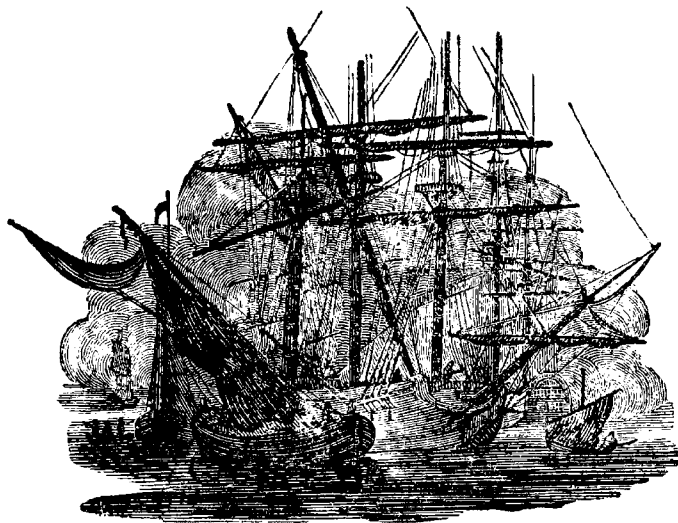


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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF
THE LATE SIR CHARLES SAUNDERS, K. B.
 ADMIRAL OF THE BLUE SQUADRON, AND SOME TIME FIRST LORD COM-
 MISSIONER OF THE ADMIRALTY.

He disdain'd, for coward ease,
 And her insipid pleasures, to resign
 The prize of glory, the keen sweets of toil,
 And those high joys that teach the truly brave
 To live for others, and for others die.

THOMSON.

SIR Charles Saunders was one of the most distinguished Officers of his time, and arrived at the highest rank in his profession. He entered early in life into the service of his country, and passed through all the subordinate stations of the Navy with the approbation of his superiors. He attained the rank of Lieutenant some time before the memorable expedition of Commodore Anson to the South Seas, and on the recommendation of that brave and judicious Officer, was appointed First Lieutenant of the *Centurion*, on board which ship Mr. Anson sailed. This appointment, at the express request of so accurate a judge of naval merit as Mr.

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B

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[More information](#)

Anson, is a sure testimony that at an early period of life Mr. Saunders afforded, by his zeal, activity, and conduct, a strong promise that he would prove an honour to the service, an ornament and a benefit to his country.

The squadron under Commodore Anson sailed from Spithead September the 18th, 1740, and the Captain of the Pearl frigate dying on the coast of Brazil, the January following, a promotion of Officers took place, when Mr. Saunders was appointed to the command of the Trial sloop. Mr. Saunders, sharing the general sickliness of the crew, was dangerously ill at this time of a fever, and obliged to remain on board the Centurion, Mr. Saumarez, who succeeded him as First Lieutenant, was appointed provisionally to command the Trial till the re-establishment of his health should enable him to undertake the charge of the sloop himself. On his recovery Capt. Saunders proceeded on board the Trial, and his skill and courage as a navigator were eminently displayed in the passage of that vessel round Cape Horn. The squadron entered the Straits of Le Maire on the 7th of March, and from that time till the end of May, they experienced, with little intermission, a succession of the most dreadful tempests. To add to their distresses, the scurvy raged so violently among them, that the mortality in the squadron daily amounted to six or seven men, beside disabling many whose services were peculiarly required at this period of calamity and danger. On the 7th of April the Pearl and Severn separated from the Commodore, and intimidated by the continuance of the storm, or reduced by sickness, gave up the enterprise, and returned to England. On the 23d of the same month, the Trial was no longer able to keep company with the Centurion, but parted in a storm more terrible than any they had hitherto experienced. A less resolute Commander than Captain Saunders would probably on this occasion have judged it prudent to return to England, but his zeal for the service, assisted by the firmness of his mind, determined him to persevere in the

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

OF THE LATE SIR CHARLES SAUNDERS, K. B. 3

prosecution of the voyage. Already he had suffered incredible hardships: his crew was weakened and hourly suffering by sickness, and his vessel much damaged by the storm; but his anxiety to perform his duty prevailed over all the consideration of future safety, which these distressing circumstances rendered extremely doubtful, and it was the happiness of this intrepid Commander that his perseverance was crowned with success.

The *Trial* arrived at the island of Juan Fernandez two days after the *Centurion* had reached that hospitable, though uninhabited spot. Captain Saunders had by this time buried nearly one-half of his crew, and so deplorable was the condition of the survivors, that the Commander, the Lieutenant, and three men, were the only persons on board, capable of enduring the fatigue, necessarily attendant on the navigation of the ship.

