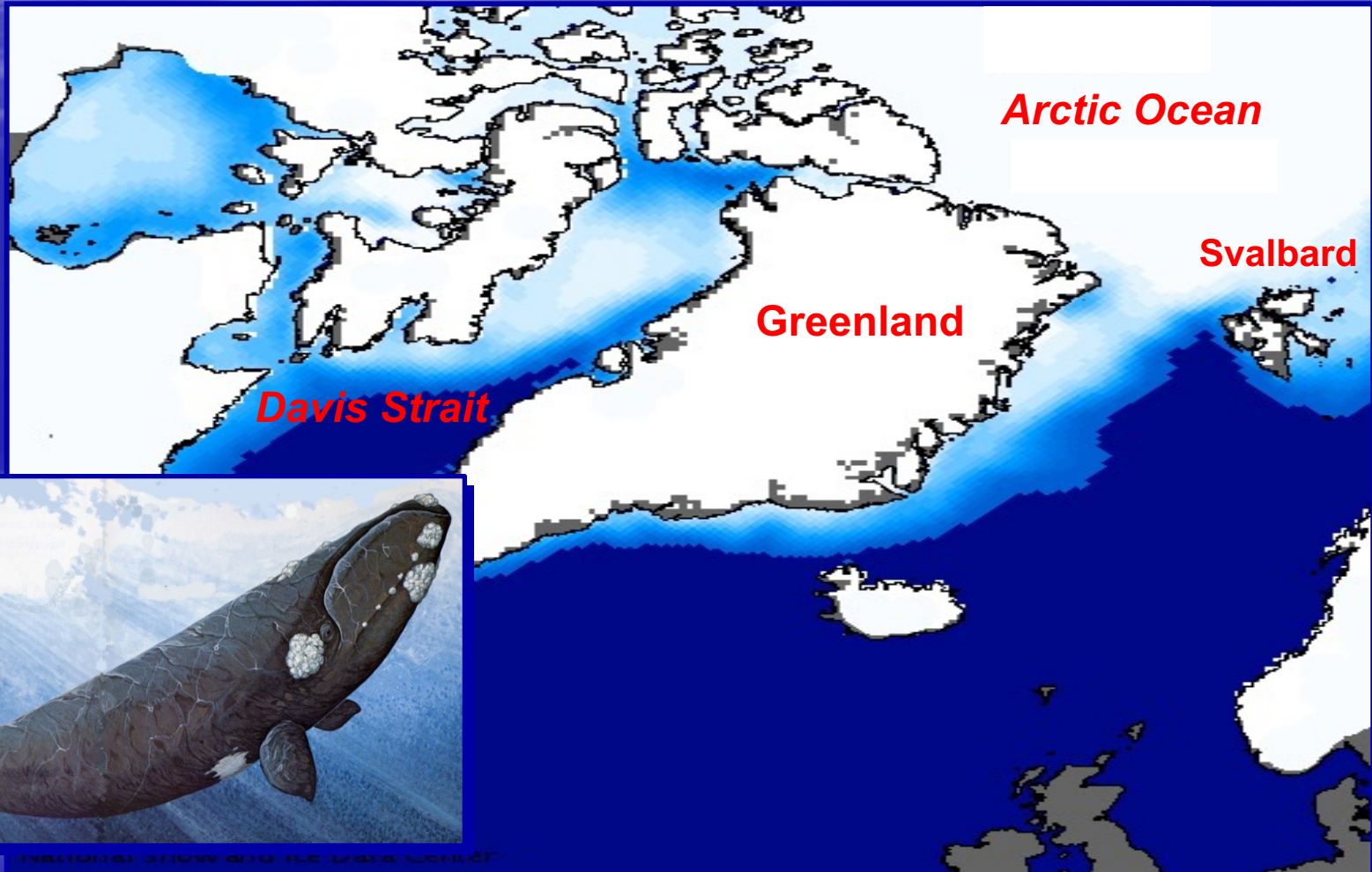
*In wartime demands for whale oil increased, but seamen of the whaling fleet were liable for impressment, and whaleships owners found government service more profitable. Numbers varied also with changes in the bounty...*



