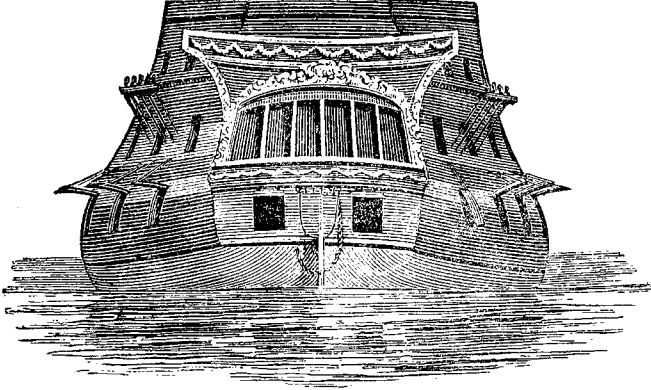


Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Stern of a Danish first rate, Christian VII. of 96 guns (one of the ships lately taken at Copenhagen); engraved by Nesbit, from a drawing by Pocock. The original sketch was made by an officer in the British navy, who transmitted the following remarks:—The Christian VII. is peculiarly constructed abaft, her breadth suddenly decreasing from the fifth after gun to the transom, which is consequently rendered very narrow, and gives an advantage thereby to the four aftermost guns to point very obliquely against an enemy coming on her quarter. The shape of her transom has obliged the builder to keep her as full as possible, in order to assist and ease her in a rough sea, which gives her quarter an ugly, and, as it is generally called, a wall-sided appearance, and takes considerably from the room and accommodation of the officers. At the bow, this, as well as the other Danish ships, is very finely turned and handsome.—As her passage to England was her first trial, nothing can be said of the properties of the Christian VII. but that she is a fine sailer. Danish vessels in general are very smooth sided, having no projections of thick plank, or what are called wales, which is certainly an improvement, as neither water nor dirt can lodge thereabouts, to injure the seams or rot the oakum.

MEMOIR OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES

OF THE LATE

CAPTAIN WILLIAM HENRY JERVIS,

OF THE ROYAL NAVY.

“ ——— JERVIS, a name to Britons dear!”

CAPTAIN WILLIAM HENRY JERVIS (formerly Ricketts), the son of William Henry and Mary Ricketts, was born November 4, 1764, in Park-street, Grovesnor-square. At the age of eight, he was placed at the grammar school at Odiham, under the tuition of the Reverend Thomas Webb. From this school he was removed to Winchester college (of which the celebrated Dr. Worton was then master), and placed under the instruction of the excellent and learned Mr. Huntingford (the present Bishop of Gloucester). There he derived every advantage

Nav. Chron. Vol. XX.

B

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

which an active and industrious mind so rapidly acquires from the erudition of an intelligent master.

In reviewing this period of life, the dawns of intellectual ability and intrinsic merit are never hidden from us. We may always trace the expanding genius of youth with confidence, when the natural disposition is generous and open. Such was particularly the case with the subject of this memoir, who, very early fired by an ardent inclination to enter that walk of life which had been trodden by so many with honour to themselves, and benefit to their country, imbibed a desire for the sea service. His excellent and indulgent parents, solicitous to cherish the growing zeal of their son, and having the happy opportunity of placing him under an officer so highly distinguished as his maternal uncle, Captain Jervis (now Earl St. Vincent), determined to accede to his wishes; and, in 1781, he embarked in the *Foudroyant*. In this ship he had the satisfaction of serving during the gallant action and capture of *la Pegase*,* and was one of the midshipmen sent to take possession of, and bring her into port.

As the testimony of great and good men is, at every time of life, a strong proof of merit, it may here not be amiss to give our readers an extract from a letter which Mr. Ricketts received from the Rev. Dr. Huntingford, already mentioned.

“ Winchester College, May 2, 1782.

“ Your ship has gained immortal honour by the late signal act of skill, intrepidity, and successful enterprize. My good friend, I congratulate you heartily. The example which your captain gave you on this occasion will, I am sure, make a lasting and effectual impression on your gallant mind. You know my maxim and system is, for every man to be excellent in his particular line: to attain to some degree of merit myself, I am content to sacrifice all unnecessary avocations from business, and to confine myself to one grand point I have undertaken. That steady firmness of mind which is apparent in you, will operate in the same manner with you in your much more noble profession. Henry, your letter which gave an account of the action, has really and truly gained you great credit; it is highly commended for its distinct accuracy, and bears with it visible marks of cool attention, with becoming modesty.”