The vegetable productions of Juan Fernandez, with the advantage of having tents on shore for the accommodation of the sick, soon stopped the progress of the scurvy, and the crew of the *Trial* being recovered, Captain Saunders was dispatched by Commodore Anson to cruise off the island of *Masa Fuero*, in hopes of finding some of the missing ships of the squadron, which might have mistaken the latter island for the appointed place of rendezvous. After a fruitless cruise, during which Captain Saunders examined every bay and harbour in the island of *Masa Fuero*, he returned to Juan Fernandez. About this time the *Centurion* had the good fortune to capture a Spanish prize. The prisoners on board this vessel were astonished at seeing a ship of so small a rate as the *Trial*, at Juan Fernandez, and believed, at first, that she had been built, on the island, by the English, whose indefatigable diligence, and almost incredible exertions, they could not sufficiently commend, for having, under the most adverse circumstances, reduced in numbers and weakened by sickness and the complicated calamities of a long and disastrous voyage, constructed and equipped in so short a time, a vessel of her description. Some of them had

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

4

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

probably experienced, and all of them had heard of, the dangers of the passage round Cape Horn, and they were at a loss to conceive how a vessel of the Trial's small dimensions was capable of performing a passage, that was frequently attempted in vain by the finest ships, and most skilful Commanders of the Spanish navy. Flattery could scarcely have conceived a compliment more honourable to Captain Saunders than this mistake of the Spanish sailors.

Although a part of the squadron belonging to this expedition, whose arrival Commodore Anson anxiously expected, was still missing, the Commodore, as it was his opinion that the Spaniards were still unacquainted with the arrival of the English in the South Seas, and therefore had probably many ships at sea, richly laden, dispatched Captain Saunders on a cruise in September. The subject of our memoir had now an opportunity of displaying his vigilance as a cruiser, as well as before he had of displaying his skill as a navigator. In a few days he fell in with, and captured, after a tedious chase, a valuable merchant ship, of 600 tons burthen, bound from Callao in Peru, to Valparaiso in Chili. This was the second prize which the English squadron made in the South Seas, and as the captured vessel and her cargo was estimated at 18,000*l.* it must have been considered as an auspicious omen of their future success. The good fortune of Captain Saunders was not, however, without alloy. The Trial sprung a mast during the chase, and was afterwards so much damaged in a squall, that the utmost exertions of the crew at the pumps were necessary to preserve her from sinking. In this condition, and there being no possibility of repairing the damages of the Trial, Commodore Anson determined to scuttle her, and ordered Captain Saunders and his crew to repair on board the prize, which, in honour of the Trial and her meritorious Officers and men, was now named the Trial's prize. As the vessel which Captain Saunders now commanded, had formerly been employed as a frigate in the Spanish service, Commodore Anson commissioned her as a frigate in the English

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

OF THE LATE SIR CHARLES SAUNDERS, K. B.

5

Navy, and her Commander received his commission as Post Captain the 26th of September, 1741. The guns of the Trial were put on board the prize, together with those of a victualler belonging to the squadron, which together amounted to twenty, and having scuttled the Trial, Captain Saunders, in his new ship, proceeded in company with the Centurion to cruise off the island of Valparaiso. This cruise did not prove successful; however, Captain Saunders shortly afterwards had the satisfaction of being present at the taking of Paita, and though it does not appear that he was personally concerned in that business, it can scarcely be doubted, but that his advice contributed to the success of the enterprise. Shortly after this, the condition of Captain Saunders's ship proved so bad, that she could no longer be navigated with safety, the crew of the Centurion was greatly reduced in number, and on board the Gloucester, which had joined them, the mortality was still more destructive. These circumstances determined Commodore Anson to destroy the Trial's prize, and remove the Officers and men on board the Centurion and Gloucester. This resolution was carried into execution in the harbour of Chequetan, where the Trial's prize was destroyed, and Captain Saunders removed on board the Commodore's ship. He remained with Commodore Anson some time in the South Seas, but was not present at the capture of the famous Manilla ship, having quitted the Centurion at Macao, where she refitted, previous to the cruise on which she took the galleon. Captain Saunders sailed in a Swedish vessel from Macao in the month of November 1742, having under his care dispatches from the Commodore for England, and arrived in the Downs, after an agreeable passage, in the month of May following. His departure from Macao terminated his share of the dangers and glory of the South Sea expedition: though a young Officer, he showed himself superior to difficulties that had proved fatal to old and experienced Commanders, and the enemy themselves testified their admiration of his conduct by doubting the possibility of what his perseverance

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[More information](#)

had achieved. His fortune might have acquired a large addition had he been present at the capture of the Manilla ship, but it could have added little to his fame, which already announced him as one of the most promising Officers in the service.

