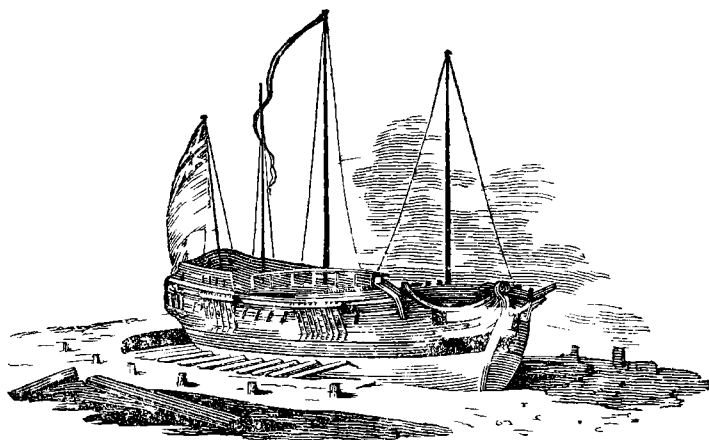


Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Provided it was so that Theory and Practice could be so easily interwoven, as imagined, the Experimental Part would be the noblest, without which no man can properly call himself a shipwright. What variety of uses, as well as shapes, may be observed in such machines, and how admirably the experimental part has unveiled itself!

SUTHERLAND *on Ship Building.*

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SAMUEL, LORD VISCOUNT HOOD.

His nature is too noble for the world!
 He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
 Or Jove for his power to thunder! His heart's his mouth!
 What his breast forges that his tongue must vent,
 And being angry, doth forget that ever
 He heard the name of Death!

CORIOLANUS

WHEN the future Historian shall impartially consider the brilliant Naval Achievements of the present war, The Subduer of Corsica, who first shook the ensanguined power of The Mad Destroyer, will attain that elevation which is due to superior merit.

There are few, if any professions, whose biography has been so little considered as that of the Naval Officers of Great Britain. Where such a complication of important duty rests on the ability of a single individual, as must ever

Admiral of the White, an Elder Brother of the Trinity House, Master and Governor of Greenwich Hospital, and Ranger of Greenwich Park

Vol. II.

B

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

be the case in naval expeditions, and especially where so modest a deportment attends on the most successful undertakings, the public should be in possession of documents, beyond those afforded by the papers of the day, before they attempt to form a final opinion: With an impetuosity peculiar to their nature, our countrymen too frequently are led to decide from the impulse of the moment; forgetting, as Dr. Johnson so justly observes in his *Life of Sir Francis Drake*, “that a man by nature superior to mean artifices, and bred from his earliest years to the labour and hardships of a sea life, is very little acquainted with policy and intrigue; very little versed in the methods of application to the powerful and great, and unable to obviate the practices of those whom his merit has made his enemies.”

Lord Hood, the elder brother of Lord Bridport, was not originally destined for the Service;—it was some time before the venerable rector of Thorncombe could obtain sufficient resolution to trust two sons, to the honourable yet perilous duty of The British Navy. His reliance and trust in Providence at length strengthened his resolution; but the moment must have been painful, when he took leave of the intrepid youth:—the wind howls with peculiar horror to him whose offspring is on the waves; the beating tempest of a winter’s evening is painfully alarming to that parent, whose social hearth seems forsaken, through the absence of one that is at Sea.

Commodore T. Smith*, then commander in chief on the Newfoundland station, who afterwards sat as president on Admiral Byng’s court martial, was the first officer with

This spirited officer was known at that time in the Navy by the appellation of *Tom of ten thousand*. When a lieutenant on board *The Gosport*, a French frigate, with whose government we were then at peace, in sailing from Plymouth, passed him without lowering her top-sails. The captain of the *Gosport* was on shore, and Mr. Smith, fearless of the consequences, fired into the French ship, and obliged her to shew the customary homage. Complaint was immediately made; Lieutenant Smith was tried by a court martial and broke. His conduct, however, was so acceptable to the nation at large, that on the following day he was promoted post captain, without passing through the gradation of commander. Capt. Smith was afterwards advanced to the rank of Admiral of the Blue, and died respected by every one, on the 28th of August 1762.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

OF LORD HOOD.

3

whom Mr. Samuel Hood embarked in the *Romney*, during the year 1740. Having distinguished himself in the situation of a midshipman, on various occasions that demanded considerable skill and intrepidity, Mr. Hood in a striking manner excited the notice, and patronage, of the discerning commodore; and was accordingly promoted by him to the rank of lieutenant, in October (1746) during the rebellion, when Commodore Smith commanded a Squadron on the coast of Scotland.

