

## ROYAL NAVAL BIOGRAPHY.

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### CAPTAINS OF 1827.

(Continued).

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#### HON. CHARLES LEONARD IRBY,

*Member of the Geographical Society of London.*

FOURTH and youngest son of Frederick, second Lord Boston, by Christiana, only daughter of Paul Methuen, of Corsham House, co. Wilts, Esq.

This officer entered the royal navy, May 23d, 1801, as midshipman on board the *Narcissus* frigate, Captain (afterwards Rear-Admiral) Percy Fraser; which ship, it appears, was driven ashore on the coast of Holland, and would, probably, have been wrecked, but for the prompt and effectual assistance she received from the *Jalouse* sloop, then commanded by Lord Boston's second son, the Hon. Frederick Paul Irby, whose services have been recorded in Vol. II. Part I. pp. 488—500.

During the peace of Amiens, Mr. Charles Irby served under Captain Fraser's successor, the present Vice-Admiral Donnelly, with whom he visited the Barbary States, Malta, Sicily, Sardinia, Toulon, Genoa, Leghorn, Naples, the Grecian Archipelago, and Alexandria. He subsequently saw much active service on the coasts of Italy and Provence, and assisted in capturing l'*Alcion* French corvette, and many trading vessels.

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978-1-108-02269-9 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 3 - Part 2

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 2

## CAPTAINS OF 1827.

In 1805, the *Narcissus* was attached to an expedition sent against the Cape of Good Hope; and while proceeding thither, in advance of the fleet under Sir Home Popham, she captured the French privateer brig *Prudent*, of 12 guns and 70 men; retook the English merchant ship *Horatio Nelson*, mounting 22 guns, with a cargo of rum, tobacco, slaves, ivory, &c.; and drove ashore, in the midst of a heavy surf, where all her masts soon went by the board, a ship of 32 guns and 250 men, having on board the ordnance and stores of the *Atalante* frigate, recently wrecked in Table Bay. She also intercepted a Dutch sloop, bound with naval stores from Cape Town to a line-of-battle ship in Simon's Bay.

After the reduction of the above colony, the *Narcissus* proceeded to the Rio de la Plata, from whence she brought home despatches, announcing the conquest of Buenos Ayres, and specie to a considerable amount, forming part of the captured property.

Towards the end of Sept. 1806, Mr. Charles Irby followed Captain Donnelly into the *Ardent* 64; which ship escorted a reinforcement of troops to the little army in South America, and formed part of the squadron under Rear-Admiral Stirling, at the siege of Montevideo. During the operations against that fortress, her captain commanded the seamen and marines employed on shore; and the subject of this sketch was wounded, while serving in an advanced battery.

On the surrender of the citadel of Montevideo, which made but little resistance after the storming of the town, Captain Donnelly was again charged with the official despatches, and the *Leda* frigate ordered to convey him to England. Mr. Charles Irby also returned home in the same ship, April 11th, 1807; and remained on shore from that period till July following; when, his health having been re-established, he joined the *Theseus* 74, Captain (now Sir John P.) Beresford, employed in the Bay of Biscay. We next find him serving under Captain Donnelly, in the *Invincible* 74, on the North Sea station, where he remained till promoted into the *Sirius* 36, Captain Samuel Pym, Oct. 13th, 1808.

In this ship, Lieutenant Irby again proceeded to the Cape

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## CAPTAINS OF 1827.

3

of Good Hope, from whence she was sent to join the squadron employed in the blockade of Mauritius. On the 21st of Sept. 1809, she assisted in an attack upon St. Paul's, Isle Bourbon, the result of which was the capture of la Caroline French frigate, of 46 guns and 360 men, a national brig pierced for 16 guns, and several merchant vessels; the recapture of two British East Indiamen, with cargoes valued at three millions of dollars, and other property to an immense amount, out of the hands of the French; and the destruction of all the defences of the only safe anchorage in the island\*.