Such were the sentiments of a friend, so fully capable of appre-

* *Vide* NAVAL CHRONICLE, Vol. IV. page 8, *et seq.*—This was in April, 1782.

tiating the merits of this young officer; and such was the advice which he had the good fortune to be early favoured with. He received it with becoming attention; and to profit by it, throughout life, was his unceasing endeavour.

During his probationary servitude in the naval profession, it would be almost impossible, and indeed is unnecessary, to enumerate the various instances of youthful ardour and activity which he displayed. It is sufficient to portray the general character, and to know that he acquired the approbation of his distinguished captain, to be satisfied that he deserved it.

Having served the usual time, he was made a lieutenant into his majesty's ship *Success*; and, passing on to the next rank in his profession, served as commander in the *Shrewsbury* and *Bonetta* sloops of war successively, until September, 1790. In each of these gradations, Captain Ricketts had an opportunity of seeing service, and of maturing his capacity for the vocation which he had engaged in. On all occasions, we find his conduct universally approved, and highly meritorious; and, in the desultory kind of warfare in which vessels of this class are usually engaged, he frequently distinguished himself. But, at the present epoch of the naval service, when victories so numerous and formidable have raised it to a height unparalleled in history; when small actions of gallantry (although always commensurate with great ones in their individual merit, local advantages, and relative consequences), are forgotten by their number, and are lost upon comparison, we must be content with recording the proud satisfaction which every British officer must feel, who, like the subject of this memoir, deserves well of his profession; each, like him, eagerly looking forward to the hour, when his opportunity may arrive, of sharing the laurel of victory, and of coupling his name with the heroes that have preceded him.

In the year 1790, Captain Ricketts commanded the *Hermione*; and, in October, 1795, he was appointed to the *Magicienne* frigate. In the spring of 1796, the *Magicienne* was one of the frigates under the orders of the zealous and gallant Commodore Sir Sidney Smith, and shared equally the fatigue and the exploits of that active squadron, on the French coast,* until Captain

* *Vide* NAVAL CHRONICLE, Vol. IV. page 453.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Ricketts was ordered to join Rear-admiral Man; with whom he continued until he was sent express with despatches to the West Indies, containing information of the probable rupture with Spain. He arrived at Jamaica in the month of September following.

At this period a war with Spain was by no means certain; but the probability of that country being forced to coalesce with the French republic, against Great Britain, was so strongly the prevailing opinion, that Captain Ricketts undertook to detain a valuable Spanish ship from Cadiz, bound to Vera Cruz, which he fell in with on his passage. The declaration of war, which followed shortly after, proved this proceeding to have been well judged.

Captain Ricketts' services in this quarter of the world, under Sir John Duckworth and Sir Hyde Parker, were active and brilliant, annoying the enemy incessantly. His several gallant exploits gained him the approbation of both those commanders-in-chief, and he was complimented with a flying squadron, which cruised under his orders.

The individual instances which occurred, during a period of two years constant and active service, in a country swarming with enemy's privateers of all descriptions, in which uniform zeal, judgment, discretion, and resolution were displayed, were very numerous.—Captain Ricketts' activity detected much of the illicit trade then carried on by the Americans; and his promptitude and decision soon checked a system so prejudicial to our commerce.

Upwards of forty sail of letters of marque, of various sizes, were taken or destroyed by his indefatigable little squadron. Amongst that number was the *Brutus*, of 24 guns; on which occasion Vice-admiral Sir Hyde Parker highly complimented Captain Ricketts, in his letter to the Admiralty, which appeared in the gazette of the 8th of April, 1797.—The French commodore, Barney, with the *Medusa* and *Insurgent* frigates, of 44 and 36 guns, narrowly escaped the vigilance of the *Magicienne* and *Regulus*, in consequence of their being favoured by the land breeze.

