



# The London Gazette

## EXTRAORDINARY.

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St. James's, June 8, 1781.

**E**XTRACT of a Letter from Com-  
modore George Johnstone to the  
Earl of Hillsborough, One of His  
Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State,  
dated Romney, in Port Praya Road, in  
the Island of St. Jago, April 30, 1781,  
brought by Captain Lindsey, of the  
Porto Sloop of War.

MY LORD,

ON the 16th of April, at Half past Nine  
o'Clock in the Morning, being at Anchor  
in Port Praya in the Island of St. Jago, with the  
Squadron of His Majesty's Ships under my Com-  
mand, which are named in the Margin, together  
with the East-India Ships, Transports, and Victual-  
lers, who sailed with us from England, the Isis  
(which Ship lay the farthest to Leeward) made the  
Signal for seeing Eleven Sail in the Offing, towards  
the N. E.

I was then absent in a Boat, giving Directions  
for moving some Ships which had driven too near  
each other.

As soon as I saw the Signal for so many strange  
Ships, I instantly returned on Board the Romney,  
and made the Signal for all Persons to come from  
the Shore, and to repair on Board their respective  
Ships, having at that Time not less than 1500 Per-  
sons absent from the Fleet, who were employed in  
watering, fishing, and embarking live Cattle, with  
other Occupations necessary to the Dispatch in re-  
fitting so many Ships, besides a Number of the Of-  
ficers and Troops who were taking the Recreation  
of the Shore.

As soon as this Signal was made, and enforced by  
the repeated Firing of Guns, and after a Boat had  
been dispatched to the Shore, to give more Expedition  
and Effect to the Embarkation, a Signal was made  
to unmoor, and another to prepare for Battle.

I went on Board the Isis, to make my Observa-  
tions on the strange Ships, as they could only be  
seen from that Ship, on Account of the East Point  
of Land which intervened.

From the Isis I plainly discovered Five large Ships  
of the Line, and several smaller Ships, standing in  
for the Land; the large Ships being separated from  
the Convoy, and making Signals by superior and  
inferior Flags, which plainly denoted that they  
were French.

Upon this I returned on Board the Romney, call-  
ing to the East-India Ships, as I passed and repassed,  
to prepare for Battle; for most of them were as yet  
heedless of the Signals which had been made.

At a Quarter before Eleven o'Clock the strange  
Ships appeared, coming round the East Point of

Land, drawn up in a Line, and leading into the  
Bay. His Majesty's Ships of War (excepting as to  
the People who were absent on Shore) were by this  
Time prepared to receive the Enemy, if they should  
offer any Insult.

We plainly perceived they intended an Attack  
by the Springs which were passed to their Cables  
along the Outside of the Ships; and we knew the  
final Regard which the French usually pay to the  
Laws of Nations, when they are possessed of a su-  
perior Force, or find it convenient to dispense with  
such Obligations, and in this our Expectations were  
not disappointed; for with much Courage and  
seeming Determination the French Commodore led  
on within Two Cables Length of the Monmouth,  
Jupiter, and Hero, passing the Diana, Terror Bomb;  
and Infernal Fire-Ship, who lay without the Rest of  
the Ships; here he hoisted his Broad Pendant, and  
displayed the French Colours; he then hauled up  
his Courses, and fired Two Shot at the Isis from his  
Larboard Bow as he luffed up; and immediately after  
permitting his Ship to shoot up in the Wind, as far  
as the Force with which the Ship was sailing enabled  
her, he dropt his Anchor a-breast of the Monmouth,  
and began to fire away among the Ships as fast as  
he could discharge and load; his Sails, however,  
were still flying about in great Confusion, so that  
his Spring on the Cable did not hold when the Ship  
was checked to bring up, and he drove a-breast of  
the Hero.

After the Two Guns mentioned above had been  
discharged with Shot, the Fire from His Majesty's  
Ships opened upon the Enemy with great Power  
and Effect.

The next French Ship which followed their  
Commodore anchored a-head of him; the Third  
endeavoured to pass through for the Romney; but  
being unable to weather the different Ships, he an-  
chored a-stern of his Commodore, and continued  
there for a short Space, driving about with his Sails  
loose, until he boarded the Fortitude and Hinchin-  
brook East-India Ships, and then went to Sea. The  
Fourth Ship run on different Lines, luffing and bear-  
ing up as he passed among the Skirt of our Ships,  
and firing and receiving Fire as he sailed along, but  
seemingly in great Confusion also; and at last, with  
much Difficulty, he wore clear of the Reef on the  
West Point without us.