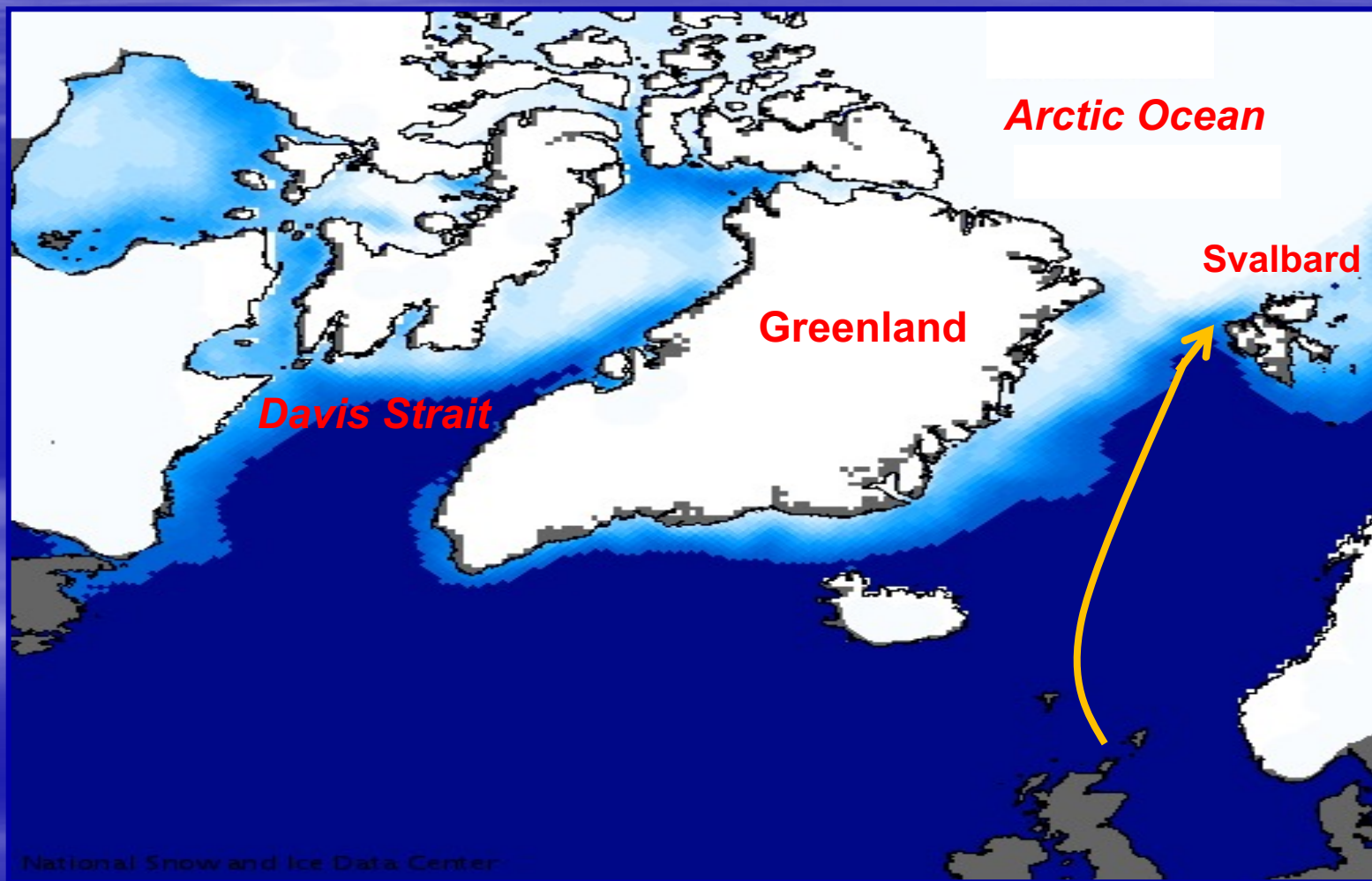
*Whalers operating in Arctic seas immediate north and north-west of Britain were following the annual northward migration of whales as the ice receded.*



