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[More information](#)

ROYAL NAVAL BIOGRAPHY.

COMMANDERS.

(Continued.)

THOMAS ROBERTS, Esq.

THIS officer first went to sea in the Swallow brig, Captain (now Sir William) Hargood, early in 1790; and joined the Bombay Castle 74, Captain (afterwards Sir John T.) Duckworth, at Spithead, on the 8th June following. In 1793, he was sent by the latter officer, then commanding the Orion 74, with Captain Solomon Ferris, of the Scorpion sloop, to obtain a more practical knowledge of seamanship; and in that vessel we find him running down the coast of Africa, touching at Ascension, and proceeding from thence to Barbadoes, where he again joined the Orion. He afterwards visited North Carolina; and, on his return home, was removed to the Cyclops frigate, Captain (now Sir David) Gould, fitting out for the Mediterranean, where he followed that officer into the Bedford and Audacious, third rates. He was, consequently, present at the reduction of Bastia, in May, 1794; at the capture of two French line-of-battle ships, by the fleet under Vice-Admiral Hotham, off Genoa, Mar. 14th, 1795; and at the destruction of l'Alcide 74, near the Hières Islands, July 13th following.* In the first of these skirmishes with the republican fleet, the Bedford was second a-head in the line-of-battle, and warmly engaged with

* See Vol. I. Part I. p. 251, *et seq.* and the notes at pp. 340 and 254.

Cambridge University Press

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

the *Ca-Ira* 80; her loss consisted of seven men killed, and a lieutenant and seventeen men wounded. After the latter affair, Mr. Roberts returned home, master's-mate of the *Camel* store-ship, Captain Edward Rotheram; and, subsequently, joined the *Eurus* 32, Captain James Ross, on the North Sea station; from which frigate he was promoted into the *Serpent* sloop, Captain Richard Buckoll, in Dec. 1796.

Between Jan. 5th and July 6th, 1797, the *Serpent* was employed in making a voyage to and from the coast of Africa, during which she detained a Swedish merchantman, laden with Dutch and Spanish property to the amount of 40,000*l.*; and captured a felucca, which had been despatched from Cadiz, to apprise the South American trade of the commencement of hostilities between Great Britain and Spain. She afterwards cruised off Havre, under the orders of Sir Richard J. Strachan, and, among other prizes, took a French transport laden with naval stores. On the 6th of Jan. 1798, she again sailed for Africa, where her commander fell a sacrifice to the climate, in the month of April following.

There being no other man-of-war then in company, Mr. Roberts, who had been first lieutenant of the *Serpent* ever since he held a commission, appointed himself successor to Captain Buckoll; but as a commodore was on the coast at the time, the Admiralty did not consider the death vacancy properly filled, and therefore refused to confirm him.

After interring the remains of his late commander, at James Fort, Accra, Lieutenant Roberts immediately collected a large and valuable fleet of merchantmen, chiefly bound to Surinam; and he appears to have been the first who ever conducted a convoy thither, two other officers, who had before made the attempt, having missed the land, whilst he, on the contrary, made it to a mile by lunar observations. He then ran down to Jamaica, and there received from Sir Hyde Parker an order to act as commander of the *Serpent*, which appointment was confirmed by the Admiralty, July 23d, 1798.

In the ensuing year, Captain Roberts, whose health had

Cambridge University Press

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

COMMANDERS.

3

become very much impaired, was sent home as whipper-in to a fleet of 113 West Indiamen, under the protection of the *Regulus 44*, bearing the flag of Vice-Admiral R. R. Bligh, who very soon parted company in a storm, and was not again seen by the *Serpent* until the third day after her arrival in the Downs. Eight or ten of the merchant vessels also parted company when outside the windward passages; but all the others were kept together and conducted safely into port by Captain Roberts, who had occasionally to chase away the enemy's privateers, which hovered about this valuable convoy, together with the usual difficulty of keeping the fast sailing vessels within bounds.

During the remainder of the war, the *Serpent* was employed on the Irish station; but, with the exception of one cruise, Captain Roberts does not appear to have been favored with the least chance of distinguishing himself, otherwise than by his careful attention to the trade constantly under his protection. Whilst on that cruise, he fell in with, and used every effort to get alongside of, a French frigate-built privateer, pierced for 36 guns, and apparently full of men; but owing to her superior sailing, and the darkness of night, she effected her escape without being brought to action.