It is interesting to trace the progression of distinguished characters; we therefore add that Mr. Hood was next appointed as lieutenant to the *Winchelsea* of 20 guns, which in the winter of 1746 engaged, and captured, a French frigate of superior force. During the action, which was very spirited, Lieutenant Hood received a severe wound. In (1748) he was removed to the *Princess Louisa*, then bearing Admiral Watson's flag; who, with ten other captains, had been advanced for their gallant behaviour in Lord Anson's action with Monsieur de la Jonquiere's squadron. Lieutenant Hood accompanied Admiral Watson to *Louisbourg*; and on the peace returned with him to England.

In the year (1754) Mr. Hood was promoted Commander of the *Jamaica sloop*, then stationed at the *Bahama Islands*; and the year following joined Lord Keppel in *Hampton Road, Virginia*, who commanded the expedition in which General Braddock was defeated. A putrid, or jail fever*, having raged with great violence in the fleet, under the command of Admiral Boscawen at *Halifax*, Captain Hood, with a presence of mind that thus early was visible in his conduct, being then at *South Carolina*, immediately entered as many supernumeraries as he could possibly accommodate at sea, and carried them without delay to the admiral; for which seasonable supply he received the hearty thanks of that officer. In the succeeding year (1756) having

* Before the admiral reached England, upwards of 2000 seamen died of this distemper.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

been appointed by Commodore Holmes his captain in the *Grafton*, and being present in the action off *Louisbourg*, with a French squadron, he returned with him to England towards the close of the same year; and found, on his arrival, that he had been made post during his absence, in July 1756.

Captain Hood received the wished-for object of naval ambition at an age, which might induce him to contemplate with zealous hope the highest honours of his profession. During the probationary years of service he had been under the immediate eye of officers whose character stood high in the public opinion. Few men have had the advantage of forming themselves after such models as Captain Hood enjoyed. Under Admiral T. Smith, he had early opportunity of daily beholding a most ingenuous character, marked with a gallantry, and integrity, that could not be surpassed. The name of Watson brings to our recollection every thing that could adorn The Navy; being in the confidence of such a man, must have early instilled those principles into the mind of our young officer, which he afterwards so rigidly adopted as the rule of his conduct towards others. Commodore Holmes had seen a variety of service, even prior to the period at which Captain Hood was under him, and had every thing in his character adapted to form an excellent officer. With these advantages, joined to an apt and ready observation, that suffered none of them to be lost, Mr. Samuel Hood passed through the first gradations of the profession, and now prepared to increase the honours of that rank to which he had been deservedly raised.

His first brilliant action was in the *Antelope*, 50 guns, to which he was appointed in April (1757)*. In this ship he engaged, drove on shore, and totally destroyed, in the Bay of Audierne, near Brest, a French ship of war of 50 guns, and 450 men. The enemy had thirty men killed during the

In January 1757 Captain Hood had an order to command the *Torbay*, which was the first ship given him after being made Post, in the room of Lord Keppel, then a member of the court martial on Admiral Byng. In the March following he commanded the *Tartar*.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

action*, and twenty-five wounded. The Antelope had only three men killed, and thirteen wounded. From a mistake in the Naval History of that period, we have assigned this action to his brother Captain Alexander Hood; but with so many others to notice of equal estimation, the mistake may perhaps be pardoned. Captain S. Hood was appointed to the command of the Vestal frigate in (1758) 32 guns, and 220 men, built at Liverpool.

Rear Admiral Holmes having in (1759) been made third in command of the fleet destined to co-operate in the expedition against Quebec, previously sailed for New York with a convoy of sixty transports. In this squadron † was the Vestal, Captain S. Hood. Early on the 21st of February, Captain Hood being sent on the look out, made the signal for a strange sail, and soon afterwards that it was an enemy. About two the Vestal got close alongside, and began a most spirited action, which continued without any cessation until six in the evening, when the Vestal took possession of her opponent. She proved to be the Bellona (32 guns, 220 men), commanded by the Comte de Beauhonnor; who had escaped out of Fort Royal Bay, Martinico, during the night of the 16th of January, in company with the Florissant, and a frigate of her own force. They were all chased by Commodore More's squadron, and had on board dispatches for France, that the English had landed on the island.

When the Vestal's lieutenant took possession of the prize, he found more than thirty dead upon the deck: out of 220, forty-two had been killed. The French acknowledged at last, that they had thrown about twelve overboard. The Vestal had five killed, and twenty-two wounded. The Bellona was left with only her foremast standing, without either yard or topmast. When Captain Hood brought to,

* For the particulars of this engagement we refer our readers to page 266 of the Naval Chronicle, vol. i.