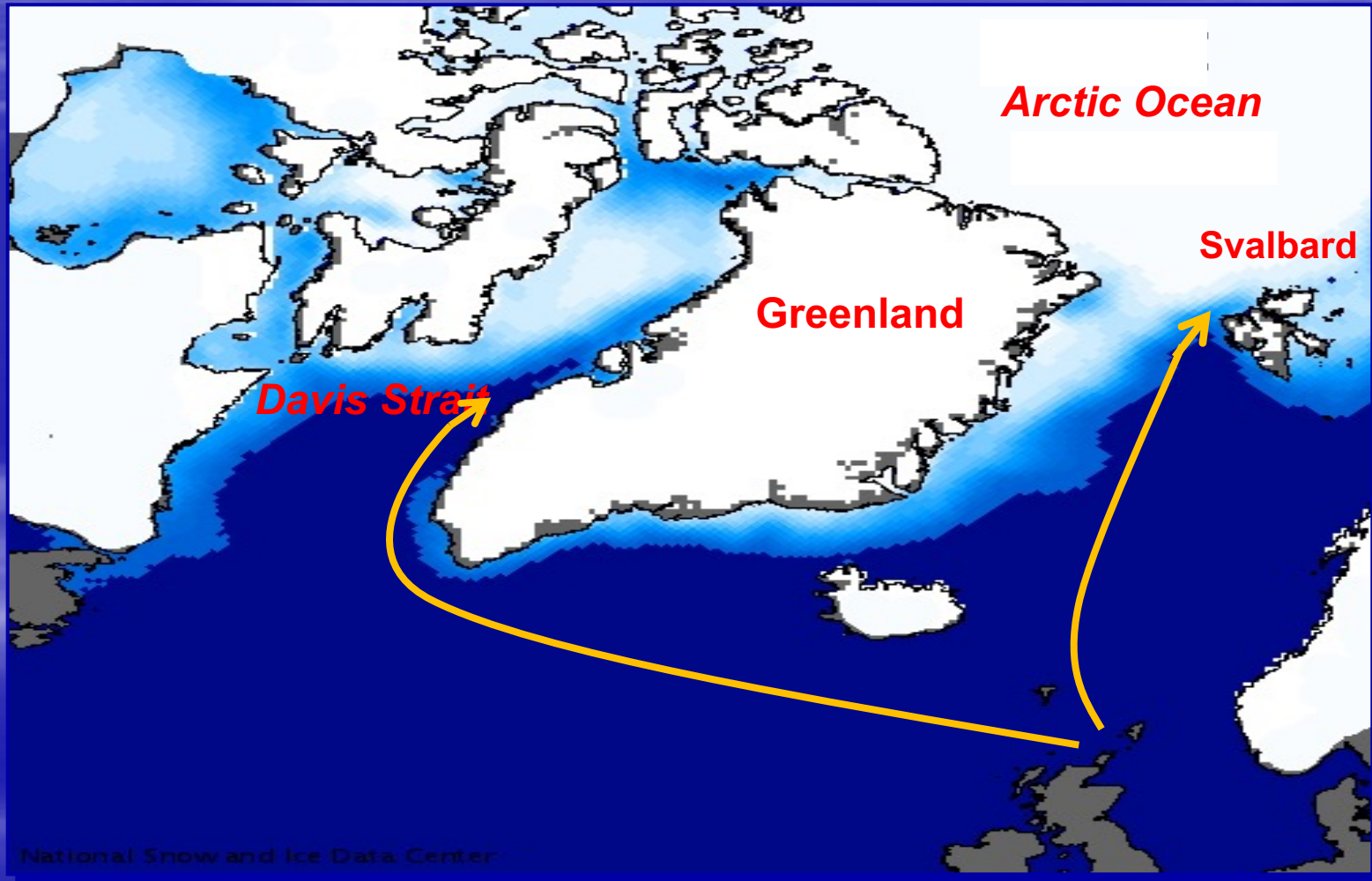
*They hunted the Greenland bowhead whale Balaena mysticetus, up to 20m long and weighing c. 60 tonnes.*