On the renewal of hostilities, in 1803, this zealous officer was one of the first appointed to raise sea-fencibles in Ireland; on which service he continued until the dissolution of that corps, in the end of 1810. During this period he repeatedly applied for an active appointment; and we latterly find him volunteering to serve on the Canadian lakes, but without success: having no interest, and never having had an opportunity of achieving any brilliant exploit, his applications were utterly disregarded; although his long and arduous services in the *Serpent* may surely be said to have entitled him to some little consideration. His more fortunate brother, Samuel, is a captain in the royal navy, and C. B.*

* See Suppl. Part IV. pp. 28—31; and Vol. III. Part II. p. 440 *et seq.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02271-2 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 4 - Part 1

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)**BENJAMIN STREET, Esq.**

OBTAINED the rank of lieutenant in July, 1800; and distinguished himself on various occasions whilst commanding the *Staunch* gun-brig, off Isle Bourbon, in 1810. The following is an extract of an official letter from Captain (now Sir Josias) Rowley to Vice-Admiral Bertie, reporting the capture of the *la Venus* French frigate, of 44 guns and 380 men:

“ I think it my duty to mention the active zeal shewn by Captain Tomkinson, of the *Otter*, and Lieutenant Street, of the *Staunch*, both on the present service, and those on which we have lately been engaged*; the latter is an officer of long service, whose merits being well known to you, renders it unnecessary for me to recommend him to your notice.”

In Dec. 1810, Lieutenant Street received the public thanks of Major-General Abercromby, for his “ indefatigable exertions” in landing the army under that officer’s command, near Port Louis, in the Isle of France†; and his conduct on this occasion was thus officially noticed in the naval despatches:

“ Nor should I omit to bear testimony to the unwearied exertions of Lieutenant B. Street, commanding the government armed-ship *Emma*, who was employed for many successive nights in sounding, and, as it has been proved, gained a perfect knowledge of the anchorage on the enemy’s coast, and who was equally strenuous in his services, in various ways, on shore. (Signed) “ALB. BERTIE.”

For these services, Lieutenant Street was promoted to the rank of commander, Mar. 4th, 1811.

JOHN ALEXANDER, Esq.

SERVED as midshipman on board the *Royal George*, first-rate, bearing the flag of Sir John T. Duckworth, during the expedition against Constantinople; and was badly wounded by the Turks, at the island of Prota, Feb. 27th, 1807.‡ On the following day, he was promoted to the rank

* See p. 16 *et seq.*, and Vol. I. Part II. p. 629, *et seq.*

† See Vol. II. Part I. p. 417. ‡ See Suppl. Part II. p. 139.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02271-2 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 4 - Part 1

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

COMMANDERS.

5

of lieutenant. We subsequently find him serving under Captain (now Rear-Admiral) Thomas Harvey, in the Standard 64. His commission as commander bears date, Mar. 14th, 1811.

This officer married, Aug. 22d, 1819, Anna Maria, second daughter of the Rev. J. Price, vicar of Merriott, co. Somerset.

JOHN CRAMER, Esq.

WAS made a lieutenant in 1795; and promoted to the rank of commander, Mar. 15th, 1811.

HENRY LYNNE, Esq.

WAS made lieutenant in 1794, and appears to have been a passenger on board the Laurel 22, Captain John Charles Woolcombe, when that ship was captured, after a gallant action, near the Mauritius, by the French 40-gun frigate *Canonnère*, Sept. 12th, 1808. He subsequently commanded the Emma government transport, at Isle Bourbon, where he contributed by his "indefatigable exertions" to the re-establishment of our naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean, as was officially acknowledged. In Dec. 1810, he acted as commander of the Eclipse sloop, at the capture of the Isle of France; and in Feb. following, we find him taking possession of Tamatavé, thereby securing to the British "an unmolested traffic with the fruitful and abundant island of Madagascar." He obtained his present rank on the 18th of April, 1811, and continued to command the Eclipse (latterly on the West India station) until July, 1814.

WILLIAM GREGORY, Esq.

WAS made a lieutenant in Oct. 1802, and promoted to his present rank in April, 1811. He subsequently commanded the Electra sloop, on the Newfoundland station, where he captured, July 7th, 1813, the American privateer schooner

Cambridge University Press

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6

COMMANDERS.

Growler, mounting one long 24-pounder and four eighteens, with a complement of sixty men. Since the peace he has been employed in the Ordinary at Sheerness.

JAMES DE RIPPE, Esq.

Was made a lieutenant in May, 1804, and promoted to the command of the Racehorse sloop, on the Cape of Good Hope station, April 18th, 1811. On the 20th of the following month, he witnessed the capture of *la Renommée*, French frigate, near Madagascar; and on the 24th, assisted in taking possession of her late consort, *la Néréide*, together with several merchant vessels, in the port of Tamatavé.* He died in the year 1828.

JAMES CLEPHAN, Esq.