On his arrival in England in 1743, Captain Saunders was appointed to the command of the Sapphire frigate of forty-four guns, one of the ships of war employed, during the ensuing spring, in cruising off the coast of Flanders and blockading the harbour of Dunkirk. His success on this station does not appear to have been great, for the only capture he is recorded to have made, is that of a galliot hoy from Dantzick, having on board nearly two hundred Officers and soldiers belonging to Count Lowendahl's regiment at Dunkirk, which had been raised in Prussia for the service of the French King. His vigilance probably kept the enemy within their ports, and to this must be attributed his want of success.

Captain Saunders remained on board the Sapphire, we believe, till he was promoted to the command of the Sandwich, of 90 guns, which appointment took place in the month of May 1745. This ship was employed as a guardship, and so inactive a station being unsuitable to the energy of Captain Saunders's character, he was, according to his wishes, in the month of April ensuing, removed to the Gloucester, of 50 guns, a ship just launched, and named after one of Commodore Anson's unfortunate squadron.

Being now employed on actual service, Captain Saunders had soon an opportunity of distinguishing himself. In 1746, cruising in company with the Lark, Captain Cheap, one of the Officers belonging to Commodore Anson's expedition, they captured the Fort de Nants, a register ship from Spanish America, valued at one hundred thousand pounds. Captain Saunders probably took other prizes, but we have no authentic information concerning him, till October 1747, when he commanded the Yarmouth, of 64 guns, one of the fleet commanded by Rear-Admiral Hawke,

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

OF THE LATE SIR CHARLES SAUNDERS, K. B.

7

which engaged and captured nearly the whole of the French squadron under the orders of M. L'Entendiere. To this important victory Captain Saunders very eminently contributed; two of the enemy's ships, the Neptune and the Monarque, of 74 guns each, having, as is reported by an eye-witness *, struck to the Yarmouth. Though his loss in the engagement was very severe, amounting to nearly 100 of his crew killed and wounded, he is said to have proposed to Captains Saumarez and Rodney, of the Nottingham and Eagle, the former of which gentlemen, as has already been mentioned, had served with him in the Centurion, that they should pursue the Tonant, of 80 guns, and the Intrepide, of 74 guns, which ships were then endeavouring to make their escape. This measure appears to have been carried promptly into execution, but its success was

* The following account of his gallantry on this occasion is given in a letter, written by an Officer belonging to the Yarmouth. It bears a testimony too honourable to the character of Captain Saunders to be omitted here :—

Though the Yarmouth, without dispute, had as great a share as any single ship in the fleet, if not a greater, in the engagement with the French, October the 14th, yet, in all the accounts I have seen, she is not so much as mentioned, as though no such ship had been there. It is something surprising that Admiral Hawke should see and notice, in his long account, the behaviour of the Lion, Louisa, Tilbury, and Eagle, and yet could discover nothing of the extraordinary courage and conduct of Captain Saunders of the Yarmouth, who lay two hours and a half close engaged with the Neptune, a 70 gun ship, with 700 men, which he never quitted till she struck, although the Monarch, a 74 gun ship, which struck to us likewise, lay upon our bow for some time, and another of the enemy's ships upon our stern. When the Neptune struck, after killing them 100 men, and wounding 140, she was so close to us, that our men jumped into her; and notwithstanding such long warm work, the ship much disabled in masts and rigging, and twenty-two men killed, and seventy wounded, his courage did not cool here. He could not with patience see the French Admiral and the Intrepide, a 74 gun ship, getting away, nor could he think of preferring his own security to the glory and interest of his country, but ardently wished to pursue them, he proposed it therefore to Captain Saumarez, in the Nottingham, and Captain Rodney, in the Eagle, who were within hail of us; but Captain Saumarez being unfortunately killed by the first fire of the enemy, the Nottingham hauled her wind, and did no more service, and the Eagle never came near enough to do any, so that the Yarmouth had to deal with both the enemy's ships for some time, till at length they got out of the reach of our guns. I think so much spirit and bravery ought not to lie in oblivion.

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Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

8

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

was fatally prevented by the unfortunate death of Captain Saumarez, of the Nottingham.

Captain Saunders, in the month of November following, was examined as a witness on the trial of Captain Fox, of the Kent, for misbehaviour during the action with L'Entendiere's squadron; but the naval registers of the times do not mention his name, as connected with the service, during the continuance of the war. In the month of April 1750, he had the honour to be elected Member of Parliament for the borough of Plymouth, on a vacancy occasioned by the advancement of Lord Vere Beauclerk to the dignity of a Peer of Great Britain. He married, on the 26th of September, in the following year, the only daughter of James Buck, Esq. a banker in London, but it does not appear that he had any issue.