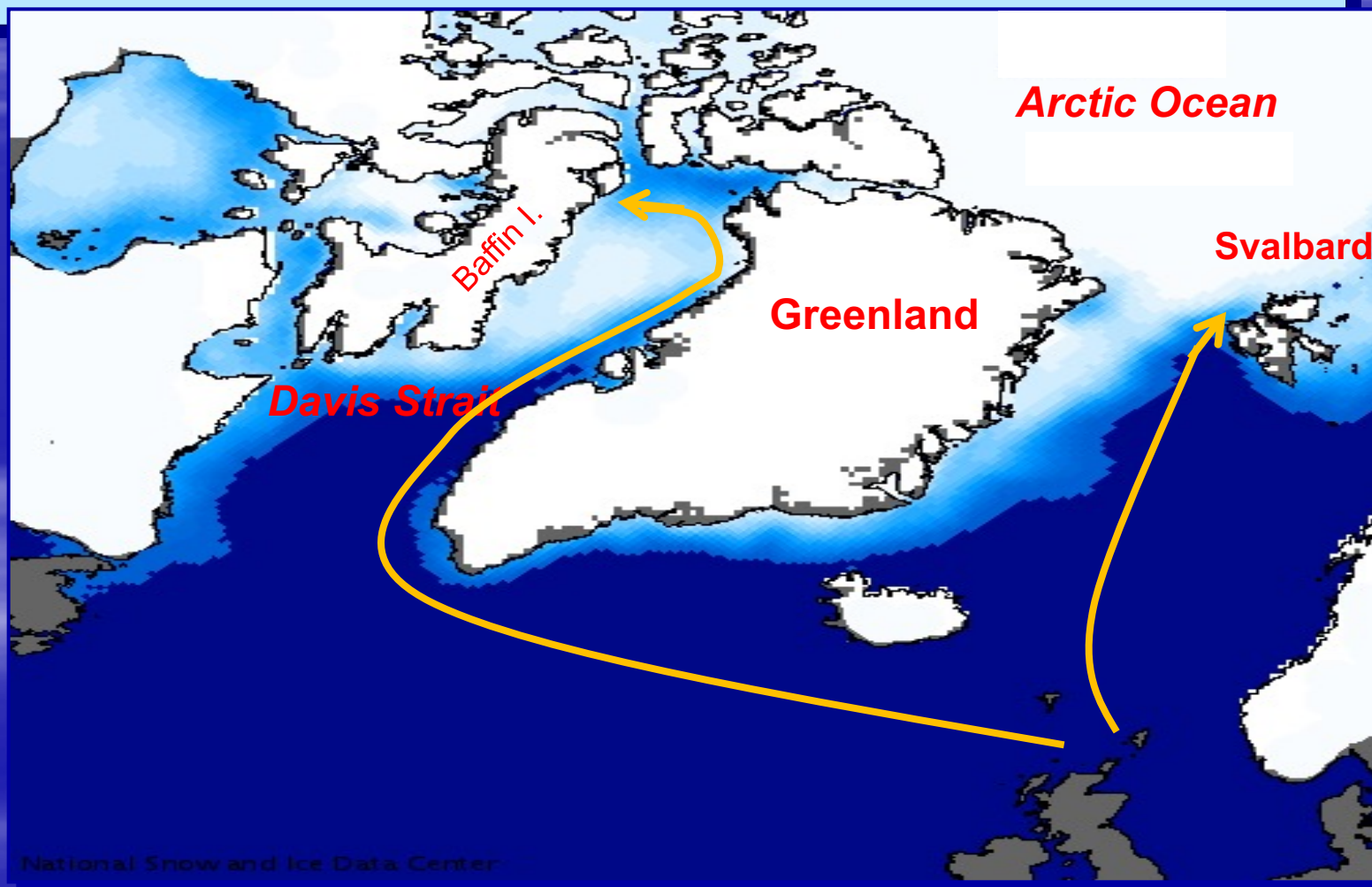
*Initially they worked the waters between Spitsbergen (Svalbard) and Greenland.....*



*... but later made longer journeys to the more dangerous waters of Davis Strait. Costs were higher, but the whales there were fatter and yielded more oil.*



*From c.1814 the most enterprising captains penetrated the loose pack ice north to Baffin Bay, returning south along the Baffin Island coast.*







