

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02267-5 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 2 - Part 2

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

ROYAL NAVAL BIOGRAPHY.

POST-CAPTAINS OF 1802—*continued.*

SIR CHRISTOPHER COLE,

*Knight Commander of the Most Honorable Military Order of the Bath ;
Doctor of the Civil Law ; Member of Parliament for Glamorganshire ;
and Deputy Grand Master of the Masonic Society in South Wales.*

THIS officer is a brother of the Rev. Samuel Cole, D. D. Chaplain of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich ; and of the late Dr. Cole, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, Rector of Exeter College, and a Domestic Chaplain to H. R. H. the Duke of Clarence. He entered the naval service in 1780, as a Midshipman on board the Royal Oak, of 74 guns, commanded by the late Sir Digby Dent, and then about to sail for the coast of America, as part of the squadron sent thither under the orders of Rear-Admiral Thomas Graves. In the course of the same year he was removed into the Reasonable 64 ; and we subsequently find him serving under the patronage of the late Rear-Admiral Sir Francis Samuel Drake, Bart. in the Russell and Princessa third rates.

The Princessa formed part of the fleets under Sir Samuel Hood and Rear-Admiral Graves, in the actions off Martinique and the Chesapeake, April 29th and Sept. 5th, 1781, and on the latter occasion sustained a loss of 6 men killed and 11 wounded. She also bore a share in the memorable transactions at St. Kitt's in Jan. 1782 ; and in Rodney's battles of April 9th and 12th, 1782*.

Mr. Cole, who had not yet completed the twelfth year of his age, was at this period the youngest of four brothers serving on the West India station, (three in the navy and one

* See vol. II., part I., pp. 62 to 65, and notes at *ditto*. N. B. Rear-Admiral Drake led the van division of the British fleet, and highly distinguished himself, on the glorious 12th of April. He died a Lord of the Admiralty, and M. P. for Plymouth, Oct. 19, 1789.

in the army) the whole of whom met together on the arrival of the victorious fleet at Jamaica.

At the peace of 1783, he joined the *Trepassey* of 12 guns, commanded by his brother, the late Captain Francis Cole, a brave and excellent officer. and accompanied him from the West Indies to Halifax, where he removed into the *Atalante* sloop, Captain Thomas Foley, with whom he continued on that station till 1785. In the following year we find him proceeding to Newfoundland in the *Winchelsea* of 32 guns, in which frigate he served under the command of the present Viscount Exmouth until 1789, when, in consequence of a recommendation from Sir Francis Drake, he was received on board the *Crown*, a 64-gun ship, bearing the broad pendant of the Hon. Commodore Cornwallis, who had recently been appointed to the chief command in India.

Unfortunately for Mr. Cole, the account of his patron's death reached India a few months after his arrival there, and all hopes of speedy promotion were consequently abandoned by him; nor did he obtain the rank he had so long sought after until 1793, at which period he had served upwards of thirteen years under some of the best practical seamen in the navy*.

In October, 1794, he was appointed first Lieutenant of the *Cerberus*, a new 32-gun frigate, at the particular request of Captain John Drew, on whose application two Midshipmen were promoted into her for the purpose of securing that situation to Mr. Cole, whose character and abilities he held in the highest estimation.

In 1795, Lieutenant Cole joined the *Sans Pareil* of 80 guns, bearing the flag of Lord Hugh Seymour, to whom he was recommended in the warmest manner by his late Captain. After serving for four years under the eye of that distinguished nobleman, it was left to his option, as senior Lieutenant of the *Sans Pareil*, either to accept the rank of Commander, and go on half pay, or proceed as his Lordship's Flag-Lieutenant to the West Indies, where promotion might be expected, accompanied by immediate employment. Mr. Cole very naturally chose the latter, and accompanied his noble

* Mr. Cole followed Commodore Cornwallis from the *Crown* into the *Minerva* frigate, and continued with that officer nearly five years.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02267-5 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 2 - Part 2

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

POST-CAPTAINS OF 1802.