† Admiral Holmes sailed on the 14th of February with the Northumberland and Terrible, 74 guns; the Trident and Intrepid, of 64; the Medway, 60; and the following frigates:—Maidstone, Adventure, Diana, Trent, Europa, Vestal, Eurus, Boreas, and Crescent.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR

all the topmasts of the *Vestal* fell over the side; and her lower masts must have gone likewise, so completely was the rigging cut to pieces, had it not been for the great exertions of the captain, and his gallant ship's company; these were assisted by favourable weather, and on the 2d of March he arrived with his prize at Spithead. She was purchased by Government, and added to the Royal Navy by the name of the *Repulse*.

During the remainder of the year (1759) Captain Hood's ship was attached, with other frigates, to Rear Admiral Rodney's fleet, sent to bombard Havre de Grace. He was afterwards employed for two years on the coast of Ireland, and the remaining three years of the war he served in the Mediterranean under Sir Charles Saunders. After the peace of 1763, Captain Hood hoisted his broad Pendant in the *Romney*, as commander of his Majesty's ships and vessels on the Boston station, in the year (1768). His letters to the ministry at this period, some of which we may hereafter lay before our readers, are well worthy their attention. They were printed by Mr. Almon, and were much read, as displaying marks of an original and penetrating mind. This curious naval work now only exists in the selections of political men. It strikingly described the ferment and discontent that pervaded all ranks in North America, and in the clearest manner predicted what afterwards came to pass.

On the 25th of July (1776) Captain Hood was appointed to the command of the *Courageux* (74 guns), which had been taken from the French; and what deserves notice, the four lieutenants serving under him in that ship have since arrived to the rank of rear admirals.

Captain Hood was appointed to succeed (Feb. 16, 1778) the late Admiral Gambier as Commissioner of Portsmouth Dock-yard; on the 20th of April following, he was created a baronet; and in the month of September (1780) was advanced Rear Admiral of the Blue. Thus, after forty years of arduous and faithful service, did this distinguished officer at length attain the professional rank, in which an ampler

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

OF LORD HOOD.

7

scope would be allowed for a display of that nautical skill, and experience, which he had derived from no common sources, and had gained with no inconsiderable share of peril and fatigue.

Towards the conclusion of the American war, in the winter of (1780) Rear Admiral Sir Samuel Hood first hoisted his flag on board the *Barfleur*, and soon sailed with a squadron to the West Indies. On the 3d of December, with all the outward-bound fleet under his convoy, he took his departure from the Edystone, with a fine breeze from the eastward. During his continuance on this station, he added considerably to a reputation already great, as the following correct details of his principal actions will prove.

In the month of April (1781), whilst Sir George Rodney, with his own ship the *Sandwich* of 90 guns, and the *Triumph* of 74 guns, was at St. Eustatius, Rear Admiral Hood, with seventeen sail of the line, was cruising off Fort Royal, Martinico, in the hope of intercepting Monsieur de Grasse's squadron and convoy; and thereby preventing, if possible, his junction with eight line of battle ships, and one of fifty, at Martinico and St. Domingo; which would give the enemy such a decided superiority in those seas, as must render the protection of our West India islands very precarious.

The course of the French fleet, from Europe to Fort Royal, lay through the channel of St. Lucia, which is about ten leagues over, and separates that island from Martinico. It has been asserted, that Sir Samuel Hood made some remonstrances against the squadron being stationed in the channel of Fort Royal Bay, as being continually liable to fall to leeward, and consequently of being rendered incapable of accomplishing the object in view: he therefore proposed that the squadron should cruise to windward off Point Salines; a situation which would render it impossible for any fleet to enter the channel, without coming to action. Subsequent events fully proved the justice of Admiral Hood's opinion, and yet Sir George Rodney might have

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

sufficient reason, which he kept to himself, for not following it. Men, who possess the energy of original genius, do not always think alike. The bird, that soars towards the Sun, is never seen in a flock.

Sir Samuel Hood, whilst lying off Port Royal, was distressed for want of frigates to cruise to windward of the islands, having only a single one to look out. In his letter to Sir George Rodney he dwells on this, and urges the necessity of having more employed on so essential a service:

In one dated April 23, he says—"I have detained the *Lizard* with me to fill the station of the *Santa Monica*, and I very much want two or three more frigates to employ as look outs; as I think it highly necessary I should keep every line of battle ship with me: for if the enemy were to appear round Point Salines, the ships of the line to the northward could be of no use; and *vice versa* if the enemy approached the other way; which makes more frigates absolutely necessary."