The Fifth Ship run among the Merchant Ves-  
sels also, firing at all, and attempting to board Two  
or Three as he passed along, without Success.

In a Quarter of an Hour after the First Gun,  
several of our East-India Ships had recovered the  
Alarm, and were firing at the Enemy, and some of  
them in well directed Lines; Two or Three how-  
ever had struck their Colours, and thrown the Com-  
pany's Packets over Board, and others prudently  
put to Sea.

The

The Romney could only fire in Two Openings, and this under a Precision which was cautiously observed; neither could she veer away Cable to open a larger Space, as the Jason lay right a Stern of her. Seeing the Romney was like to have little Share in the Action, after the Fourth Ship had passed her, I ordered the Barge to be manned, to go on Board the Hero. General Meadows and Captain Saltern insisted they should accompany me, with a Degree of Generosity and good Humour which I could not resist. It is pleasant to be near the General at all Times, but on the Day of Battle that Satisfaction is felt in a peculiar Degree. We were received by Captain Hawker with as cheerful and affable Civility as if we had come to Dinner, while the Hero kept up a constant, awful, heavy Discharge of Artillery.

The Action bordered upon a Surprize, and the Nature of the Service in which we were engaged rendered it liable to much Confusion; yet upon the Whole, until the Enemy were beat off, I saw nothing on our Part but steady, cool, determined Valour.

Captain Alms, of the Monmouth, kept up a well-directed Fire.

Captain Pasley had worked hard from the Beginning of the Business, and had got a Spring on his Cable, by which Effort every Shot told from the Jupiter.

The French Commodore now found his Situation too hot, and he cut his Cable in Three Quarters of an Hour, and went away through the Ships, as his Second a-stern had done before him; the other a-head was now left behind, an Object to be fired at by all the Ships in our Fleet, who could get Guns to bear upon him. In this Situation he remained for Fifteen Minutes, hardly firing a Gun during the whole Time: Such a Spectacle of Distress I never before beheld.

I am satisfied myself he struck his Colours, and that they were not merely shot away, as some alledge; and this I believe, because different Ships thought he struck at the same Time; but it was impossible to get all the Ships to cease firing at once; and One Gun being aftwards discharged from the Enemy's Ship, the Firing began again even from such of our Ships as had left off.

Whether his Cable was shot away, or he cut the Cable, I cannot say, but off the Ship went round upon the Heel, her Stern falling close to the Broad-side of the Isis; her Masts were tottering; her Yards were hanging different Ways; her Sails were flying about in Rags, and full of Holes. First fell the Mizzen-mast, next went the Main-mast, and lastly the Fore-mast and outer End of the Bow-sprit tumbled in the Water.

I instantly returned to the Romney, and made the Signal for all Captains, and after hearing the Condition of every Ship, I directed the Men of War to cut and slip as fast as they could get to Sea, to follow up the Victory, with Orders to make any India Ships who lay in their Way to cut their Cables also, that they might not be impeded.

I ordered the Merchant Ships to lie fast and repair their Damages, until we joined them again.

As soon as the Jason was out of the Way, the Romney was call'd by a Spring on the Cable, and she went out to Sea under the Acclamations of the whole Fleet.

The Jupiter instantly followed, and we run between our scattered Ships and the Enemy. Perceiving neither the Isis nor Diana making any Signs to follow, though both of them lay in clear Births for so doing, their several Signals were made. The

Diana answered, and soon after followed; but although Gun after Gun was fired to enforce the Signal to call out the Isis, she still remained without any Signs of Obedience to my Signal then Abroad. At last the Hero came under our Stern, with a Message from Captain Sutton, saying that his Masts and Yards, and Sails and Rigging, were so wounded, that he could not come out without repairing them, but that he would follow as fast as he could.

My Answer was, all this is no Excuse for disobeying my positive Orders; besides, I think his Damages immaterial to a Man of any Resources.

Captain Sutton's Signal was therefore again enforced by another Gun; he then hoisted his Answering Flag, and came out, after Three Hours Delay.

All the Ships being now come out, the Signal was made to form the Line a-head on the Larboard Tack. The French Ships had before this collected and taken the disabled Ship in Tow, and they had raised a Stump forward, and fixed a Sail upon it, with which they had wore the Hulk, and put before the Wind in a Line of Battle a-breast, and sent off their Convoy under all the Sail they could get.