503

friend to the Leeward Islands in the *Tamar* frigate. Soon after their arrival on that station, the Dutch colony of Surinam surrendered without opposition to the British forces, and the *Hussar*, a fine prize corvette, mounting 20 nine-pounders, was immediately purchased into the service, named after the island where she was captured, and the command of her conferred upon the subject of this memoir.

The *Surinam* cruised with considerable activity, and Captain Cole was fortunate enough to take several of the enemy's privateers, and make some recaptures: his exertions to promote the comforts of his men on all occasions, but particularly during a season of extraordinary malignity, were also very great, and eminently successful; the *Surinam's* crew affording a remarkable instance of good health at a time when the yellow fever was committing great ravages in other ships, and on shore: the contrast was indeed so striking as to induce the commander-in-chief to represent it officially to the Admiralty.

In 1800, Lord Hugh Seymour was removed from the Leeward Islands to Jamaica, and with the consent of Sir John T. Duckworth, who had succeeded him on the former station, he despatched the *Galgo* from Port Royal to relieve the *Surinam*; but his wish to have Captain Cole under his orders again was frustrated by the unhappy fate of the *Galgo*, which vessel foundered with the greater part of her crew, during a heavy squall, on the 9th Oct. in that year.

Some time after this sad event, Captain Cole had the misfortune to be deprived of his noble friend, who fell a sacrifice to the yellow fever, and died sincerely regretted by all who were acquainted with his claims to respect and admiration*.

Deeply as he felt the loss of such a friend, still Captain Cole had the gratification of finding that he had gained the

* Lord Hugh Sevmour died Sept. 11, 1801, in the 46th year of his age. He was attacked by the fatal fever of the West Indies, about the middle of the summer, from which he had but a temporary respite, as it returned with increased violence on the 1st of Sept, and on the 11th deprived the service of a gallant and meritorious commander, and society of a most accomplished and estimable member. The particulars of his Lordship's professional career will be found in the *Naval Chronicle*. He left seven orphan children to mourn their irreparable loss; his amiable consort having died on the 12th Jan. in the same year.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02267-5 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 2 - Part 2

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

504

POST-CAPTAINS OF 1802.

favourable opinion of Sir John T. Duckworth, by his conspicuous zeal and alacrity on every occasion of public service, and which was shortly proved by that officer promoting him into his flag-ship, the *Leviathan* of 74 guns, and afterwards appointing him to the command of the Southampton frigate. His post commission was confirmed by the Admiralty, April 20, 1802.

A cessation of hostilities having now taken place in Europe, the Southampton was soon after ordered home, and paid off in the month of September following. Captain Cole's next appointment was, in June 1804, to the *Culloden* 74, fitting for the flag of his old friend and commander, Sir Edward Pellew, with whom he proceeded to the East India station, where he captured *l'Emilien*, French corvette, of 18 guns and 150 men, Sept. 25, 1806. This vessel had formerly been the *Trincomalee*, British sloop of war. He also assisted at the capture and destruction of about thirty sail of Dutch shipping, including a national frigate and several armed vessels, in Batavia Roads, on the 27th Nov. in the same year*.

We next find Captain Cole commanding the *Doris*, a new frigate, built at Bombay, and with the *Psyche*, Captain Edgcombe, under his orders, escorting Colonel Malcolm, Ambassador to the Persian court, to Abashir, in the Gulf of Persia, and remaining at that place for the protection of the embassy. On his return from thence he received the thanks of the Governor-General in council, accompanied by a present of 500*l.* for his services on that occasion.

During the years 1808 and 1809, Captain Cole was principally employed cruising in the Straits of Malacca, and the China seas. Upon the arrival of intelligence respecting the change of political affairs in Spain, he was despatched by Rear-Admiral Drury, who had succeeded to the command in India, with the *Psyche* again under his orders, to communicate with and endeavour to conciliate the government of the Phillipine islands. Having completely succeeded in this mission, and received information from a valuable prize (the Japan ship from Batavia) that two French frigates had pro-

* See Vol. I., p. 223.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02267-5 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 2 - Part 2

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

POST-CAPTAINS OF 1802.