Lieutenant Irby quitted the Sirius in May, 1810; returned home in the Leopard 50, Captain James Johnstone; and was appointed to his old ship, the Narcissus, commanded by Captain the Hon. Frederick William Aylmer, in the month of December following. After a cruise off the Canary Islands, we find him proceeding in that frigate to Newfoundland, and from thence, along "the bleak coast of snowy Labrador," to the mouth of Hudson's Bay.

The Narcissus was paid off in Mar. 1812; and Lieutenant Irby subsequently served under Captains Lord William Stuart, Clotworthy Upton, and Sir E. T. Troubridge, in the Conquistador 74, and Sybille and Armide frigates, on the Channel, Irish, and Halifax stations. Previous to his leaving the latter ship, he assisted in capturing an American privateer, of 17 guns and 100 men; and a French letter-of-marque, of 16 guns and 60 men. In Sept. 1814, he assumed the command of the Thames 32, armed *en flûte*, into which ship he had been promoted by the Admiralty on the 7th of June preceding.

The Thames was attached to the unfortunate expedition against New Orleans, and Captain Irby continued to command her till May, 1815, when, being in a bad state of health, he was superseded at his own request. In the summer of 1816, after having unsuccessfully endeavoured to obtain an appointment in the armament fitting out against Algiers, he left England, with the intention of making a tour

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\* See Vol. II. Part II. p. 716.

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

on the continent of Europe, accompanied by his old friend and shipmate, Captain James Mangles, R. N.

This journey our travellers were led to extend far beyond their original design. Curiosity at first, and an increasing admiration of antiquities as they advanced, carried them, at length, through several parts of the Levant, which had been but little visited by modern travellers, and gave them more than four years of continued employment. In 1823, they printed, *for private distribution*, an account of their "Travels in Egypt and Nubia, Syria, and Asia Minor, during the years 1817 and 1818." The volume consists of six letters. The first, dated at Cairo, Sept. 27, 1817, relates to a voyage up the Nile, in company with Messrs. Beechey and Belzoni, for the purpose of opening the great temple at Ebsambal, near the second cataract; and which object they accomplished, after twenty-two days' hard labour, Aug. 1, 1817. The average height of the thermometer in the shade during the operations was 112° of Fahrenheit; and, for the last five days, their food consisted of only doura and water, the Nubians having cut off their supplies, in order to prevent them from completing their explorations. On the 5th of August, Captain Irby had his hand badly cut in wresting a dagger from one of the native boatmen, who, while foaming with rage, was in the act of stabbing Belzoni; by whom the model of the great temple was afterwards exhibited at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. "Mr. Bankes," says the writer of this letter, "was the first Englishman who ever succeeded in gaining the second cataract: he travelled in 1815. In 1816, Mons. Drovetti, the *ci-devant* French Consul in Egypt, succeeded in reaching it, with his two agents, Rifaud and Cailliaud; these travellers, together with Sheikh Ibrahim, and ourselves, are all that have reached thus far. Belzoni had his wife with him in man's clothes."

The second letter contains the journal of a route across the Desert, from Grand Cairo to El Arish and Gaza; along the sea-coast of Syria to Latachia; and from thence to Antioch and Aleppo, at which latter place they arrived on the 25th of Nov. 1817. During the second portion of this

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## CAPTAINS OF 1827.

5

journey, they also visited the village of Eden, the cedars of Lebanon, and the splendid ruins of Baalbec.

The third letter transports us from Aleppo to Hamah (the Epiphania of the Greeks and Romans), situated near the west bank of the Orontes; Palmyra, the ancient Tadmor, founded by Solomon; and the delightful city of Damascus, where the writer and his friend remained from the 10th till the 23d of February, 1818. Previous to their arrival there, they had been thirty-eight days and nights without pulling their clothes off, or ever sleeping on a bed.

