

The following captures detail the proceedings which took place prior to the capture of the Isle de France.

ADMIRALTY OFFICE, FEBRUARY 12.

Copy of a letter from Vice Admiral Bertie, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels in the Cape of Good Hope, to the Admiralty, dated on board His Majesty's ship the Africaine, St. Paul's, 14th of November, 1810.

Sir—Following the instructions communicated by my letter addressed to you, of the 26th August, I have the honour now to acquaint you, for the information of your Lordships, that having made the necessary dispositions and arrangements previous to my departure from the Cape, I hoisted my flag on board the Niue, and sailed on the 4th ult. in that ship, for the Isle de France. Having made the land on the 28th ult. I proceeded to reconnoitre Port Louis, and thence to Fort Louis, where, having cruised 48 hours, and not falling in with any of the blockading squadron, I proceeded to this anchorage for information of them, where I found lying His Majesty's ship Boadicea, Otter, the Staunch gun-brig, together with His Majesty's ships Africaine and Ceylon, which had been taken and recaptured from the enemy, and the Imperial French frigate La Venus, also captured from the enemy.

The details, copies of which I have the honour to transmit herewith, will fully explain to your Lordships the circumstances of the occupation of the Isle de France, as well as the subsequent unfortunate result of a very gallant attack made on the enemy's ships in Port Louis, with the Sirius, Captain Pym, the Magicienne, Captain Currie, the Iphigenia, Captain Lambert, and the Neride, Captain Willoughby, which ended in the unavoidable destruction of the two former of His Majesty's ships, and the surrender to the enemy of the Iphigenia and Neride, the latter after a glorious resistance, almost unparalleled even in the brilliant annals of the British Navy.

A momentary superiority thus obtained by the enemy, has been promptly and decisively crushed by the united zeal, judgment, perseverance, skill, and intrepidity of Captain Rowley, in His Majesty's ship Boadicea; the value and importance of whose services, long conspicuous and distinguished as they have been, have fully justified the selection and detention of him, as the senior Officer conducting the blockade of this station; and who, in the present instance, almost alone and unsupported, but by the never-failing energy and resources of his active and intelligent mind, under circumstances, as may be easily imagined, of extreme anxiety, mortification, and disappointment, in a few hours not only rescued His Majesty's ships Africaine and Ceylon, but captured also the large frigate possessed by the enemy in these seas, and has thus restored the British naval pre-eminence in this quarter, which his talents have long so successfully contributed to maintain.

Nor can I omit to refer the tribute of joyfully due to the memory of the gallant Corbett, of His Majesty's ship Africaine, whose meritorious eagerness to check the triumph of an exulting enemy impelled him to an unequal contest, in which he nobly fell, defending the cause of that country, to whose fierce his valuable life has been most usefully, most honourably devoted.

Under the pressure of these events, the arrival of the Niue was to be considered as most opportune, as every exertion had been already employed with a view to the equipment of the Africaine and Ceylon, which ships, though severely cut up in the attack and rigging, (the lower masts being unfit for further service,) had fortunately, at the time of their capture, part of their crews on board. Fully concurring in the expediency and the absolute necessity of this measure, the adoption of which, and the carrying into effect with the least delay, is of the most serious importance to the ultimate success of the operation, now ripe for execution, against the Isle of France, and having found it further practicable to equip the Venus in furtherance of this object, I have not hesitated to commission her for the time being, under the name of the Neride, in commemoration of the gallant defence of His Majesty's ship bearing that name, notwithstanding the very many local difficulties and disadvantages with which we have necessarily had to contend in the execution of these plans. The squadron, now on the eve of sailing from these Roads, consisting of the ships named in the margin, exhibits a striking, and on every gratifying instance, of what may be effected by British exertion and British perseverance.

Among other vessels captured by the enemy, I regret to mention the Ceylon and Wyndham, Honourable East India Company's ships, and the Ranger transport, from the Cape, having on board provisions and stores for the squadron; I am happy to add, that the Wyndham has since been retaken, and is arrived here, and the Venus was taken to have on board the greater part of the stores and provisions taken in the Ranger. Both of which circumstances have been particularly advantageous, the lower masts of the Wyndham having been applied to the Africaine, and the retaking of the squadron being, by means of the provisions found in the Venus, completed to four months.

It is further of still greater moment that I should inform you, for the information of your Lordships, that Major General Abercromby, who with his whole Staff was embarked in the Ceylon, and who is entrusted with the command of the expedition against the Isle of France, was recaptured in that ship.