When the Isis joined us she run under our Stern, and repeated an Account of her Distress and her Damages, particularly the Want of a Mizzen-top-sail-yard, which I told the Captain was nothing at all.

The Signal was now made to bear up in a Line of Battle a-breast. At that Instant the Isis lost her Fore-top-mast above the Top-sail-yard, which Yard was not injured by the Fall, nor was the Sail hurt, or any other Damage sustained, to prevent the Ship from working, the Fore-top-sail being clove reefed and set.

I immediately shortened Sail to give Time to the Isis to clear the Wreck, which was done in Half an Hour or Forty Minutes.

This increased our Distance from the Enemy. As soon as I saw the Isis could make Sail, I bore up and set the Fore-sail, and made the Signal for the Line a-breast. When we came near the Enemy, I found the Isis and Monmouth had dropt astern between Two and Three Miles, though both of them sail much better than the Romney: Their Signals were therefore made to call them to their Stations; the Monmouth immediately answered, and made Sail accordingly, but the Isis still kept behind.

By these various Obstructions and Delays, added to a strong Lee Current, the Enemy had drawn us far to Leeward of St. Jago. The Sun was set; the Sea had increased; I could not propose a decisive Action in the Night. If I followed until Day-light, my Prospects were great and tempting; but I must then determine to leave my Convoy in Distress, and separate from the Troops, without any fixed Determination concerning them or their Destination; and I must also have relinquished the Object of the present Expedition; because, after getting so far to Leeward that we could not fetch the Islands of Bravo or Fogo, it is a well-known Fact that no Ship can beat up against the N. E. Winds and the S. W. Currents which always prevail here, much less after such an Action as must be expected.

On the other Hand, if the principal Force of the Enemy should arrive before us at the Place of our Destination, it might prove equally fatal to the Object of the Expedition.

The Dilemma was great indeed, and I felt the cruel Situation with an Anguish which I never before experienced; but after maturely weighing the Subject in all its Consequences with those Persons

on whose Judgment I have most Confidence, I thought myself bound to return to join the Ships under my Protection, and to pursue the Object of the Expedition, it being most probable that the Enemy must either send off Two of their disabled Ships of War to the West Indies, in which Case I shall have a superior Naval Force, or they must touch at the Brazils for Water and Repairs; and perhaps they will be obliged to do both; in either of which Cases we shall have a great Advantage by the preceding Action.

Next Day we retook the Hinchinbrook East India Ship, with 25 Frenchmen on Board; and I learn from them that the Squadron who attacked us was composed of

Le Heros, 74, M. de Suffrein, Brigadier des Armés, Grand Commander de Malte.

L'Annibal, 74, M. de Tremigon, Capitaine de Vaisseau.

L'Artesien, 64, M. de Cardillac, Chevalier de Malthe.

Le Sphynx, 64, M. de Duchillou, Capitaine de Vaisseau.

Le Vengeur, 64, M. le Chevalier de Forbin, Capitaine de Vaisseau.

La Fortitude, 16, Corvette.

M. de Castries, Commandant de l'Armée de Terre.

Regiment de Pondicherry, deux Batalions.

Detachement du Regiment d'Austrasie.

4 Vaisseaux des Indes, viz.

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Le Brisson,       | } et cinq Vaisseaux de transport Armée en Flute;—all doubled with Copper. |
| 2. Les Trois Amis,   |   |
| 3. L'Isle de France; |   |
| 4. Pondicherry;      |   |

The Hannibal was the Ship which was dismasted; the Hero led in, and suffered Damages next in Proportion to the Hannibal; the Artesien, Sphynx, and Vengeur came in according as they are named, but the last three did not receive much Injury. The Captain of the Artesien, to which Ship the Prisoners belong, was killed by a Grape Shot on the Shoulder.

They informed me that they sailed from Brest the 22d of March, with Mons. le Grafs and Twenty Sail of the Line, Three of which are of Three Decks, bound to Martinique, besides the Sagittaire Frigate of Fifty Guns, bound to North America.

That they separated off Madeira, and their Purpose was to attack the Squadron under my Command, wherever they could find it, of which they had received a correct List at Brest: That the Artesien first discovered us lying in the Road, and tacked towards Monsieur Suffrein to acquaint him of it; that he instantly ordered them to prepare for the Attack; and being asked by Mons. Cardillac the Captain of the Artesien, what they should do if the Portuguese Forts should fire upon them? He desired them to fire at the Portuguese Forts also.