The fourth and fifth letters are occupied with various travels throughout the Holy Land, of extraordinary interest. Among other places visited by the writers were Pnias, near to which is the source of the Jordan; Tiberias, situated close to the Lake of Gennesaret; Om Keis, the ancient Gadara, in the country of the Gadarenes; Bysan, supposed to be the Bethshan of scripture; Djerash, formerly a splendid city, the ruins of which are still more interesting than those of the celebrated Palmyra; Szalt, which they believe to be the ancient Machærus, where John the Baptist was beheaded; Gilhad Gilhood, said by the natives to have been the birthplace of the prophet Elijah; Nablous, the ancient Sychem; Mount Gerizim; Bethlehem; Solomon's Pools; Tekoa, built by King Rehoboam; Hebron, which, according to Moses, vied with the best cities of Egypt in antiquity; the vast Necropolis of Petra, distant, according to Pliny, 600 miles from Gaza, and 122 from the Persian Gulf; the Tomb of Aaron, a little edifice upon the very highest and most rugged pinnacle of the Mount Hor of scripture; Rabba, formerly Rabbath-Moab; Diban, in the territory of the ancient Amorites; Mount Tabor; Nazareth; and St. Jean d'Acre.

After quitting Jerusalem, in May, 1818, Captains Irby and Mangles likewise travelled round the Dead Sea, which only two Europeans (the late Messrs. Burckhardt and Seetzen,) had ever visited before them and their companions, Messrs. Banks and Legh.

The fifth letter concludes with an account of the captains'

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 6

## CAPTAINS OF 1827.

embarkation at Acre, on board a Venetian brig, bound to Constantinople; and the scene of the sixth lies in Asia Minor, where they were attacked with fever and dysentery, which increased in so alarming a degree, that they were obliged to hasten from Chelindreh to Cyprus, for medical aid, being totally unprovided with medicine, or any of those comforts so requisite in such an emergency.

Towards the middle of December, 1818, as it was too late to return to Karamania, in their then feeble state, they embarked for Marseilles, where they arrived after a most boisterous passage of 76 days. From this enumeration it will be seen, that some of the least visited and most remarkable portions of the globe were explored by Captains Irby and Mangles, whose enterprise, perseverance, zeal, and abilities, are so conspicuous, throughout the entire narrative, that we much regret our *present* inability to find room for any illustrative quotations.

On the 8th of August, 1826, Captain Irby was appointed to the Pelican sloop, of 18 guns, fitting out for the Mediterranean station; and on the 3d of Jan. 1827, his boats, under the command of Lieutenant Henry Smith (*b*), captured, without resistance, the piratical schooner Afrodite, of 4 guns and 30 men, near Scardamoula, in the Gulf of Calamata. This vessel belonged to a notorious freebooter, named Nicolo Siutto, and had on board a quantity of plundered property, consisting of cochineal, raw-silk, bees'-wax, paper, gunpowder, provisions, dollars, and other money.

The following correspondence subsequently took place between Captain Irby and the Greek authorities, some of whom appear to have countenanced the depredations committed by corsairs from the ports of Sparta :

*“ Djunova, Jan. 8th, 1827.*

“ Sir,—According to information I have received, there are two pirates in your port—I am come to take or sink them. I have, however, first examined these vessels, and observed that one of them belongs to you—I hear she is armed by order of your Senate, the sealed authority for which I request you will furnish me with a copy of. At the same time, I desire you will deliver into my hands the Ionian vessels she has captured, together with their cargoes; giving me likewise a written promise, that whatever

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## CAPTAINS OF 1827.

7

faults this vessel may in future commit, you and your Government will be answerable for. It will also be satisfactory to me, that you deliver into my hands the two pirate chiefs, Nicolo Coccoici and Nicolo Siutto, of Genoa, who, I am well informed, are now residing within the limits of your territories.

(Signed)

"CHARLES LEONARD IRBY."

*"To Signor Giovanni Mavronūcali,  
Member of the Senate of Sparta."*

(ANSWER.)

"Sir,—Such of the members of the Ephori of Sparta as are here present are ready to reply to your letter of the 8th Jan. N. S.