As the squadron will proceed to sea in a few days, after the closing these dispatches, I trust I shall find executed to their Lordships, in deference to a future opportunity the several returns and details of the squadron, as well as a statement depending of work performed in each department, which, in the short space of three weeks, through the unremitting and unwearied exertions that have been displayed, has been such as to complete the equipment of the squadron, and to render the whole thoroughly effective.

I have the honour to be, &c. (Signed) A. BERTIE.

His Majesty's ship Boadicea, St. Paul's, Road, Isle of Bourbon, 21st Sept. 1810.

Sir—I had the honour to transmit to you on the 31st of August, Captain Pym's report of a gallant and successful attack by his boats on the Isle de la Paiffe, and I beg leave to second his recommendation of Lieutenants Chads and Waring, for their conduct on that occasion. Under the same cover, I also transmitted Captain Pym's detail of his subsequent operations at Grande Port. The urgency of the service we were engaged in, prevented me from entering more minutely into particulars; the Boadicea was then under weigh, proceeding to Grande Port, in hopes of relieving the Iphigenia, the only frigate left to me by the disasters which had befallen our squadron. It is now my duty to give you a more detailed account of our operations.

I had acquainted you with the intentions of Col Keating, in concert with myself, to establish a strong military post at Flat Island, after the occupation of the de la Paiffe. For this purpose the Bombay Merchant transport was prepared with water and provisions flanked with the supply of both places; and the flank battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Aulon, with a proportion of artillery, were in readiness to embark, when, on the evening of the 22d of August, by the arrival of the Wyndham recaptured Indians, I learned that the British and Marine French frigates, Victor corvette, and Ceylon captured Indianan, had forced the passage by the de la Paiffe into Grande Port, and that it was Captain Pym's intention to attack there.

Two of the flank companies and a detachment of artillery were immediately embarked on board the Boadicea; the transport with the remainder of the force were directed to follow as expeditiously as possible. From baffling winds our passage was very tedious; on the morning of the 27th we picked up a boat with an officer and fourteen men dispatched with letters from Captain Pym and Lambert, which I transmitted to you; these made me acquainted with the unfortunate result of the attack on the de la Paiffe; next morning at day-light I made the de la Paiffe, and perceived two of the enemy's frigates close off the point; we stood nearly within gunshot of one of these, and within five or six miles of the de la Paiffe, and when the Iphigenia was anchored, making signals to her, but a third sail, which we afterwards learned was the Africa frigate, appearing to windward, I thought it prudent to tack off, and was immediately chased by the French squadron of three of the Venus, from her superiority of sailing, might have brought us to action, but appeared to wait for her consort (La Mancha).

Towards day-break they hauled off; but as I judged it advisable to draw them down as far as possible from their station, in order to give the transport an opportunity to favour the Iphigenia, and favour the escape of both, I again stood towards the French frigates, when they resumed their chase, and continued it until our arrival off St. Denis. From thence I immediately dispatched an express to Captain Tomkinson to move with his ship's company on board the Wyndham, and join me off the Island, the Otter being dismantled for leaving down.

On my arrival off St. Paul's, I found that Captain Tomkinson, considering the Wyndham unfit for immediate service, had declined the command of her; in consequence of which Captain Lyons had, with the most indefatigable exertions, fitted the Emma transport with her guns, and joined me off the Port.

With the Emma in company, I refitted my route towards the Isle de France; but finding that she could not keep company, I detached her to windward from Round Island to Rodriguez, in order to give notice to any of our ships she might meet, of the comparative rate of our naval force, and that of the enemy's. I then proceeded with the Boadicea off the de la Paiffe, and on our arrival there found the Iphigenia gone, and four ships at anchor in Grande Port; these we have since learned were the Bellone, Miereux, Neride, and Ceylon (East India ship), the first with two gallant yards across, sails bent, and apparently ready for sea; the second with jury top-masts; and the third with jury rig and mizen-masts. I have also understood from the prisoners lately taken in the Venus, that they were shortly to proceed round to Port Louis, and that the slaughter on board of them had been very great.

I have the honour to be, &c. (Signed) JOSHUA ROWLEY.

Vice Admiral Bertie, &c. &c.

His Majesty's ship Boadicea, St. Paul's Road, Isle of Bourbon, 21st Sept. 1810.