505

ceeded to China, and were likely to remain there some time, he took upon himself the responsibility of proceeding thither in quest of them. Finding, on his arrival at Macao, that the enemy had not made their appearance in that quarter, he endeavoured to return through the sea of China, against the foul-weather monsoon. His endeavours, however, proved ineffectual, the ships being forced into the Mindoro Sea and Pacific Ocean. A scarcity of provisions, added to the severe weather and fatigue encountered by the crews of the *Doris* and *Psyche*, now produced an attack of scurvy and dysentery, by which the former frigate lost 40 men before she anchored in Malacca Roads, and on her arrival there no less than 80 others were confined to their hammocks through sickness. The *Psyche* suffered in a nearly equal degree. To enable the reader to judge of Captain Cole's anxiety on this alarming occasion, we need only add, that during the latter part of the passage there remained but 1 Lieutenant, the gunner, and 56 men, who were able to keep watch on board the *Doris*, and assist her commander in the arduous duties he had to perform.

In 1810, Captain Cole was removed, at his own request, into the *Caroline* of 36 guns. He soon after received orders to take the *Piedmontaise* frigate, *Baracouta* brig, and *Mandarin* transport under his command, and proceed with them to the assistance of the garrison of Amboyna, which island had recently been taken by the British*.

Having received on board a considerable sum in specie, large supplies of provisions, and 100 European troops, the squadron left Madras on the 10th May, and arrived at Prince of Wales's Island (Pulo-Penang) on the 30th of the same month. Whilst there, he signified to the government his intention to attempt the reduction of the Banda islands on his way to Amboyna, and was furnished with 20 artillery-men, commanded by a Lieutenant of that corps, 2 field-pieces, and twenty scaling-ladders, to assist him in the undertaking.

After a passage of six weeks, against the S. E. monsoon, through the Straits of Malacca, the intricate navigation on the N. E. side of Borneo, and the Sooloo Sea, the squadron passed through Pitt's Straits, and entered the Java Sea on the

* See Captain SIR EDWARD TUCKER, K. C. B.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02267-5 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 2 - Part 2

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

506

POST-CAPTAINS OF 1802.

23d July. On the 7th of the following month, Captain Cole communicated with the island of Goram, for the purpose of obtaining information and procuring guides.

During the whole of this long passage, the ships' companies had been daily exercised in the use of the pike, sword, and small arms, and in mounting the scaling ladders placed against the masts, preparatory to any attempt at escalade. The expertness with which they handled their weapons, and the emulation displayed by them when imitating the storming of a fortress, added to their excellent health and high spirits, convinced Captain Cole that, however deficient in numbers, no men could have been found better calculated to ensure success to any hazardous enterprise. The result of that in which he was then about to embark, against a strong, and generally supposed impregnable fortification, it would be difficult to describe better than in his own words. His plain and modest narrative marks so strongly the intrinsic merit of himself and his gallant associates, that it would be almost presumptuous were we to offer a word of commendation; but as official reports, however clearly written, generally require a little elucidation, we shall avail ourselves of some well-authenticated information respecting the capture of Banda, by introducing it in the shape of notes, instead of incorporating it with the substance of his public letter, of which the following is a copy :

"H. M. S. Caroline, Banda Harbour, Aug. 10, 1810.

"Sir,—I have the honor and happiness of acquainting you with the capture of Banda Neira, the chief of the Spice Islands, on the 9th Aug., by a portion of the force under my orders, in consequence of a night attack, which completely surprised the enemy, although the approach of the ships had been unavoidably discovered the day before*.

* On the evening of the 8th Aug., when the Banda Islands were just visible, all the boats were hoisted out, and every preparation made for the attack. It was intended to run the ships into the harbour before day-light in the morning, and a hope was entertained that they might remain undiscovered till then; but they were fired at by a battery when passing the small island of Rosengen, about 10 P. M. which island the ships had approached rather close, not knowing that it was fortified. The weather about this time changed suddenly from a fine clear moonlight to violent squalls, ac-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02267-5 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 2 - Part 2