The attack on the vessels in the harbour of Cape Roxo, Porto Rico, in the night of the 5th of April, 1797, was well conceived,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE LATE CAPTAIN WILLIAM HENRY JERVIS. 5

and as well conducted; the boats of the *Magicienne* and *Regulus* having effected the destruction of eleven sail of square-rigged vessels, cut out a Spanish schooner and sloop, and spiked two two-gun batteries at the entrance of the harbour; which, from the darkness of the night, and the intricate navigation, was found to be a very difficult enterprise.

The latter end of the same month, we find Captain Ricketts making a gallant attack upon the enemy, in Carcass Bay, St. Domingo, which obliged them to raise the siege of Irois, a post which formed the key to the grand Anse; and thus, by the active exertions of the *Magicienne* and *Regulus*, the whole of our western possessions in St. Domingo, against which plans of attack had been concerted, were prevented from falling into the hands of the enemy. These services were at that time considered of great importance, as appears by the following letters:—

Copy of a letter from Vice-admiral Sir Hyde Parker, to Evan Nepean, Esq. dated June 11, 1797.

“ I have the pleasure to acquaint you, for their lordships’ information, that the Grand Anse is acknowledged to be saved by the spirited and well-timed attack made by Captain Ricketts, of his majesty’s ship *Magicienne*, upon the enemy’s transports of provisions and ammunition in Carcass bay, for the particulars of which I beg to refer you to a copy of Captain Ricketts’ letter.”

(COPY).

“ SIR,

“ *La Magicienne, April 24, 1797.*

“ I beg leave to inform you, that, on Sunday the 23d instant, when doubling Cape Tiberoon, in company with his majesty’s ships *Regulus* and *Fortune* schooner, we discovered a six-gun privateer sloop, and four schooners, at anchor in this bay, which convinced me that the port of Irois was attacked. Soon after, the alarm gun was fired from the fort: as no time was to be lost in endeavouring to counteract the views of the enemy, we stood in and anchored, when we commenced a heavy cannonade, and had the good fortune in a short time to drive them into the mountains. Their field pieces, ammunition, provisions, and vessels, laden with necessaries for carrying on the siege, fell into our hands.

“ The good conduct of every officer and sailor belonging to our little squadron, manifested itself upon this occasion, as well as upon many others since I have had the honour to command it.

“ I have to regret the loss of four men killed; and Mr. Morgan, master’s mate, and ten men wounded (though not mortally), who were in the *Magicienne*’s boats when endeavouring to tow out the privateers.

“ I have the honour to be, &c.

“ *To Vice-admiral Sir Hyde Parker, &c.*

“ W. H. RICKETTS.”

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6

MEMOIR OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES OF

The gazette of August 14, 1797, contains the following despatch from Lieutenant-general Simcoe, dated Port au Prince, June 20, 1797:—

“ I do myself the honour of enclosing General Churchill’s report of the attack made by the enemy on the Grand Anse, and the repulse they met with in that quarter. The brigadier-general acknowledges in the strongest manner the services which Captain Ricketts, of the *Magicienne*, with the squadron under his command, effected in the destruction of the vessels of the enemy in Carcass bay.”

Extract from Brigadier-general Churchill’s letter, dated Jeremie, April 30.

“ In the mean time the enemy were making every disposition for a regular siege of Irois, when, fortunately, the *Magicienne* frigate, commanded by Captain Ricketts, attacked their small fleet in the Bay of Carcasses, and sunk the vessels loaded with cannon and military stores for the siege.”

The following address, from the inhabitants of Jeremie, the capital of the Grand Anse, also shews the consideration which they entertained of this service:—

To the Honourable George [William] Henry Ricketts, commander of his majesty’s ships, la Magicienne, le Regulus, Captain Carthew, and the Fortune sloop, Lieutenant Trelawny, stationed off the southern part of St. Domingo.

“ SIR,

“ The important service which you rendered to the Grand Anse, on the 24th of last month, has excited the most grateful sensations in the hearts of its inhabitants.

“ Condescend, sir, to accept of their most respectful acknowledgments.

“ The Grand Anse will never forget, that the enemy, after a fruitless assault against the fort of Irois, threatening it with a siege, for which it had assembled a most powerful force in Carcass bay, saw you, at a single signal, rush down upon them, with the *Magicienne*, *Regulus*, and *Fortune*; that your fire was so terrible, and so well supported, that, in a short time, the shore was covered with dead, and the numerous troops collected for the expedition put to flight.

