Monday Maritime Matters

Description

Captain Gustavas Conyngham

From Wikipedia:

> A privateer was a private warship authorized by a countryâ€™s government by letters of marque to attack foreign shipping. Strictly, a privateer was only entitled to attack enemy vessels during wartime. However, states often encouraged attacks on opposing powers while at peace, or on neutral vessels during time of war, blurring the line between privateering and piracy.
>
> Privateers were an accepted part of naval warfare from the 16th to the 19th centuries, authorised by all significant naval powers. The costs of commissioning privateers was borne

by investors hoping to gain a significant return from prize money earned from enemy merchants.
[â€¦]

Captain Gustavas Conyngham was born in Ireland in 1744. He came to America with his father and settled in Philadelphia, PA before the Revolutionary War. He became a successful privateer captain. From the CONYNGHAM Association page:

[â€¦]
In 1777, the merchant ship he commanded, CHARMING PEGGY, was seized and interned in Europe. He then sought and obtained a Captainâ€™s Commission in the Continental Navy. Operating primarily in British waters, Captain Conyngham proved to be one of the most successful and audacious naval officers in the American Revolution.

His first naval command was the 100-ton cutter SURPRISE whose mission was attacking British shipping in the English Channel. After taking numerous prizes, he was given command of the cutter REVENGE which was larger and faster than SURPRISE. He continued to harass British shipping, ***taking more than 60 prizes in 18 months***. Each ship captured was sent into a friendly port and the cargo disposed of in the interest of the revolutionary cause. Historians indicate that the proceeds from these prizes contributed materially to the operations of Benjamin Franklin and his American mission in France.

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British influence finally forced the closure of French and Spanish ports to him, so he set sail for the West Indies where he convoyed American shipping in addition to continuing his task of capturing enemy merchant ships.

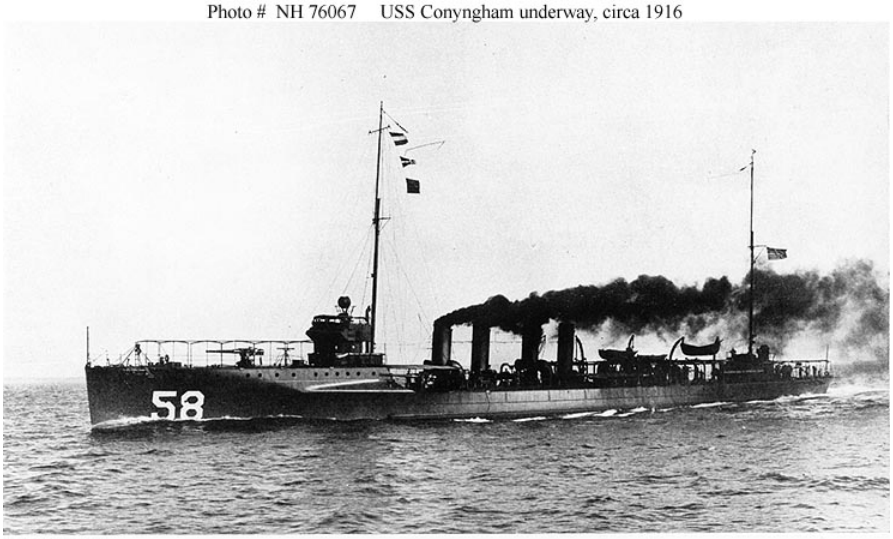
In 1779, Captain Conyngham returned to Philadelphia, but on his next cruise he was captured and taken prisoner as a privateer. He was interned first in New York and then in London, from where he escaped only to be recaptured while returning to America in 1780. Again, he escaped and was in France, preparing to cruise against the British, when the war ended.

Captain Conyngham returned to the merchant service and commanded the armed brig MARIA during the Quasi-War with France. Later, as a member of the common council of Philadelphia, he assisted in the defense of the city during the War of 1812. Captain Conyngham died on 27 March, 1819 and is buried in St. Peterâ€™s Churchyard in Philadelphia.

Showing how the logistical needs of your enemy can handsomely fund your resistance obviously became a specialty for Captain Conyngham. Consider his first voyage on a 100 ton vessel, harassing British shipping right under the noses of His Royal Majestyâ€™s finest ships and crews. Guts. Lots of them. Oh, and â€œPrize crewsâ€• come from your own hands on deck and shipâ€™s officersâ€¦leaving you and the prize ships underhanded. Yet, it appears he made due somehow, probably had frequent port call credits built up in France and our eastern seaboardâ€¦.