Early on the morning of the 28th of April (1781), the frigate cruising to windward, off Point Salines, made the signal for discovering a large fleet. Sir Samuel instantly ordered a general chase to the S. E. in order to bring all the ships well up to windward; and at ten (A. M.) formed the line of battle a-head, at two cables length asunder; the enemy then standing on a wind to the southward. About noon, a signal was made by the reconnoitring frigate, that the enemy was of superior force, and counted nineteen sail of the line, besides two supposed to be armed *en flute*, and a numerous convoy; the whole were standing to the northward. Notwithstanding this superiority of force, Sir Samuel Hood steadily continued the line of battle ahead, endeavouring by every exertion to get to windward, that he might be able to close in with Fort Royal at day-light, and thereby cut off the possibility of the enemy's escape into that harbour. Accordingly at sun-set, the English squadron tacked all together, stood to the northward, and kept in with Fort Royal all night.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

On the morning of the 29th, at nine o'clock, the enemy appeared in sight coming down between Point Salines and the Diamond Rock : Sir Samuel Hood made the signal for a close line, and to prepare for action. The enemy at the same time formed the line of battle. At twenty minutes past nine the Prince William, Captain Stair Douglas, with great exertions* and diligence, opportunely joined the Admiral from Gros Islet Bay ; but at the very same time four ships of the line, and one of fifty guns, joined Comte de Grasse, thus giving him a superiority of *six ships of the line*.

Notwithstanding this great inequality of force, which would have daunted a common mind, Sir Samuel Hood, resolving on the attack, made every possible manœuvre to gain the wind, and bring the enemy to close action ; and in this he was gallantly seconded by the next in command, Rear Admiral Drake, and all the captains of his Fleet. At eleven the enemy's fire commenced, which Admiral Hood did not return until he observed their shot passed over his ships ; he then threw out the signal for engaging. De Grasse, having the option of distance, would not approach near enough to render the Action decisive, although Admiral Hood bravely invited him to come down by bringing to the English squadron under their topsails.—In his letter to Sir George Rodney Sir Samuel remarks, that the action became general at half past twelve, but at too great a distance, and then adds : “ never was more powder and shot thrown away in one day before ; *but it was with Monsieur de Grasse the option of distance lay, it was not possible for me to go nearer.*”

The Action had now lasted about three hours, when the British Admiral finding that not one shot in ten of the enemy reached, and that all his endeavours to gain the wind

* Sir Samuel Hood thus expressed his grateful sense of it, in his letter of May the 4th—“ Twenty minutes past nine, the Prince William joined me from Gros Islet Bay ; and, as I sent for her but the night before, Captain Douglas's exertion must have been great, and does him much credit, to be with me so soon, having the greatest part of his crew to collect in the night.”—Lord Hood never suffered the exertions of his officers to pass unnoticed.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01841-8 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 2

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

were fruitless, ceased firing; an example that was soon followed by Monsieur de Grasse.

Although The Engagement in point of firing seemed to be general, the distance preserved by the enemy, and the strenuous, though ineffectual efforts made on every occasion that offered, by the British ships, to close with the French, rendered it partial. The van, and nearest ships of the centre, from their unceasing attempts to get to windward, were exposed to a long and heavy fire, by which some of them suffered very considerably; but this was more with respect to their masts, hulls, and rigging, than to any loss of men.

The Russell had received so many shot in her hull, that the water was over the platform of the Magazine, gaining considerably on all the pumps. Three of her guns also had been dismounted, besides other damages. At half past six on the evening of the 29th of April, Admiral Hood made her signal to come within hail; when Captain Sutherland, who commanded her, received his orders, if he could possibly keep the ship afloat, to proceed instantly to St. Eustatius, or any other port he could make. He accordingly bore away for the former in the night, and with great difficulty preserved the ship from sinking in her passage.

On Monday, April 30, at day-light, the admiral discerned the Van, and Centre, of his squadron, separated at some distance from his own ship the Barfleur, and also the Rear, owing to baffling winds and calms during the night. The enemy's advanced ships were steering to the van of his squadron, indicating a disposition in them to bring the contest to that decisive conclusion they had before so much evaded. Admiral Hood made all possible sail towards them, and threw out the signal for a close line of battle; the enemy's line being a good deal extended and scattered.

The unexpected manœuvre which Sir Samuel Hood afterwards made, shewed the uncommon powers of his mind as a Commander in chief, and is thus related by the first political writer of the age*: "That judicious commander

* Old Annual Register, vol. xxiv. p. 109.