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

“The weather proved so unfavorable for boat-service on the night of the 8th, that although nearly 400 officers and men had been selected for this occasion, yet, on assembling under Great Banda, at two o'clock in the following morning, I found that the state of the weather would deprive us of the services of some valuable men under Lieutenant Stephens, of the royal marines, and the greater part of the detachment of the Madras European regiment, from whom I had expected the most steady support and assistance. The attempt was now to be made with less than 200 men, consisting of the seamen and marines, and about 40 of the Madras European regiment, or our labors in the boats through a dark and squally night, in the open sea, must have ended in the severest mortification. After getting under shelter of the land, the same circumstances of the weather which before operated against us, were now favorable to us; and the confidence I had in the handful of officers and men about me, left me no hesitation: and, with a degree of silence and firmness that will ever command my heartfelt acknowledgments, the boats proceeded to the point of debarkation*.

“A dark cloud with rain covered our landing within one hundred yards of a battery of 10 guns; and by the promptitude and activity of acting Captain Kenah, and Lieutenant
companied by thunder, lightning, and rain; and the alarm having been spread throughout the islands, all hopes of surprising them by the *ships* was at an end.

* The men selected for shore service, 390 in number, took a nap with their arms by their sides whilst the ships were standing towards the land. At 11 P. M. they were ordered into the boats, and directed to rendezvous close under the lee of the point of Great Banda; but at 3 A. M. a few boats, containing 150 officers and men only, had reached the place appointed, the rest having been driven to leeward. Some large fires denoted the exact situation of Banda Neira, the seat of government, which island was strongly fortified, having a citadel, and numerous sea batteries, two of which, mounting ten 18-pounders each, with Fort Nassau, commanded the harbour. As no time was to be lost in attempting something before daylight, this small force, under the personal direction of Captain Cole, accompanied by the acting Commander of the *Baracouta*, pulled immediately across the harbour, with the intention of surprising the two 10-gun batteries and spiking the guns, that the ships might take their anchorage at daylight with the less difficulty.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02267-5 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 2 - Part 2

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

508

POST-CAPTAINS OF 1802.

Carew, who were ordered with the pikemen to the attack, the battery was taken in the rear, and an officer and his guard made prisoners, without a musket being fired, although the enemy were at their guns with matches lighted. From the near approach of day-light, our situation became critical; but we had procured a native guide to carry us to the walls of the castle of Belgica; and leaving a guard over the prisoners, and in charge of the battery, the party made a rapid movement round the skirts of the town, where the sound of the bugle was spreading alarm among the enemy*. In twenty minutes the scaling ladders were placed against the walls of the outer pentagon of Belgica; and the first guns were fired by the enemy's sentries †. The gallantry and activity with which the scaling ladders were hauled up after the outwork was carried, and placed for the attack of the inner work, under a sharp fire from the garrison, exceed all praise. The enemy, after firing three guns ‡, and keeping up an ineffectual discharge of musketry for 10 or 15 minutes, fled in all directions, and through the gateway, leaving the Colonel-Commandant and 10 others dead, and 2 officers and 30 men prisoners in our hands. Captain Kenah, Lieutenants Carew, Allen, Pratt, Walker, and Lyons, of the navy; Lieutenant Yates, and Ensign Allen (a volunteer) of the Madras service, were among the foremost in the escalade; and my thanks are due to Captain-Lieutenant Nixon, of the Madras European regiment, for the steady and officer-like conduct with which he directed

* An officer and 60 men were taken prisoners in the first battery, without firing a pistol: the sentinel was killed by a pike. Fortunately, the nature of the attack required no firing from the assailants, as the boats grounded at some distance from the shore, and the men had to wade up to their waists in water. Expecting an attack by sea, the enemy were fully prepared to give the ships a warm reception. Their confusion on finding the British in their rear, may readily be conceived. Captain Kenah had been ordered to attack the other battery, but was recalled in consequence of Captain Cole determining to attempt the citadel, which commanded all the other defences, by *coup-de-main*.

† Owing to the state of the weather, Captain Cole and his followers were not discovered until within 100 yards of the ditch surrounding the citadel.