After an Action of such a Length, in such a Situation, in smooth Water, with large Ships so near each other, it is surprizing to find how few Men have been killed, and what slight Damages His Majesty's Ships have received.

The Monmouth lying within a Cable's Length, had not a Man killed, and only Six wounded.

The Jupiter had Two wounded.

The Isis had Four killed, and Five wounded.

The Romney had Seven wounded; and the other Ships according to the List inclosed.

The Jason and Latham East-India Ships, who lay at the furthest Distance from the Enemy, had 4 killed

and 14 wounded; among the Number of the Killed is Lieutenant Keith of the Jason, a brave and worthy Officer.

Several of the last India Ships have suffered in their Masts, Yards, and Rigging, but nothing that will impede the Voyage, or which cannot be repaired even here with Security.

The Fate of the Infernal Fire-ship, and Terror Bomb, deserves to be particularly related: They had come from the Isle of May Two Days before, and lay to the Eastward, without all the Ships, notwithstanding my Orders in Writing had been strictly given, and punctually communicated, for all the small Ships to anchor within the Rest. The Terror had sprung her Bow-sprit, and was fishing of it, with her Rigging loose, when the Enemy appeared, and one of the Sixty four Gun Ships layed her on Board.

The Terror caught Fire, and the Enemy durst not take Possession of her, though often invited so to do by Captain Wood. She then cut her Cable, and drove to Sea, where she lost her Bow-sprit and Fore-mast.

One of the French Ships again followed her in this miserable Condition, and fired several Shot at the Terror; yet Captain Wood, seeing us preparing to come out, would not strike his Colours, but bravely contrived to set some Stay-sails, and slide off in that shattered Condition.

The Fire-ship went to Sea, and was taken by the Enemy, by what Means I cannot relate; but I have good Reason to believe she was afterwards either abandoned by the Enemy or retaken by the Crew, as the Jupiter saw her next Day to Leeward, and standing towards us, with her distinguishing Vanes and answering Flag Abroad.

The Fortitude India Ship behaved with uncommon Bravery. She was boarded by the Artesien, who fired many Guns into her; several of the Enemy's Crew jumped on Board the Fortitude; yet, in this Situation Captain Jenkinson, of the 98th Regiment, kept up a constant Fire with Small Arms; several of the Enemy were shot on the Shrouds, and Two were forced overboard, and taken up again into the Fortitude, after the two Ships had separated.

The Hinchinbrook was also miserably cut and mangled by the Artesien, before she was taken.

Many of the other India Ships suffered considerable Damages, particularly the Lord North, Ousely and Asia; and the Edward Victualler was nearly sunk and carried out to Sea, though afterwards abandoned.

With great Difficulty, after turning many Days, we recovered this Bay with the Fortitude, and we towed in the Hinchinbrook and Edward.

Every possible Exertion has been used since to repair the various Damages which the Ships had sustained, and the whole Convoy are now as completely refitted as Circumstances will allow; in the Execution of which Service I am chiefly indebted to the ind-fatigable Attention of Captain Pasley, whose Zeal in this, and every other Occasion, I wish may be represented to His Majesty.

To add to our Embarrassments, the Porto Sloop; who joined us that Day we got back, run foul of the Hero, and lost her Fore-mast and Bow-sprit.

I have judged it proper to put Captain Sutton, of the Isis, under an Arrest.

Since writing the above Account, the Infernal Fire-ship has joined us. The Enemy had abandoned her on our Approach, having taken away Captain Darby and Five Seamen, and Nine Soldiers of the 98th Regiment.

Lieutenant Hamilton has been ever since turning up to gain this Port, which shews the Impossibility,

ty of ordering the Convoy if I had followed the Enemy.

The Fire-ship has sustained little or no Damages. We shall sail from this Island To-morrow; and the Porto Sloop will be ready to proceed for England the Day after with these Dispatches.

I am, with the greatest Respect,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient  
and most humble Servant,

GEO. JOHNSTONE.

