

THE BATTLE OF VIGO

Admiral Sir George Rooke

Thursday, 18 October 1702

Early this morning made the land going into Vigo, and as we got about three leagues from it, it fell calm, and a fresh gale springing up, about noon, SSE, we crowded sail to get in before night; but as we were got within a league of the islands it proved calm, so that we were forced to tack at four, the wind coming in the evening fresh off shore.

Sent in Lieutenant Paddon in a boat, and Sir Stafford Fairborne's lieutenant in another, to discover and bring us off what account they could learn of the enemy, and ordered the Dunwich to attend and bring them off. At eight lay by. Blowing fresh at ENE.

Friday, 19 October 1702

About six made an easy sail to keep near the shore, and lay by again about four. The LOWESTOFT fell in with two of Sir Clowdisley Shovell's squadron.

Saturday, 20 October 1702

About three this morning the two boats returned from Vigo and brought an account that they had been in between the islands and the main, and by a Spanish friar whom they brought with them, found the flota arrived there the 17 or 18 September, being twenty-two galleons and eighteen French men-of-war; that they had unloaded all the King's plate, and waited orders from Madrid to put ashore the rest; that they were all hauled up above Vigo, near Redondella, and had a chain of masts, etc., cross the narrow neck of land going into it.

Upon this intelligence the Admiral immediately ordered the DUNWICH to carry Sir Clowdisley Shovell, who is cruising WSW from fifteen to thirty leagues from Cape Finisterre, to join the fleet at Vigo, he intending to lead home the great ships. At seven the NASSAU joined the fleet, having been ordered from Spithead to join Sir Clowdisley Shovell, and sent duplicates of the order by him for Sir Clowdisley's joining us at Vigo.

Made all the sail we could toward Vigo, being about twelve or fourteen leagues to the northward of it, with a fresh gale at SSE. At noon the MARY joined us from England, having left Plymouth Sunday last, being ordered to Sir Clowdisley. He chased last night five or six ships into a harbor on this side Cape Finisterre, and the Admiral ordered the KENT, PEMBROKE, and LOWESTOFT, to cruise off the Isles of Bayonne in order to intercept them. At two afternoon the ROCHESTER's prize joined us, being bound to Sir Clowdisley Shovell, by whom the Admiral also sent orders for his coming to Vigo.

Sunday, 21 October 1702

Having lain by from eight last night, at four this morning made sail, being about four leagues from the islands, but it being very dirty, thick weather we had much ado to make the entrance in; and it was not until ten o'clock that the KENT, who had been in with the passage early in the morning, brought to and made the signal; upon which, the wind freshening very much, the whole fleet anchored before eleven o'clock in a range up almost to the chain which the enemy had placed before their ships. The town of Vigo fired some few shot, but none of them reached us, except two or three which did no harm.

Immediately called a council of war.

At a council of war of sea and land general officers held on board Her Majesty's Ship THE ROYAL SOVEREIGN
Present: Sir George Rooke, Admiral; Rear Admiral Baron Wassenaer; Admiral Calemburg; Rear Admiral Graydon; Vice Admiral Hopsonn; His Grace the Duke of Ormonde; Vice Admiral Vandergoes; Lord Portmore; Vice Admiral Pietersen; Baron Sparre; Sir Stafford Fairborne; Brigadier Hamilton

Upon consideration of the present position of Monsieur Chateau-Renaud's squadron with the flota above the entrance into the Redondella, and in regard the whole fleet cannot, without great hazard of being in a huddle, attempt them where they are: it is resolved to send in a detachment of fifteen English and ten Dutch ships of the line of battle with all the fireships, to use their best endeavors to take or destroy the aforesaid ships of the enemy, and that the frigates and bomb vessels do follow in the rear of the fleet, and that the great ships do move after them to go in if there should be occasion.

It is also resolved that the army do land tomorrow morning and march to the fort on the south side of the Redondella, and attack it, and from thence where it shall be most useful to the annoying the enemy.