In January 1752, he was appointed Commodore of the squadron under orders to proceed to the Mediterranean, for the purpose of relieving Mr. Keppel, who then held the chief command on that station. Captain Saunders did not, however, proceed to this station, for in May following he was appointed Commodore and Commander in Chief at Newfoundland. He sailed shortly afterwards for this station on board the Penzance, of 40 guns, and was instructed to look for a supposed island in lat. 49 deg. 40 min. longitude 24 deg. 30 min. from the Lizard, in search of which Commodore Rodney, some weeks before, had cruised ten days in vain. It is almost unnecessary to add that Commodore Saunders had no better success. After remaining the usual time on the Newfoundland station, he returned to England, and in April 1754, was appointed Treasurer of Greenwich Hospital, an office which on his farther promotion he resigned.

In the Parliament that met at Westminster, May the 31st, in the same year, he was returned a member for the borough of Heydon in Yorkshire, through the interest of his great and constant friend Lord Anson.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

OF THE LATE SIR CHARLES SAUNDERS, K. B. 9

In consequence of the appearance of a war with France, which every day became more threatening, in the month of March 1755, Mr. Saunders was appointed to the command of the *Prince*, a new ship, of 90 guns, and in June he entertained with the utmost magnificence, on board his ship at Spithead, a numerous assemblage of the first Nobility of the kingdom, who came to see the rejoicings of the fleet on the anniversary of the King's accession. Captain Saunders continued to command the *Prince* till the month of December following, when he quitted his ship on being appointed Comptroller of the Navy. This lucrative place he probably obtained through the patronage of his steady friend Lord Anson, who at this time was at the head of the Board of Admiralty. Having accepted a civil appointment under Government, he vacated his seat in Parliament, but was immediately rechosen for the borough he had before represented. About the same time he had the honour to be elected an Elder Brother of the Trinity House, a strong proof of the high respect in which his character was held. In the spring of 1756, war being formally declared against France, an Officer of the acknowledged services, experience, and merit of Captain Saunders, could not long remain unemployed. Accordingly, in the month of June, intelligence being received of the misconduct of Admiral Byng in the Mediterranean, and the consequent loss of Minorca, a large promotion of Flag Officers was made, purposely to include Captain Saunders, who sailed immediately afterwards with Sir Edward Hawke, as a passenger on board the *Antelope*, for Gibraltar, where he was to hoist his flag as Rear-Admiral of the Blue. On the return of Admiral Hawke to England, in January 1757, the command in chief of the Mediterranean fleet devolved on Admiral Saunders; but it does not appear that any very favourable opportunity * was

* The most remarkable appears to have been the following skirmish, which took place early in the year, with a small French squadron, bound to Louis-

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

afforded him of signalizing himself, during his continuance on that station. In 1758, he was promoted to be Rear-Admiral of the White, and in February 1759, to be Vice-Admiral of the Blue. Immediately on this last promotion, he was appointed Commander in Chief of the naval armament destined to assist in the reduction of the French possessions in North America. He sailed from Spithead on the 17th of February, on board the Neptune, of 90 guns, having with him as "his colleague in war," the immortal General Wolfe, who commanded the land forces attached to the expedition. The fleet under the orders of Admiral Saunders consisted of the Neptune, his flag-ship; the Royal William, of 84 guns; the Dublin, Shrewsbury, and Warspite, of 74 guns; Orford, of 70 guns; Alcide and Stirling Castle, of 64 guns; the Lizard, of 20 guns; the Scorpion sloop, the Cormorant, Strombolo, and Vesuvius fireships, and the Baltimore, Pelican, and Racehorse bomb vessels. A detachment under Admiral Holmes, a junior Officer, had sailed from Spithead a few days before. On the 21st of April Admiral Saunders made the island of Cape Breton, but not being able to enter the harbour of Louisbourg on account of the ice, he was obliged to bear away for Halifax in Nova Scotia. From this station he dispatched a division of the fleet under Admiral Durel, to cruise off the isle of

bourg, under Monsieur Revest. The Phoenix, Captain Warfe, arrived at Plymouth on the 23th of April, in eighteen days from Malaga, and reports that on the 2d instant, Admiral Saunders, at Gibraltar, had received an express from Malaga, with advice that there were off that port, four French men of war, of 74 guns each. On which he went out with the Culloden, Berwick, Princess Louisa, Guernsey, and Portland, to cruise in the Gut, and on the 5th about four o'clock in the afternoon, saw the French. He being to leeward, formed the line; and about sunset the enemy did the same, about two miles to windward of our Admiral, and began to fire, but it did not reach our ships. The Guernsey and Louisa got within shot, and began to engage; but before the rest got up it was night, and the two squadrons lost sight of each other. About nine o'clock the moon getting up, the Guernsey and Louisa saw the French again. The Admiral made a signal to chase, but could not come up with them. On the 8th, the Phoenix spoke with one of the Admiral's ships, who said they lost sight of the French the day before.