Is a native of Fifeshire, and appears to have served his time as an apprentice in the merchant service. In July, 1794, having fallen into the hands of a press-gang, he entered as an able seaman on board the *Sybil* 28, Captain the Hon. Charles Jones†, by whom he was rated master's-mate of the *Doris* frigate in Oct. 1795. Subsequent to the demise of that officer‡, we find him serving in the latter ship, under Captains John Halliday and Charles Brisbane, until advanced to the rank of lieutenant for his gallant conduct at the attack and capture of *la Chevrette*, French national corvette, in Camaret bay, near Brest, July 22d, 1801. To the account already given of this brilliant enterprise§, we have now to add, that, although knocked overboard when mounting her side, he was the first person who gained the enemy's deck; and that he there received several slight wounds, of which no mention was made in the surgeon's report. On receiving his first commission from Admiral Cornwallis, that veteran

* See Vol. II. Part II. p. 833 *et seq.*

† Afterwards Viscount Ranelagh. ‡ Dec. 24th, 1800.

§ See Vol. II. Part II. p. 884 *et seq.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02271-2 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 4 - Part 1

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

COMMANDERS.

7

chief thus addressed him:—" *Your country is much indebted to you for your gallant services ; you are now a lieutenant of the Namur ;—you well deserve your promotion ;—few officers have earned it so hardly.*"

The *Namur* 90, Captain the Hon. Michael De Courcy, was paid off in April, 1802 ; from which period Mr. Clephan continued on half-pay until Mar. 1803, when he was appointed to the *Spartiate* 74, Captain George Murray. In this ship he visited the West Indies, under the command of Sir Francis Laforey, at whose particular request he became her first lieutenant immediately after the battle of Trafalgar*, and remained as such until she was put out of commission in Dec. 1809. His next appointment was, in Aug. 1810, to be first of the *Dragon* 74, fitting out for the flag of Sir Francis, by whom he was promoted to the command of the *Charybdis* sloop, on the Leeward Islands' station, April 20th, 1811.

On the 31st Dec. 1812, Commander Clephan captured the American schooner privateer *Blockade*, of 10 guns and 66 men, near the island of Saba. The *Charybdis* was paid off at Deptford, in Aug. 1815 ; since which he has not been employed.

JAMES HENRY GARRETY, Esq.

OBTAINED the rank of lieutenant in May, 1801 ; commanded the *Favorite* hired armed cutter, in action with the *Flushing* flotilla, May 16th, 1804† ; and lost an arm, whilst gallantly defending the *Plumper* gun-brig, near Granville, July 16, 1805.

"On the 15th of July," says Mr. James, "the gun-brigs *Plumper* and *Teazer*" (the latter commanded by Lieutenant George Lewis Kerr), "while cruising off the port of Granville, found themselves becalmed, and likely to be carried into danger by the strength of the tide. They therefore anchored near the island of *Chausey*, but, owing to the exigency of the moment, at too great a distance apart to benefit by any mutual support, in the event of being attacked before a breeze sprang up. The critical situation of these brigs being plainly seen from Granville, which was

* See Suppl. Part III. p. 181.

† See Suppl. Part I. p. 17.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02271-2 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 4 - Part 1

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

8

COMMANDERS.

not four leagues distant, Capitaine Louis Léon Jacob, commanding the several divisions of the flotilla that were assembled between Saint-Malo and Cherbourg, resolved to send some gun-vessels to attempt the capture of them. Accordingly, as soon as it grew dark, seven of the largest class of French gun-vessels, armed each with three long 24-pounders and an 8-inch howitzer, and amply supplied with men and musketry, swept out of the port, under the command of Capitaine Joseph Collet. On the 16th, at 2-30 A. M., they arrived within long range of the Plumper, and opened a fire upon her from their heavy long guns; taking such a safe position, as they advanced, that the brig's 18-pounder carronades could only at intervals be brought to bear upon them. In the course of half an hour Lieutenant Garrety, who from the first had conducted himself in the bravest manner, had his arm shot away; but he continued, for some time, to animate his men in repulsing the enemy. At length, at the end of an hour's cannonade, from which she had greatly suffered in hull and crew, the Plumper surrendered.

“Having shifted their prisoners and manned the prize, the French rested at an anchor, until the tide turned again in their favour at 6 A. M.; when, accompanied by the Plumper, they weighed, and stood for her late consort. At 8-45, the seven French gun-vessels and their prize commenced firing at the Teazer; who, at 9 A. M., cut her cable, and, setting all sail, tried to escape. But the calm continuing, the brig made little or no progress; and her opponents soon surrounded and captured her. The British loss on this occasion has been noticed nowhere but in the French accounts. By these it appears that the two brigs had, including Lieutenant Garrety, seventeen men badly wounded, the greater part on board the Plumper; but, with respect to the killed, which probably amounted to four or five, no intelligence was obtained. The loss on board the French gun-vessels appears to have amounted to five men wounded, including Captain Collet; who, on the afternoon of the same day, entered Granville with his two prizes.”