*List of the Killed and Wounded in the Ships and Vessels under the Command of Commodore Johnstone, in an Action with a French Squadron commanded by Monsieur de Suffrein, on the 16th of April, 1781, in Port Praya Road in the Island of St. Jago.*

- Romney.* 7 Seamen or Petty Officers wounded; 3 Ditto, since dead of their Wounds.  
*Monmouth.* 1 Seaman or Petty Officer, 5 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.  
*Hero.* 2 Seamen or Petty Officers wounded.  
*Yis.* 1 Seaman or Petty Officer, 3 Soldiers or Marines, killed; 4 Seamen or Petty Officers, 1 Soldier or Marine, wounded; 1 Seaman or Petty Officer since dead of his Wounds.  
*Jupiter.* 1 Seaman or Petty Officer, 1 Soldier or Marine, wounded.  
*Jafon.* 2 Seamen or Petty Officers killed; 4 Seamen or Petty Officers, 3 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.  
*Active.* None.  
*Diana.* 3 Seamen or Petty Officers, 3 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.  
*Rattlesnake.* None.  
*Infernal.* 1 Seaman or Petty Officer killed; 2 Seamen or Petty Officers wounded; 4 Seamen or Petty Officers, 9 Soldiers or Marines, taken Prisoners.  
*Terror.* 2 Soldiers or Marines killed; 6 Seamen or Petty Officers wounded.  
*San Carlos.* 3 Seamen or Petty Officers, 3 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.  
*Pandicberry.* 4 Soldiers or Marines killed; 1 Seaman or Petty Officer, 9 Soldiers or Marines, wounded; 1 Soldier or Marine since dead of his Wounds.  
*Royal Charlotte.* 1 Soldier or Marine killed; 1 Seaman or Petty Officer, 3 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.  
*Porpoise.* None.  
*Resolution.* Ditto.  
*Manilla.* Ditto.  
*Elizabeth Bomb Tender.* Ditto.  
*Effex.* 2 Soldiers or Marines killed; 1 Seaman or Petty Officer, 6 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.  
*Lord North.* None.  
*Queen.* 1 Seaman or Petty Officer, 2 Soldiers or Marines, killed; 6 Seamen or Petty Officers, 4 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.  
*Chapman.* None.  
*Latham.* 2 Soldiers or Marines killed; 1 Seaman or Petty Officer, 6 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.

*Hastings.* 1 Seaman or Petty Officer killed; 2 Seamen or Petty Officers wounded.

*Southampton.* None.

*Osterly.* 1 Seaman or Petty Officer killed; 6 Seamen or Petty Officers, 2 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.

*Valentine.* 4 Seamen or Petty Officers wounded.

*Asia.* 3 Ditto wounded.

*Hinchinbrook.* 7 Seamen or Petty Officers killed; 7 Ditto wounded; 7 Ditto taken Prisoners.

*Locko.* 2 Soldiers or Marines killed; 5 Seamen or Petty Officers, 2 Soldiers or Marines, wounded.

*Fortitude.* 2 Seamen or Petty Officers, 2 Soldiers or Marines, killed; 7 Seamen or Petty Officers, 14 Soldiers or Marines, wounded; 3 Ditto since dead of their Wounds.

*Sykes.* None.

*Elizabeth.* Ditto.

*Admiral Keppel.* Ditto.

*Jupiter.* Ditto.

*Prudence.* Ditto.

*Union.* Ditto.

*Edward.* Ditto.

*Nancy.* Ditto.

*Three Sisters.* Ditto.

*Content.* 1 Soldier or Marine wounded.

*Eagle.* None.

*Mirtle.* Ditto.

#### T O T A L.

16 Seamen or Petty Officers killed; 77 Ditto wounded; 4 Ditto since dead of their Wounds; 11 Ditto taken Prisoners.  
20 Soldiers or Marines killed; 63 Ditto wounded; 4 Ditto since dead of their Wounds; 9 Ditto taken Prisoners.

#### OFFICERS killed.

George Keith, First Lieutenant of the *Jafon*.  
Captain Crawford, of the 100th Regiment, on Board the *Osterly East Indiaman*.  
Lieutenant M'Donald, of Ditto, on Board Ditto.  
Lieutenant Griffin, of the 98th Regiment, on Board the *Pondicherry Armed Transport*.  
Lieutenant Morris of Ditto, in a Boat coming from the Shore.  
Henry Roach, Master of the *Porpoise Armed Transport*.  
The Surgeon of the *Osterly East India Ship*.

#### OFFICERS wounded.

Lieutenant Donald Campbell of the *Terror Bomb Vessel*.  
Lieutenant Hind of the 98th Regiment.  
Ensign Scott of Ditto, on Board the *Fortitude East Indiaman*.

#### PRISONER.

Captain Henry D'Esterre Darby, Commander of His Majesty's *Fireship Infernal*, taken Prisoner by the French.

GEO. JOHNSTONE