Sir—I weighed anchor from the Bay of St. Paul's on the morning of the 12th of September, in company with the Otter sloop and Staunch gun-brig, in order to attack two of the enemy's frigates, the Africa and Iphigenia, who were in the offing

to windward. When under weigh, I received an intimation from Colonel Keating that an English frigate was said to have arrived at St. Denis, and as we stood off clear of the bay, I had the satisfaction of recognizing the Africaine, who joined with me in the chase. By superior sailing, and having the gale breeze at the enemy's back, we were enabled to close with them before dark, and led by her signals the Boadicea was gaining fast upon them, when at 3 A. M. a heavy firing was observed between the frigates, at that time being four and five miles ahead of the Boadicea. I concluded that it was Captain Corbett's intention merely to attempt crippling the enemy; but unfortunately at this moment the winds became light and variable, and the Africaine becoming unmanageable under the fire of both ships (one in a most destructive raking position), after a mull of gallant, though unequal combat, was obliged to surrender, and the firing ceased at about fifteen minutes after four in the morning. Day dawned, and showed us the result; the enemy appeared to have suffered little; the Africaine was in their possession, with no apparent loss, but that of the mizen top-mast; such a state did not appear to justify my commencing an attack on a force so much superior, particularly in the present critical situation of affairs, when mine was the only British frigate in these seas, and we knew of two other frigates of the enemy and a corvette cruising in the neighbourhood; I therefore made sail to bring up the Otter and Staunch, then out of sight, and having soon rejoined them, I led them towards the enemy, who, at our approach, abandoned the Africaine, leaving an officer and nine men in charge of her, with most of the wounded, and about eighty-three of her crew, whom they had not time to remove. The extent of her loss in killed and wounded I have not been able to ascertain, but it must have been considerable. It is with deep regret I have to mention the loss of my gallant friend Captain Corbett; he was wounded early in the action, and died a few hours after it had ceased; in him the service has lost one of its best Officers. I cannot conclude without mentioning, in terms of approbation, the steadiness and zeal manifested by my First Lieutenant, Mr. Langhorne, the Officers and Ship's company under my command, and beg leave to recommend them to your favourable notice. I have the honour to be, &c. (Signed) JOSHUA ROWLEY.

To Vice Admiral Bertie, &c.

The enclosed statement of the Killed and Wounded of the Boadicea is submitted as follows: Killed, 10; Wounded, 11; Maimed, 8; Officers, 4; Total, 29.

Names of Officers Killed and Wounded.

Killed—Robert Corbett, Esq. Captain, Mr. Parker, Master.

Wounded—J. Tullidge, Senior Lieutenant, brought prisoner to the Isle de France; C. Foster, Sea and Landing Master; J. Jackson, (2) Lieutenant of Marines; Mr. Deed, Marine; Mr. Sagar, and Meador, Mulattars, on board the Hospital Ship; Mr. Jones and Mr. Leach, Mulattars, prisoners at the Isle de France.

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It is with much satisfaction I have again to call your attention to the gallantry and zeal manifested by my Officers and Ship's company in presence of the enemy; to which I have also to add that of Lieutenant Ramsley of the 89th, with his detachment doing duty on board. To Lieutenant Langhorne I feel much indebted for his able assistance in taking charge and conducting into port the Africaine and La Venus, and beg you will have the goodness to recommend him to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

I think it my duty to mention the active zeal shown by Captain Tomkinson, of the Otter, and Lieutenant Strut, commander of the Staunch gun-brig, both on the present service and those on which we have lately been engaged; the latter is an officer of long service, whose merits being well known to

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you, render it unnecessary for me to say more to your notice.

I have the honour to be, &c. (Signed) JOSHUA ROWLEY.

To Vice Admiral Bertie, &c.

His Majesty's ship Boadicea, St. Paul's, Road, Isle of Bourbon, 21st Sept. 1810.

Sir—I have the honour to inform you, that after having anchored in this Bay, on the morning of the 18th September, I discovered soon after three sail in the offing, two of which appeared to have suffered in their masts and rigging. I immediately weighed anchor in company with the Otter sloop and Staunch gun-brig, but from light winds was unable for some hours to clear the Bay, at which period the ships were nearly out of sight. The Boadicea having the advantage of a fresh breeze neared the enemy; one of them which had a crippled frigate in tow, cut her off, and made all sail away from us, the third bore up under colours (having lost her topmast) to protect the other, which enabled us to close with her; we soon ran her alongside, and after a short but close action, having lost one killed and fifteen wounded, she struck to the Boadicea, and proved to be the French Imperial frigate Venus, of 44 guns, commanded by Commodore Kamelin, senior officer of the French squadron in India, victualled and stored for six months. She had in the early part of the morning, in company with the Victor corvette, captured, after a most gallant defence, His Majesty's ship General, commanded by Captain Gordon, having on board General Abercromby and his Staff, bound for this island. I made the signal for the Otter to take possession of the Ceylon, while we took the Venus to tow, and they are both arrived in these Roads, where I trust we shall in a few days have them and the Africaine in a state for service, which will again restore us to our accustomed ascendancy in these seas, Colonel Keating having, with that zeal he has manifested on every occasion, offered to complete their complements from the force under his command.

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