“ You took, or sunk, the six ships which formed their marine; and carried off their guns, their ammunition, their provisions, and even the tent of their commander in chief.

“ It was this decisive advantage which compelled them, precipitately, to re-enter their own territory; when two columns advanced, to complete their destruction by land, which had been so well commenced upon the sea.

“ This exploit, so glorious for the British flag, insures to you, sir, the most flattering rewards, from the king of whom we have now the honour

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE LATE CAPTAIN WILLIAM HENRY JERVIS.

7

to become the subjects; it obtains a security for the Grand Anse, which, unquestionably, the implacable hatred of an obstinate enemy will not, for a long time, again disturb; this happy event having induced the government to adopt such measures as will preserve it for the future.

“ In the inability of the inhabitants properly to acknowledge so signal a service, they beg of you, sir, to receive, as a testimony of their gratitude, a complete plan of the country of the Grand Anse, in which will be found, correctly drawn, the fort of Irois and the Bay of Carcasses.

“ This plan, in reminding you of the memorable action of the 24th of April, will call to your recollection how much your presence, and that of the ships of war under your command, were serviceable to the Grand Anse; will solicit a continuation of your vigilance towards a quarter which first called for the assistance of his Britannic majesty’s forces, and which has uniformly given to its government innumerable proofs of its inviolable fidelity.

“ We are, with the most respectful esteem, and the most lively gratitude,

“ Sir,

“ Your most humble and obedient servants,

“ THE INHABITANTS OF THE GRAND ANSE.”

(A correct copy, from the original, signed by all the inhabitants)

Lieutenant-colonel H. DESOMBRAGE,

Major de la Place.

The whole of the enemy’s coast, as well as the island of St. Domingo, seems more or less to have felt the activity of this little squadron; for we find in the gazette of April 2, 1798, an extract of a letter from Vice-admiral Sir Hyde Parker, to Mr. Nepean, enclosing the following letter, and stating that he is sure their lordships will, with him, highly approve the gallant conduct of Captain Ricketts, as well as the captains, officers, seamen, and marines under his command:—

(COPY.)

“ *La Magicienne, off the Island of Zacher, December 28, 1797.*

“ Having received information, that several brigs and schooners belonging to the enemy were in Guadilla bay, in the island of Porto Rico, I proceeded there with his majesty’s ships *la Magicienne*, *Regulus*, and *Diligence*: on the 27th at noon, we anchored close abreast of the forts, and after an hour and a half cannonading, captured every vessel under their protection. To Captain Carthew I am indebted for the very gallant and able support that I on this occasion met with (as well as many others since the *Regulus* has been under my orders): Captain Meads, who commanded the boats that took possession of the vessels, executed that service much to his own honour, and highly to my approbation: indeed every officer and man belonging to this squadron is fully entitled to my best thanks and praises.”

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Another most essential service was performed in the beginning of 1798, under the orders of Captain Ricketts. The *Magicienne*, *Regulus*, and *Drake* brig sailed from Cape Nicholas Mole, with detachments of only 250 troops, for the purpose of dislodging a considerable body of brigands, who had established themselves in Platform bay, about seven leagues to the westward of the Mole; whence, by small vessels and row-boats, carrying about twenty men each, they daily committed depredations and acts of piracy against merchant vessels of every description. To secure themselves more effectually, they had collected a thirteen-inch mortar, and several guns (some of large calibre), for the purpose of mounting them on the Platform, an eminence so called from its shape, and presenting by nature a position of great strength. The summit is as level as a bowling green, about the third of a mile in circumference, and affording the most commanding situation of the bay and adjacent country; so steep withal, as to render it very difficult of ascent, and capable of being made, with a little art, defensible by a small body, against any number that could be brought against it. On this advantageous spot, therefore, the pirates had fixed to fortify themselves, and had already succeeded in getting the mortar up the hill, when the sudden arrival of the squadron put an end to their operations. By the dawn of day, on the 13th of February, the ships were in the bay, and the troops landed with so much celerity, under cover of the *Magicienne's* fire, to scour the beach, flanked by the *Drake* brig, that the enemy was surprized and routed before he had time to gain the Platform, which was immediately taken possession of by the troops, and several advanced posts on the commanding heights occupied, to interrupt the proceedings of the brigands, who were assembled in large bodies from the country. The seamen at the same time were landed, and brought off four row-barges, and, in the course of the day and following morning, all their ordnance, consisting of the 13 inch mortar and six guns. In the afternoon the troops reembarked; the whole enterprise having been fortunately accomplished without the loss of a man.*

* Illustrative of this action, an engraved representation of the *Magicienne*, and *Drake* brig, as engaged, is given at page 41 of the present volume, from a drawing taken upon the spot.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE LATE CAPTAIN WILLIAM HENRY JERVIS.