"There can be no doubt that the Devil has again entered into the minds of the Sovereigns. The information you have had, that we have two vessels in our port armed as pirates, is not true; for having arranged our system by the name of Ephori, our first business was to put down piracy by every means in our power, and at the same time to annoy our enemy in every possible way, both by sea and land, for which object our courageous General has orders from the Senate at Napoli de Romania, of which we send you a copy, according to your orders, to inform yourself, that by order of our Government, we have armed this vessel to guard our waters and blockade our enemy's fortresses regularly, without committing any improprieties, according to the documents which we have put into the hands of her captain; having, however, given him directions to be vigilant in distressing our enemy who is so near to us, as we are always striving to do both by sea and land. As to the vessels taken by our cruiser, you will hear all from the Ionian captains themselves, and they are lawful prizes. Although their papers announce they are bound to Zante, they are falsely made out; for the philanthropic Government of Great Britain does not give papers for the fortresses of our enemies to transport provisions there; but these people, to serve themselves, have resolved to do injury to a whole nation, which is suffering under a barbarous enemy. It is now six years since we have revolted, and Great Britain is our only protector. Observe the quality of their cargoes, as appears by their declared manifests; but much of the cargo of the schooner does not appear on her manifest, such as stiletos, knives, pikes, &c.—this proves they were not intended for Zante, such articles being prohibited from entrance there. We, however, according as we ought, have written to our government at Napoli di Romania, to receive their orders on the subject, as in justice we could not do otherwise. If, on the contrary, your excellency thinks differently (not believing, however, it can be so), you are the master; but we must represent our reasoning on the subject. In what regards the pirates, Nicolo Coccoici and Nicolo Siutto, we will take every possible means to apprehend them, and send them under custody to

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 8

## CAPTAINS OF 1827.

our Government at Napoli di Romania, with whom the Government of Great Britain is in correspondence on the subject. As to the captain of our galliot, we are ready to answer for every wrong he may commit, as long as he is furnished with the documents of the Ephori of Sparta. We remain with all honor,

The Ephori of Sparta,  
(Signed) "GIOVANNI MAVRONŪCALI.  
"DEMETRIO GRIGORACHI.  
"GIOVANNI DI COSTANTINO MAVRONŪCALI,"

*"Djunova, Jan. 8th, 1827.*

"Ephori of Sparta,—I have received your answer, and have nothing farther to add, than that for my satisfaction I desire that the persons of the pirates Nicolo Siutto, of Genoa, and Nicolo Coccoici, may be delivered into my hands. By all accounts, Nicolo Siutto is now at Scardamoula, and Nicolo Coccoici is at Kitries: also I require the two Ionian vessels and their cargoes, they having been illegally captured off Cape Matapan.  
(Signed) "CHARLES LEONARD IRBY."

(ANSWER.)

"Sir,—The officer and the consul you have sent have delivered your orders to us, and, to be short, we reply, that in all that regards the pirates Coccoici and Siutto we will endeavour by fifteen days' time to take them, if it be possible, and deliver them into your custody on your return to this port, as well as the property of the Ionian captain who was killed off Prodanò. With respect to the vessels captured, they are free; but their cargoes we have written about to our Government, and according to their answer we must act; if, however, the British Government shall think them not lawful captures, and order them to be restored, we shall be ready also to answer for their cargoes; you may, therefore, rest easy and satisfied on all the points in dispute; we cannot explain ourselves otherwise than by word of mouth."

(Signed as before.)

*"Djunova, Jan. 9th, 1827.*

"Ephori of Sparta,—If you fail to deliver into my hands the persons of the two pirates, Siutto and Coccoici, I will intercept all vessels coming to you with provisions, and on this account I have already detained an Imperial trabaccolo; if, however, you will give me a written promise to deliver to me the persons of these pirates at the expiration of seven days, I am ready to leave your port for the present.

(Signed) "CHARLES LEONARD IRBY."

(ANSWER.)

"Sir,—We have your resolution that we shall search for and deliver



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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## CAPTAINS OF 1827.

9

into your hands, in the course of seven days, the persons of the two pirates, and that you will otherwise blockade our port;—we will do all we can, and if you leave this place we can do it with greater facility; if we find a difficulty in doing so, we will inform you, as well as let you know who protects them.

“ If you remain firm in your resolution to blockade our port, you have the power of doing so. The pirates shall be taken, unless the populace of the country are determined otherwise; and you may imagine what tigers we have to deal with here. The Ephori will not fail to give their reasons for their actions;—you can act as you think proper; we shall do all we can to take the pirates.