For his daring exploits and contribution to our Nationâ€™s first war, three ships have been named for Gustavas Conyngham:

Photo # NH 76067 USS Conyngham underway, circa 1916



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U.S.S. CONYNGHAM, A RECENT DESTROYER, IS A 310-FOOT VESSEL OF 1,090 TONS DISPLACEMENT. SHE IS AN OIL BURNER WITH TURBINE ENGINES AND CAN STEAM 29.6 KNOTS. SHE WAS NAMED FOR GUSTAVUS CONYNGHAM, A DISTINGUISHED PRIVATEER CAPTAIN OF THE REVOLUTION.

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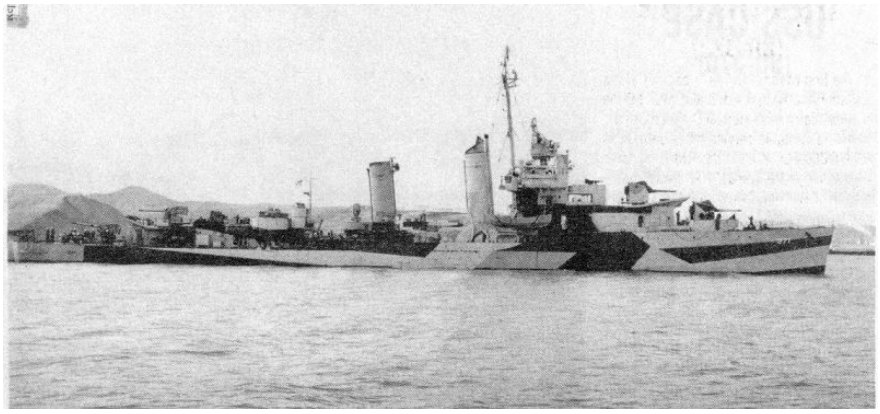
DD-58

A Tucker Class Destroyer, the first USS CONYNGHAM was commissioned in January, 1916 and saw action in WWI, protecting shipping and conducting anti-submarine duties. Decommissioned in 1922.



DD-371

The second USS CONYNGHAM was also a destroyer, this time of the Mahan Class. Commissioned 4 November, 1936, patrolled in the Atlantic and Med, then was sent to the Pacific Fleet. She was in Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. She became a veteran of many famous battles, being assigned aircraft carrier screening duties. Present at Midway, the Battle of Santa Cruz and Gadalcanal. Later in WWII, CONYNGHAM escorted battleships during the invasions in the Marina Islands and was also in the action in the Philippines off Leyte Gulf.She was used as a test target for â€œOperation Crossroadsâ€• at Bikini Atoll in 1946 and was later sunk in 1948.

DDG-17

The third USS CONYNGHAM was a guided missile destroyer of the Charles F. Adams Class. Commissioned 13 June, 1963. Making 15 Med deployments, she spent her career in the Atlantic Fleet. Present to help evacuated Americans from Cypress in 1964 and 1974, she also was present in the Med for the Yom-Kippur War in 1973 and helped evacuate Beruit in 1976. She was at Grenada in 1983, and later did numerous drug interdiction patrols.In 1987, USS CONYNGHAM was the second ship to arrive after the USS STARK (FFG-31) was hit by two Iraqi Exocet missiles. CONYNGHAM remained nearby, providing men and supplies to help the damage control efforts to save STARK. I discussed some of my remembrances of that day in this post, which, was found by the then Executive Officer of CONYNGHAM, who left a comment.USS CONYNGHAM (DDG-17) was decommissioned 20 October, 1990, and later sold for scrap.

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I sailed in company with USS CONYNGHAM (DDG-17), and my neighbor across the hall at my first apartment, ENS Tom Brubaker, was an officer aboard her. They certainly were a can do ship, with a hard charging captain. From my vantage point on the â€œfat ship,â€• I recalled them departing our starbaord side, having just taken three rigs (two fuel, one stores) and within 20 minutes announcing they were ready to take the VERTREP (helicopter delivered vertical replenishment) deliveries. It looked like an antâ€™s nest of frenzied activity over there, but they had the â€œgit â€˜er doneâ€• mentality working for them, long before we had heard of Larry the Cable Guy. We often commiserated together about the cost of such a reputation on the crew, but he lived and went on to a career as a civil engineer for the Navy, and I believe he ended up with the SEABEEs. We sailed on a deployment to the Med in 1978, which had both our ships in the Med when the Shah of Iran was overthrown. The USS CONYNGHAM (DDG-17) was also discussed in my post about breakaway music last year.

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