***'William Lee of Hull'*. John Ward, c. 1831. Hull Maritime Museum.**

**The boats: 22 ft whalers with 6-man crews**



**The crew: Harpooner, boat steerer, line coiler, three oarsmen.**



**The crews: Harpooner, boat steerer, line coiler, three oarsmen.**

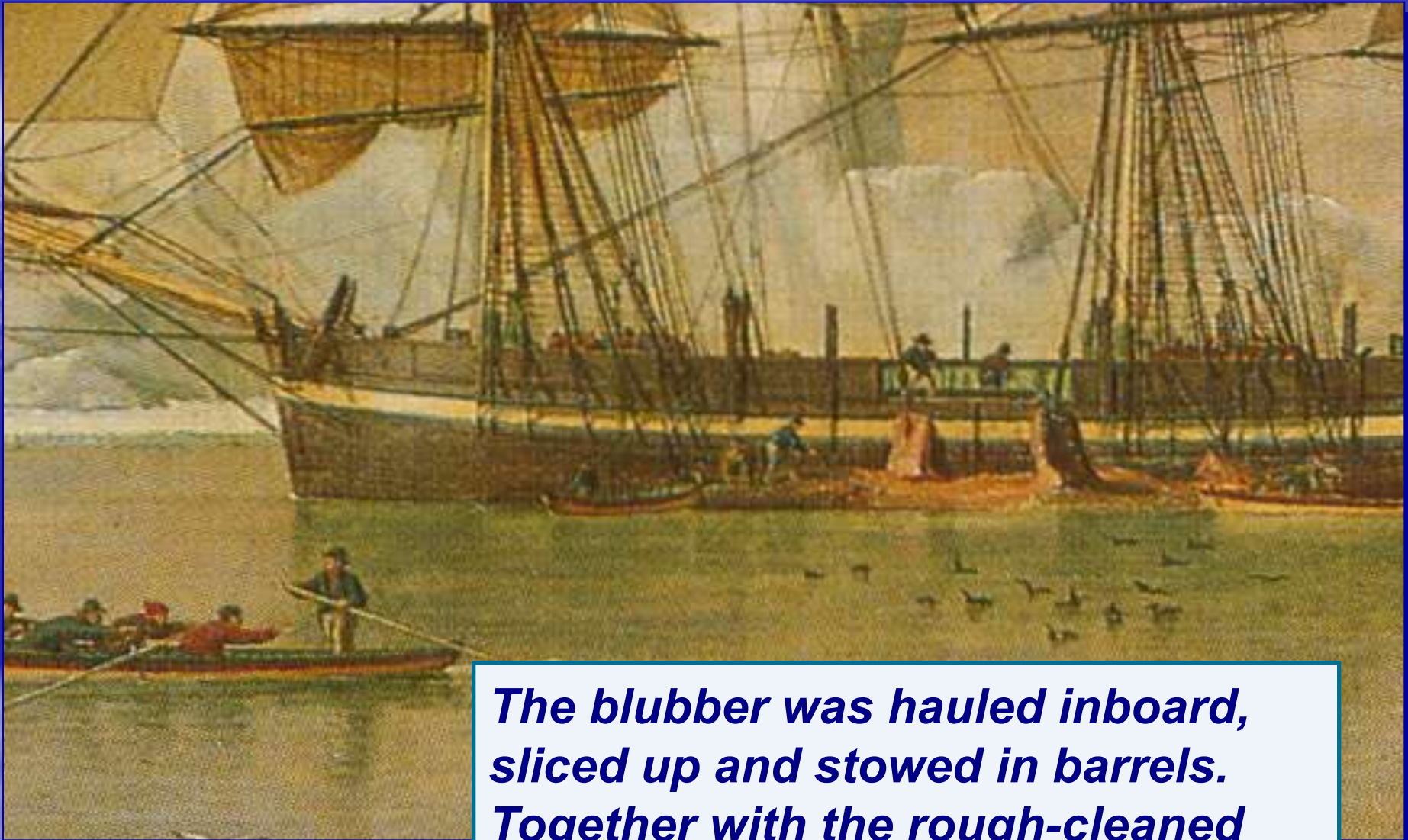




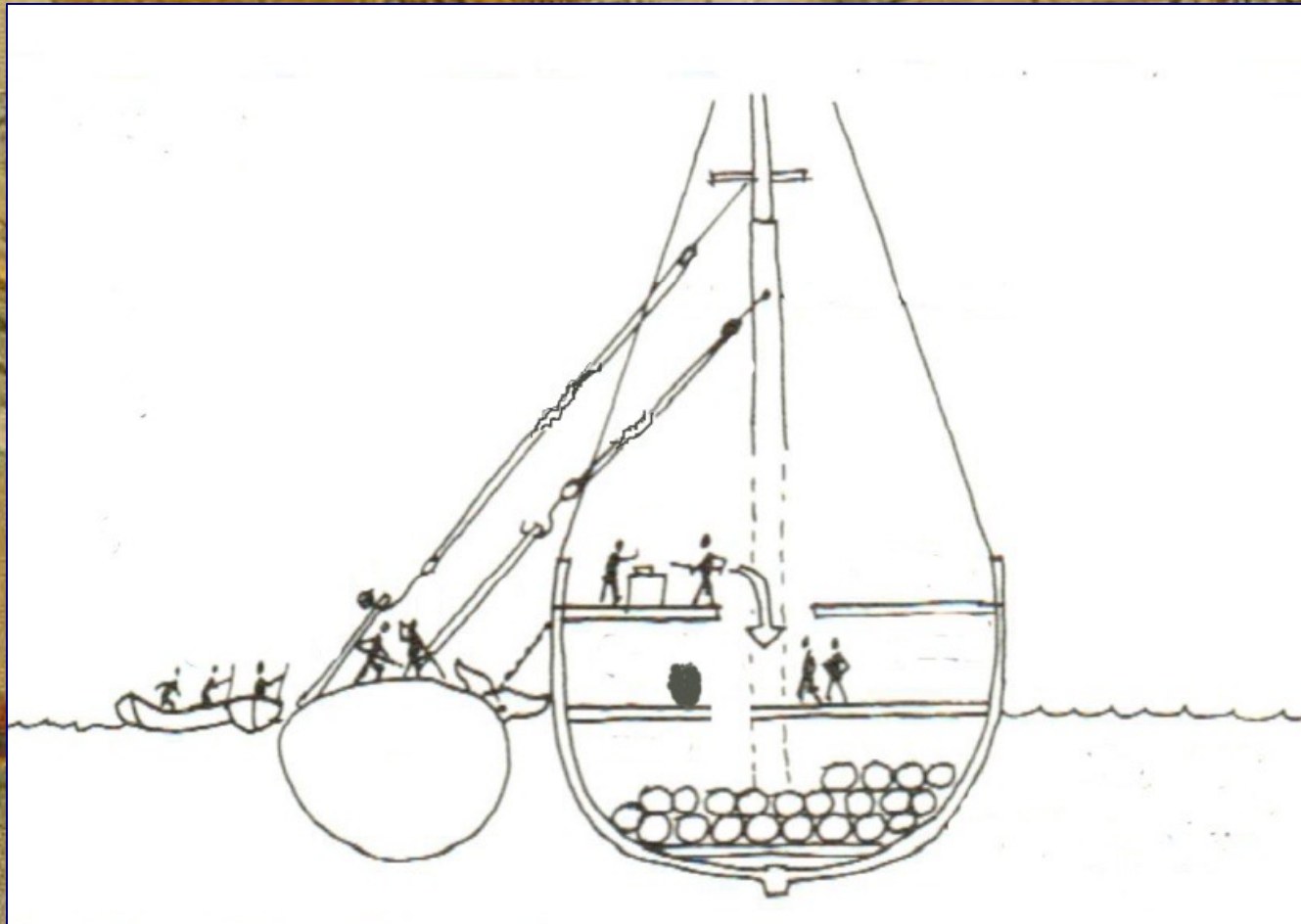
***The products of the hunt were:***

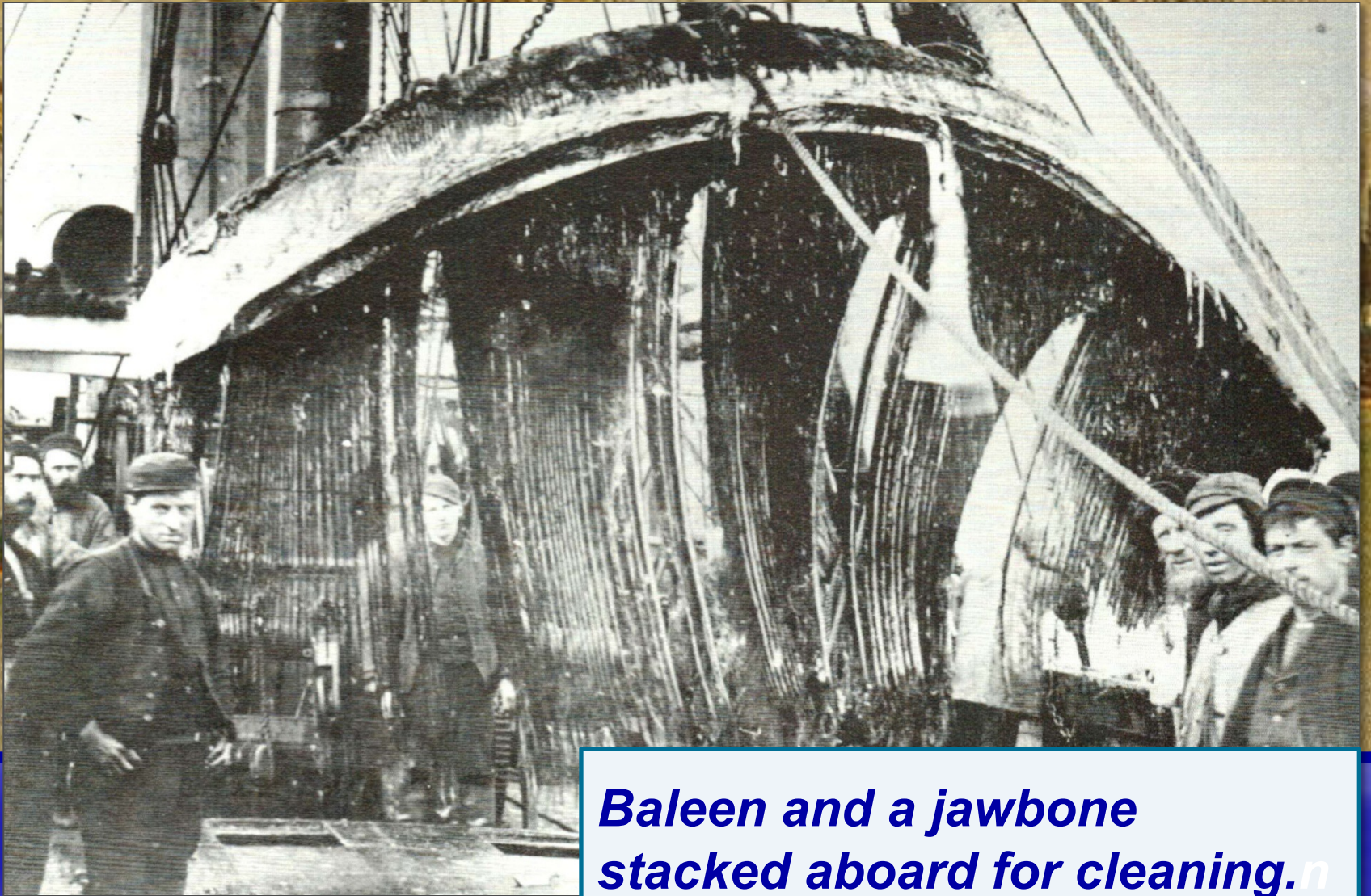
***blubber, yielding oil, for use in lighting, lubrication, leather and cloth processing, etc.:***