Line of Battle

Guns			
MARY	60	Edward Hopsonn] Vice Admiral Hopsonn
GRAFTON	70	Thomas Harlowe	
TORBAY	80	Andw. Leake	
KENT	70	Jno. Jennings	
MONMOUTH	70	Jno. Baker] Vice Admiral Vandergoes
DORDREHT			
SEVEN PROVINCES			
VELUE] Rear Admiral Fairborne
BERWICK	70	Rd. Edwards	
ESSEX	70	Jno. Hubbard	
SWIFTSURE	70	Rt. Wynn] Admiral Rooke
RANELAGH	80	Rd. Fitzpatrick	
SOMERSET	80	Thos. Dilkes	
BEDFORD	70	Hen. Haughton] Admiral Calemburg, Baron Wassenaer, Rear Admiral
MUYDE			
HOLLAND			
UNIE] Rear Admiral Graydon
REYGERSBURGH			
CAMBRIDGE	80	Rd. Lestock	
NORTHUMBERLAND	70	Ja. Greenway] Vice Admiral Pietersen
ORFORD	70	Jno. Norris	
PEMBROKE	60	Thos. Hardy	
GOUDA			
ALKMAAR			
CATWYCK			

Monday, 22 October 1702

Early this morning the soldiers were got in a readiness to disembark, and all landed in a little bay on the starboard side going up to the Redondella, about a league above Vigo, at eleven o'clock.

At ten weighed anchor with the fleet and stood in close to the two forts at the entrance of the harbor, but proving calm, Vice Admiral Hopsonn was forced to anchor, the cannon from both sides playing amongst the ships, but did no great damage.

Ordered the ASSOCIATION and BARFLEUR to lay near the forts and to flank them, to force the men from the batteries in case our ships should stop at the boom.

The forts were observed to fire about thirty guns on the starboard and fifteen or sixteen on the larboard. At twelve went aboard the TORBAY, and viewed the forts, boom, and position of the French ships, and at one, the wind coming pretty fresh, the Admiral ordered the Vice Admiral to slip and push for it, which he immediately did, and by half an hour after one, with great success, broke the boom, notwithstanding the great fire that was from both the forts, and eight of the French that were very conveniently posted, the three first divisions got in. The army got up to the fort just as the ships got past and took it. One and soon after three of the French ships were set on fire, and all abandoned the ship Monsieur Chateau-Renaud was in, being first afire, and those near the boom, so that before our ships began to appear pretty clear, and Vice Admiral Hopsonn returned to the SOMERSET to give the Admiral an account as well

as he could of the action, that he found all our ships well except the TORBAY which had been laid aboard by a French fireship which was luckily got a little off, but blew up and set only their sails and side afire; which also, by the captain's and men's good management, was put on; but fifty-three men were drowned, with the first lieutenant, Mr. Graydon, and the purser by the accident of her blowing up.

In the evening went up round the harbor and found by the account of Monsieur le Marquis de Gallissonnière, Captain of the *ESPÉRANCE*, that the following ships were here viz.:

LE FORT, 76 guns, burnt
LE PROMPT, 76 guns, taken, but aground, and may be got off and will be carried home
L'ASSURÉ, 66 guns, taken, and will be carried home
L'ESPÉRANCE, 70 guns, taken, but run ashore and bilged
LE BOURBON, 68 guns, taken by the Dutch, and will be carried home
LA SIRÈNE, 60 guns, taken, but run ashore and bilged
LE SOLIDE, 56 guns, burnt
LE FERME, 72 guns, taken afloat and in good condition, and will be carried home
LE PRUDENT, 62 guns, burnt
L'ORIFLAMME, 64 guns, burnt
LE MODÉRÉ, 56 guns, afloat and in good condition, to be carried home
LE SUPERBE, 70 guns, taken, but run ashore and bilged
LE DAUPHIN, 46 guns, burnt
LE VOLONTAIRE, 46 guns, taken, but ashore
LE TRITON, 42 guns, taken afloat and in good condition, to be carried home

Frigates:

L'ENTREPRENANT, 22 guns, burnt
LA CHOQUANTE, 8 guns, burnt
LE FAVORI, burnt

3 corvettes

17 galleons—4 taken afloat, 2 taken ashore by the English, 5 taken by the Dutch

He says also that all the King's plate, about three million sterling, was taken out and carried to a town about twenty-five leagues up the country, but that only forty small chests of cochineal was carried ashore.

Tuesday, 23 October 1702

Went up and viewed the ships, and ordered Sir Stafford Fairborne to call Rear Admiral Graydon to his assistance, and to take particular care to get as many of the French ships afloat as they can, and those that cannot be got off that they do set them on fire an hour before high water, having first taken out their brass guns, and stores for use, and that they also unload the galleons that are aground, and set them on fire, and take particular care of what is so taken out, and seize all for Her Majesty's use and service.

Ordered two days' provisions to be sent ashore for the soldiers.

The Admiral struck his flag aboard the SOMERSET, and returned to THE ROYAL SOVEREIGN.