‡ The great guns near which the ladders were placed fortunately burnt priming, owing to the heavy rains.

the covering party entrusted to his charge ; and to Lieutenants Brown and Decker, of that regiment, attached to the marines. With such examples our brave fellows swept the ramparts like a whirlwind ; and, in addition to the providential circumstance of the service being performed with scarcely a hurt or wound, I have the satisfaction of reporting that there was no instance of irregularity arising from success *.

“ The day now beaming on the British flag, discovered to us the fort of Nassau, and the sea defences at our feet, and the enemy at their guns at the different posts. I dispatched Captain Kenah with a flag of truce to the Governor, requiring the immediate surrender of Nassau, and with a promise of protection for private property. At sun-rise the Dutch flag was hoisted in Nassau, and the sea-batteries opened a fire on the *Caroline* (followed by the *Piedmontaise* and *Baracouta*, then approaching the harbour †). Having selected a detachment to secure Belgica, the remainder, with their scaling ladders, were ordered for the immediate storm of Nassau ; but Captain Kenah had returned with the verbal submission of the Governor, and I was induced to send a second flag, stating my determination to storm Nassau that instant, and to lay the town in ashes, if the colours were not immediately struck. This threat, and a well-placed shot from Belgica into one of

* The ladders being found too short for the escalade of the inner walls, a rush was made for the gateway, which had at that instant been opened by the guard to admit the Colonel-Commandant, and three other officers, who lived in houses at the foot of the hill. The Colonel refused to receive quarter, and fell in the gateway, sword in hand, and covered with honorable wounds ; several of the guard were also slain, and many of the panic-struck garrison threw themselves over the walls, but the greater part escaped. Four officers surrendered their swords to Captain Cole immediately under the flag-staff ; forty artillery-men were disarmed on the same spot, and the British colours were immediately hoisted with three hearty cheers. At break of day the assailants found themselves in complete possession of the citadel, with 52 pieces of heavy cannon mounted on its walls ; but neither the ships nor the remainder of the landing party were to be seen, the violence of the weather during the night having prevented their approach.

† The *Caroline* did not return a shot ; but her first Lieutenant led into the harbour, and anchored abreast of Fort Nassau, uncertain of the fate of his Captain until the guns of Belgica silenced the fire of the battery.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02267-5 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 2 - Part 2

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

their sea-batteries, produced an immediate and unqualified submission, and we found ourselves in possession of the two forts, and several batteries, mounting 120 pieces of cannon, and defended by 700 disciplined troops, besides the militia*.

“The ships had been left with so few men to manage them, that I had merely directed Captain Foote to lead into any anchorage that he might be able to obtain, to make a diversion in our favor; but they were worked against all the unfavorable circumstances of a dark and squally night, in a narrow channel, with the most determined perseverance, and with that degree of zeal that I expected from an officer of my own rank, whose heart and hand had always been with me on every point of public service †.

“Captain Kenah, who led the storming party, crowned a series of valuable services during two months’ difficult and intricate navigation through the Eastern seas, by his bravery and activity on shore ‡.

“The colours of Forts Nassau and Belgica will be presented to your Excellency by Lieutenant John Gilmour, who has served nine years in this country, as a Lieutenant, and a large portion of that time as first Lieutenant under my command. Although labouring under a severe illness, he took charge of the ship on my quitting her; and his seaman-like and zealous conduct in the discharge of his trust were most conspicuous.

“I also transmit a plan of the defences of Banda Neira, with the position of the Dutch troops, and our route from the

* The island of Banda Neira is little more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, and $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile broad. Its shores were defended by ten batteries, in addition to the citadel and Fort Nassau. The total number of guns mounted on the different works was afterwards ascertained to be 138, and no less than 1500 men piled their arms on the glacis of the fort the very day of its capture; yet, strange as it may appear, scarcely one of the victorious little band received a hurt that could with propriety be called a wound.

† Captain Charles Foote, the meritorious officer alluded to in the above passage of Captain Cole’s letter, was the last surviving son of the late J. Foote, Esq. banker, of London. He died at Madras, Sept. 5, 1811, aged 31 years.

‡ Captain Kenah died in command of the Etna bomb, on the coast of America, at the latter end of the war.