***baleen ('whalebone'), used in manufacture of stays for fashion garments, umbrellas, brushes, brooms, upholstery etc.***



*The blubber was hauled inboard, sliced up and stowed in barrels. Together with the rough-cleaned baleen, it was shipped back to port for processing.*





***Baleen and a jawbone stacked aboard for cleaning.***





***An average-sized whale yielded:***

***0.5 tons bone, value***

***c. £ 50.0.0***

***10.8 tons oil, value***

***c. £390.0.0***

***£440.0.0***

***A large whale could double this yield: 5-10 large whales caught in a single voyage would be regarded as a very good catch.***

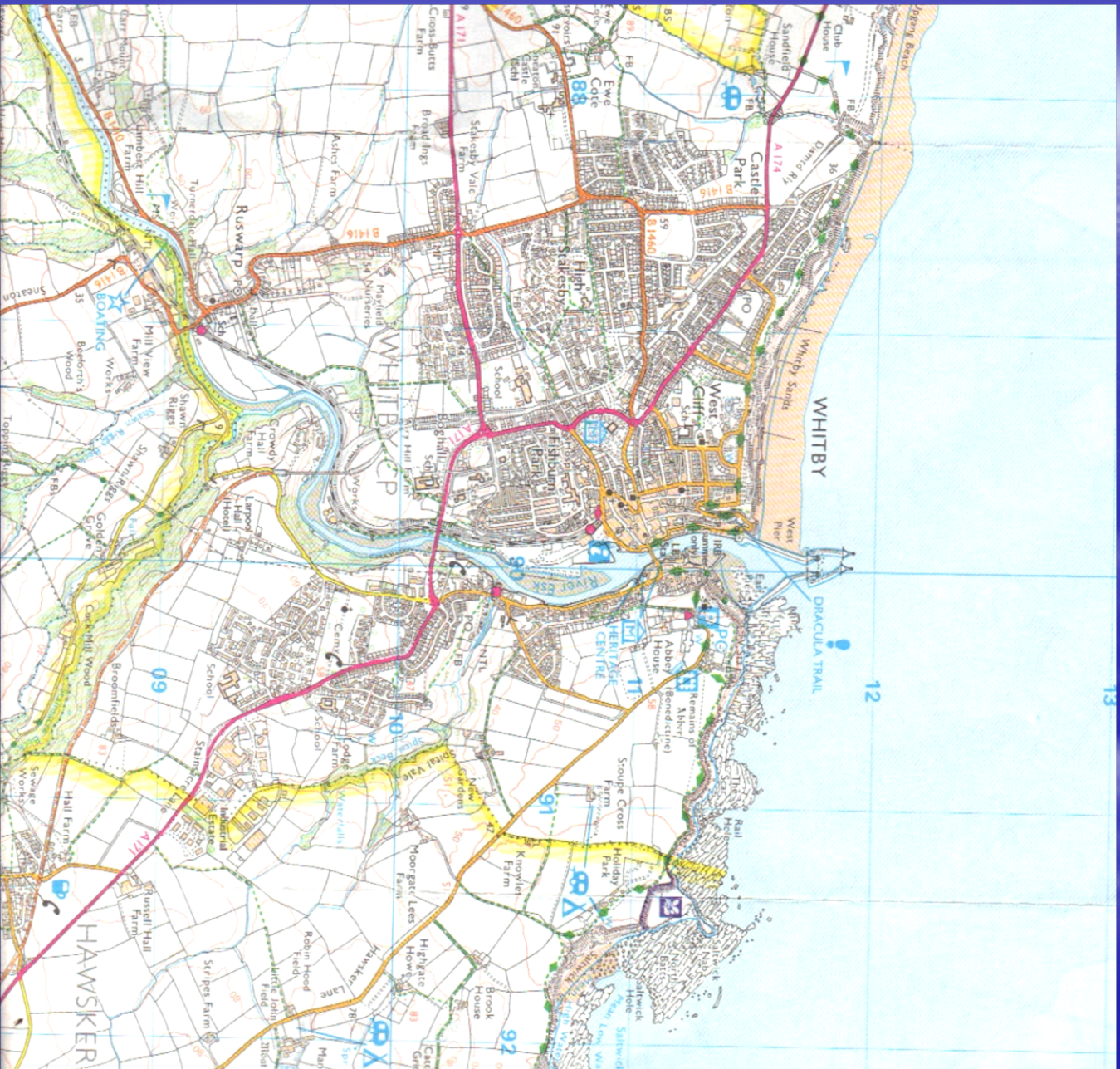