(Signed)

“ GIOVANNI MAVRONUCALI,

“ First Member of the Ephori of Sparta.”

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

“ According to your orders, I shall not fail in giving up the rudders, &c. of the two Ionian vessels, as well as every thing else which was taken from them. As to whatever else is in dispute between us, remain more than certain that I shall not fail in doing all I possibly can.”

The Pelican remained wind-bound at Djunova till Jan. 16th, on which day Captain Irby addressed the following to Signor Giovanni Mavronūcali :

“The week I allowed you, wherein to find the two pirates, having expired, and receiving no intelligence whatever from you about them, although I know that Coccoici was in company with your own son at Kitries, and that Siutto resides at Scardamoula, the schooner of Siutto having been captured by our boats close to that place, and the small piratical boat of Coccoici having been found here, I cannot consider you and the other Ephori of these parts in any other light than as protectors of these pirates. On this account, I desire you will immediately give up to me the entire cargo of the Ionian vessel bound to Zante, you have captured. To establish a proper blockade of your enemy's ports you should have a competent force stationed off them: a vessel captured off Cape Matapan, whatever may be her cargo, her papers being made out for Zante, cannot be proved to contain enemy's property; besides which, the vessel that captured her is not furnished with the proper document from the Government of Napoli di Romania, without which no Greek vessel of war is suffered to cruise, according to the agreement between the Government of Great Britain and that of Greece. It becomes, therefore, my duty to demand her of you, and if you refuse to give her up I shall use force to take or destroy her. At the same time the Government of Great Britain being at peace with Greece, I am desirous to avoid as much as possible firing into your houses; but as circumstances may occur to render it im-

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## 10

## CAPTAINS OF 1827.

possible for me to prevent it, for humanity's sake I desire you will send your women and children to the mountains. If you agree to give up to me your galliot, and the cargo of the Ionian schooner, I have no objection to your sending a supercargo of your own to Zante on board the Ionian vessel, nor that your galliot should go there under Greek colours, and manned by her own crew, provided both sail under my custody. If the authorities at Zante conceive you had a right to capture this vessel, you well know that both she and her cargo, as well as your own galliot, will be returned to you. I likewise require satisfaction for the Ionian captain's property, who was killed off Prodano, and on which subject you have already had communications from the Vice-Consul of Kitries, Signor Pasqualigo.

"If you do not comply with my request, I shall be obliged to begin firing: I give you two hours to consider.

(Signed) "CHARLES LEONARD IRBY."

In consequence of this letter, Signor Giovanni Mavronūcali waited upon Captain Irby, and consented to send his galliot and the Ionian vessel to Zante in company with the Pelican: the former was afterwards liberated by an order of the British Government, and sent back with a strong remonstrance to the Greeks. Early in March, 1827, Captain Irby, then at Corfu, reported to his commander-in-chief as follows:

"On the morning of the 2d instant, having heard that Cipriotti the pirate had his rendezvous at Scropho, and had been there a week previously, I took the gig and cutter with Lieutenant Smith (who had destroyed two boats there during our last cruise), in order that I might myself form a judgment as to the practicability of an attack by boats, if Cipriotti should still be there; the Pelican passing outside of Oxia, as there was too little wind for her to pass through the narrow channel between it and Scropho. On opening the passage, a boat, answering the description I had had of Cipriotti's, was perceived to leeward, and chased by the brig and boats; the latter keeping close in shore to cut her off, while the brig necessarily kept outside of her on account of the shallowness of the water. On getting within range, chase guns were fired by the Pelican, and muskets by the boats, to bring her to, which she did not obey, but got her sweeps out and made every effort to escape. On the pinnace and gig approaching her within pistol-shot, she opened a very heavy and destructive fire on them, though both boats had English jacks in their bows, and the Pelican her ensign displayed. Perceiving that the boats would suffer greatly, I ordered them on board, but am sorry to say not until they had two marines killed, and two seamen mortally wounded; both Lieutenants (Messrs. Smith and Daniel F. Grant), Mr. Case the