9

But it would be endless to trace this little squadron through every instance in which, whilst under the orders of Captain Ricketts, it was distinguished for active cruising. Its merits were fully known, and duly appreciated, by the commander in chief on the Jamaica station.

The *Magicienne* was soon afterwards despatched to Caraccas, on a particular duty; and, on the 4th of May, 1798, when Captain Ricketts returned to the Mole, private affairs requiring his immediate return to England, the country was for a time deprived of the services of this zealous officer.

In 1800, he resumed his employment, and was appointed to the *Naiad* frigate.

The glorious victory of the 14th of February, 1797, which had raised his eminently distinguished uncle (Sir John Jervis) to the peerage, by the title of Earl St. Vincent,* is still (as the high sense of the just reward bestowed by his majesty for this important achievement must ever be) alive in the memory of every one. His majesty having also been graciously pleased, on the 21st of April, 1801, to renew his grant of the dignity of Viscount St. Vincent, of Meaford, in the county of Stafford, with remainder to Captain Ricketts, he soon after received his royal license and authority to use and take the surname of his illustrious and noble relative.

Towards the latter end of the war, Captain Jervis received the command of the *Robust*, of 74 guns, and was employed in the Channel fleet. This ship, like many others which he had commanded, was considered a complete man of war, both in her interior regulation and military discipline; and a squadron being ordered to the West Indies, after the cessation of hostilities, the *Robust* was one of the ships selected by Earl St. Vincent, who then presided at the Admiralty Board, for this duty: a signal instance of impartiality, as that country was suffering under a most malignant contagion. He resigned the command of this ship in July, 1802.

Hostilities being again on the point of commencing, Captain Jervis was amongst the foremost in seeking employment. His seniority as a captain not entitling him to the command of a frigate (a kind of service most adapted to an active mind), he

* We particularly recommend to the perusal of our readers the corrected edition of the biographical memoir of the gallant earl, Vol. IV. *et seq.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01859-3 - The Naval Chronicle, Volume 20

Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

[More information](#)

was appointed to the *Magnificent*, one of the smaller class of 74's, on the 31st of May, 1803. Being attached to the Channel fleet, he for a time formed part of a small squadron employed on the south-west coast of Ireland; and, upon his being recalled, that gallant and discerning officer, Admiral Cornwallis (with whom he was an acknowledged favourite) honoured him by allowing him to remain for some time senior officer of the inshore squadron, off Brest.*

The course of service in the Channel fleet, unless fortunately presented with the opportunity of a general engagement, is of a very monotonous and insipid kind. The gratifying reflection of being a link in one of those effective chains which block up every port of the enemy, and preserve security to our country, affords always a solace for the many privations and hardships which are endured; but it is not often that an occasion presents itself of exercising the valour and patriotism of those brave men who compose it.

Whilst commanding inshore, Captain Jervis was not unmindful of the trust reposed in him; and, assiduously reconnoitring the enemy's coast, he discovered several sail of vessels in the bay of Conquit. He determined upon laying hold of them; and, having manned and armed the boats of the squadron, the night of the 24th of March, 1801, was fixed upon to cut them out. Unfortunately, on approaching the bay, a very strong current setting to the eastward, with the appearance of threatening weather from the south-west, obliged them to abandon the enterprise, which had otherwise been so well digested and arranged, that the whole of the enemy's vessels must inevitably have fallen into their hands.

It was on the following day, after getting under way (in consequence of thick weather and strong winds from the south-west), and endeavouring to round the outermost of the Black Rocks, that the *Magnificent* struck upon a rock (unknown to the French pilot on board, and not noticed in any chart), and every effort having been made in vain to get her off, the tide rising rapidly, she was unfortunately wrecked.

* On the 30th of November, Captain Jervis received the appointment of treasurer of Greenwich Hospital.