***(£1 in 1800 = c. £80 today)***

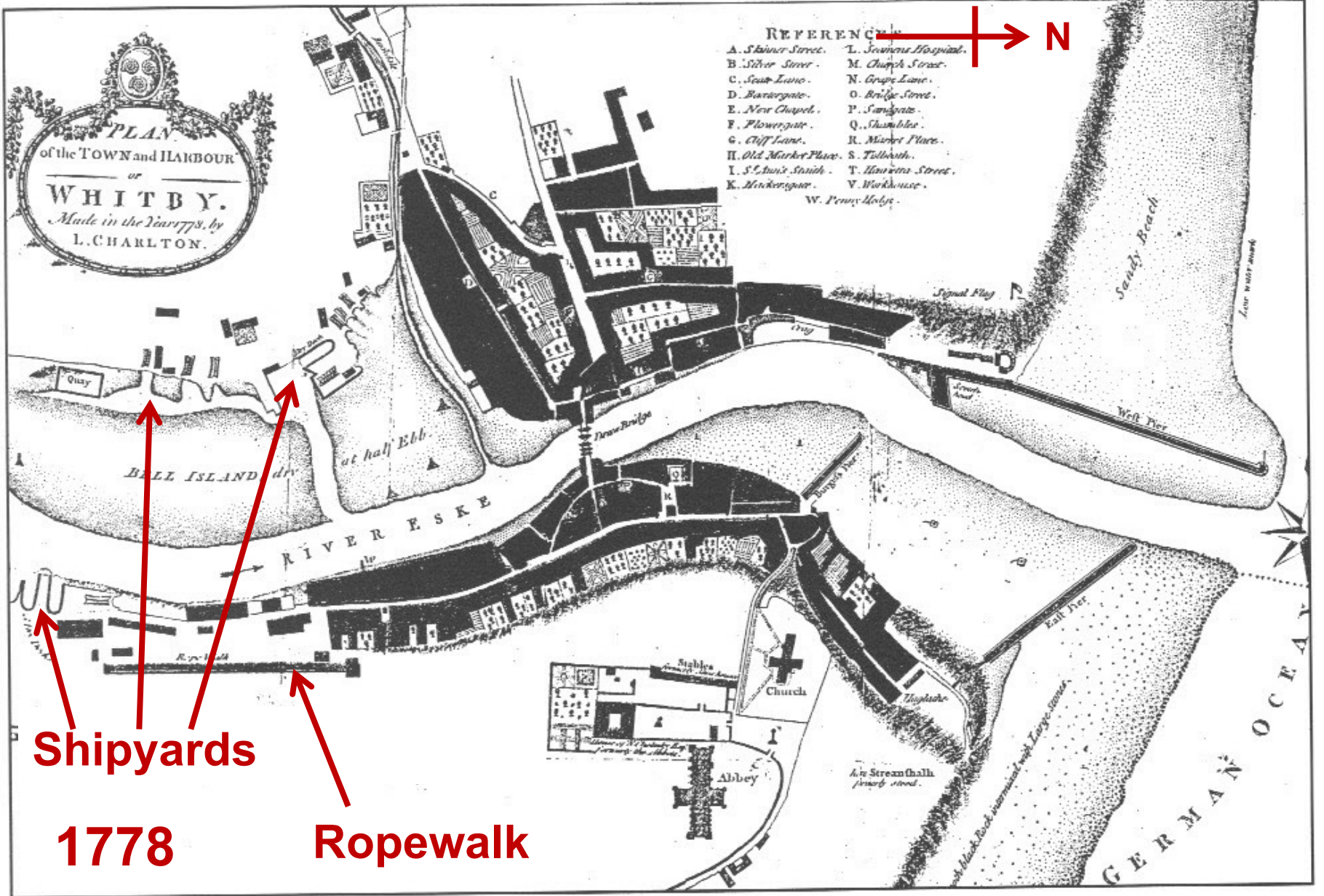














*Greenlanders' cottages*



es.co.uk 01947 603433



*Masters' and owners' mansions*





***Jane, Viewforth and Middleton beset in the Arctic, 1835, by Thomas Binks, 1836. Hull Maritime Museum.***







***Viewforth* (Kirkcaldy) and *Jane* (Hull) drifted south with the ice through winter, returned to their home ports in February.**

***Middleton* (Aberdeen), crushed and sunk. All hands saved.**