On the 5th of Feb. 1806, a pension was granted to Lieutenant Garrety, the amount of which, at the time of his death, was 200*l.* per annum. On the 3d of May, 1811, he was promoted to the rank of commander; and in Jan. 1812, appointed to the Parthian sloop, on the North Sea station. He married a sister of Lieutenant Joseph G. H. Gramshaw, R. N.; and died in the year 1827.

JOHN GILMOUR, Esq.

OBTAINED his first commission in Sept. 1801; and was senior lieutenant of the Caroline frigate, at the capture of

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-02271-2 - Royal Naval Biography, Volume 4 - Part 1

John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

COMMANDERS.

9

Banda-Neira, the chief of the Dutch Spice Islands, Aug. 9th, 1810. In the official report of that conquest, made by Captain (now Sir Christopher) Cole to Rear-Admiral Drury, there appears the following passage :

“ 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 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 was most conspicuous.”

Lieutenant Gilmour's promotion to the rank of commander did not take place until July 1st, 1811. He died in the year 1823.

JAMES BREMER, Esq.

Son of the late Captain James Bremer, R. N. (whose services are briefly recorded in Charnock's *Biographia Navalis*), by Marianne, sister of Lieutenant Daniel Gernier, who perished on board the *Ramillies* 74, near Plymouth, Feb. 15th, 1760 *.

This officer was born at Southampton, Jan. 15th, 1767 ; and had scarcely attained the sixth year of his age, when he accompanied his father, in the *Pearl* frigate, to Newfoundland. On his return home, in 1774, he was placed at school, where he continued until July, 1778, when we find him embarking as a midshipman on board the *Vigilant* 64, in which ship he served, under Captains Robert Kingsmill and Sir Digby Dent, on the Channel and West India stations, upwards of three years. The most remarkable events of which he was an eye-witness, during that period, were the action between Keppel and D'Orvilliers, off Ushant, July 27th, 1778 ; that between Byron and D'Estaing, off Grenada, July 6th, 1779 ; and those between Rodney and De Guichen, off Martinique, in April and May, 1780. In these encounters

* See Suppl. Part I. note * at p. 458.

Cambridge University Press

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John Marshall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

14 of his shipmates were killed, and he, with 30 others, wounded.

The *Vigilant* was paid off, at Chatham, Sept. 3d, 1781; and Mr. Bremer remained on shore from that period until April 15th, 1782, when he joined the *Crocodile* 24, Captain Albemarle Bertie, on the Downs station. Whilst in this ship, he was blown up and severely burnt, during an action with a Dunkirk privateer of 32 guns. On the 22d Aug. he followed Captain Bertie into the *Recovery* frigate, then about to accompany Lord Howe to the relief of Gibraltar; and after the performance of that service, witnessed a partial action with the combined forces of France and Spain, off Cape Spartel.

On the 24th May, 1784, Mr. Bremer, then serving under Captain Jonathan Faulknor, in the *Proselyte* 32, at Quebec, was discharged into the *Boreas* 28, Captain Horatio Nelson, for a passage to the Leeward Islands, where he appears to have been principally employed in the *Berbice* schooner, tender to the *Adamant* 50, flag-ship of Sir Richard Hughes, commander-in-chief, with whom he returned home in the autumn of 1786. His next trip was to the same station, in the *Sybil* 28, Captain Richard Bickerton, under whose command he continued from Mar. 7th, 1787, until Sept 30th, 1790; when we find him drafted, with the other petty-officers of that frigate, into the *Boyne* 98, Captain George Bowyer, from which ship, then fitting out at Woolwich, he was at length promoted to the rank of lieutenant, by commission dated Nov. 22d, 1790. His subsequent appointments were, to the *Childers* sloop, Captain (now Sir Robert) Barlow, employed in the suppression of smuggling;—to the *Prince* 98, bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Bowyer, in the Channel fleet;—to the command of the *Bull-dog* gun-boat, fitting out for the Jersey station;—to the *Ruby* 64, Captain Edwin Henry Stanhope, of which ship he became first-lieutenant after the surrender of the Cape of Good Hope;—to command, *pro tempore*, the *Vindictive* 28, one of the Dutch squadron taken in Saldanha bay;—to be first of the *Director* 64, Captain William (*alias* Bounty) Bligh, on the North Sea station;—to the