

THE GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE

Lieutenant S. J. Ballard, HMS QUEEN

Wednesday, 28 May 1794

AM—Just before 8, discovered a strange fleet of large ships from the masthead, standing for us and we for them. At 9, made out 28 large ships. Our fleet carrying a press of sail to meet them, which they declined. Cleared ship for battle. At 11, tacked. The French fleet forming in a line of battle on the larboard tack. Fleet in chase in the order of sailing. French fleet from SSW to SW $\frac{1}{2}$ W 4 or 5 leagues. Lord Howe WSW 3 miles.

PM—Fresh breezes and squally. The whole fleet in chase of the French, hoping to bring on a general action by our fast sailing ships attacking their rear. At 3, the weathermost of our ships fired on the enemy's rear. $\frac{1}{2}$ past 3, wore with the fleet. Strong breezes, hazy weather, with squalls. The enemy's rear SSE. $\frac{1}{2}$ past 6, observed Admiral Pasley's squadron engaged with the enemy's rear. The body of their fleet SE 9 or 10 miles. Fleet carrying a press of sail in chase. About 10, got up with our ships that were engaged, but too much to leeward for our shot to do sufficient execution. Observed to appearance, by the light of our ships' guns, a large ship, very much shattered, her fire silenced, fall on board one of our ships, with an intent we imagined to board. Prepared for boarding. All hands at quarters.

Thursday, 29 May 1794

AM—At 3, observed the enemy's fleet to windward in line of battle. Our fleet at daylight forming, found ourselves well ahead and to windward of most of our fleet. At 8, the fleet wore in succession. At 9, exchanged a few distant shot with the enemy's rear passing. Made and shortened sail occasionally to preserve our station in the line. Fresh breezes and cloudy. The two vans engaged at a distance. The enemy being to windward, no hopes of bringing them to close action. The signal to tack annulled. CÆSAR's inability to comply with it.

PM—At 53 minutes past noon, wore ship per signal and renewed the action, passing along the enemy's line within ours. Made four different attempts to break the enemy's line, but could not effect it. Their rear being so compact left no possibility of sailing ahead of any of their ships, particularly from the shattered state of our ship who barely steered. At $\frac{1}{2}$ past 2, discontinued firing, having passed the enemy's rear ship. Most of our fleet in action. Wore ship and laid our head towards the enemy. Employed refitting the damages sustained in action. Masts all wounded. Got the topgallant masts down. Cleared the wreck of the fore yard. Sent the main topgallant mast up for a mizen topmast; main topsail yard for a fore yard; and bent a complete new suit of square sails. 4.10 Made the VENUS' signal to stay by us. 6.10 The enemy's fleet wore and stood for us with an intent to cut us off; which they would have done had not some of our ships very gallantly bore down to our assistance, when they hauled off and wore in a good line. At 8, the body of our fleet W. Inclinable to fog. Fresh breezes and squally. At 12, lost sight of our fleet. Thick fog with rain.

Friday, 30 May 1794

AM—At daylight, part of our fleet in sight. Made and shortened sail occasionally. Mustered the ship's company. Found we had killed, Mr. William Mitchell, master, and 22 men; wounded, Captain Hutt, Lieutenants Lawrie and Hollis, Mr. Le Briton, midshipman, and 48 men, 27 very severely.

PM—Clearer. Saw the body of the French fleet bearing NW, 3 or 4 leagues. 8.45 Made the signal to say we were ready to renew battle. 9.35 INVINCIBLE ordered to quit the line, having sprung a lower mast. Fresh breezes and hazy. Fleet forming in the order of sailing.

Sunday, 1 June 1794

AM—At daylight, the French fleet in sight far to leeward. Altered course to starboard per signal. $\frac{1}{2}$ past 7, came to the wind on the larboard tack by signal. The enemy in a line of battle from WNW to N by E. At $\frac{1}{2}$ past 9, bore down on the enemy, each ship for her opponent. $\frac{3}{4}$ past 9, the two vans began to engage. Received the fire from several of the enemy's rear ships, going down to bring our opponent to close action, which she easily declined by making sail from us; our ship then being very much disabled in her masts, sails, and rigging. $\frac{1}{4}$ past 10, brought the next ship to close action, passed through their line and engaged within a cable's length to leeward, sometimes the two ships barely clear of each other. Soon found we had the superiority over our opponent at close fighting, her fire being nearly silenced by $\frac{1}{2}$ past 10; and in much confusion, having suffered us to rake her twice, when her mizen mast, and soon after her main and fore masts, went by the board, as did our main mast nearly at the same time. Still a well-directed fire kept up till eleven, when the French ship, being totally dismasted and her fire silenced, called for quarter. Our boats all being shot through could not take possession of the enemy. People employed clearing the wreck, getting up a jury main mast, and repairing the damages sustained in action. Counted 9 ships dismasted astern of our van. The generality of them had struck to our ships. Moderate breezes and fine clear weather.

PM—Moderate breezes and hazy. Employed repairing damages and putting the ship in a state of defence. $\frac{3}{4}$ past 12, wore ship under a shattered jury foresail and fore topsail. The ship being unmanageable, all her after yards and sails

shot away. Observed eleven sail of the enemy's line and their frigates standing for us. Our fleet so much disabled to windward, no hopes of relief from them. Beat to arms. Swayed a fore studdingsail up for a cross-jack to keep the ship from falling down on the enemy. At ½ past 1, they began a heavy fire on us, which we so faithfully returned, occasioned them to pass on, not wishing to have any more fire from a disabled British ship. Lord Howe, perceiving our distress, sent the PEGASUS frigate to our assistance, who took us in tow. Wore ship. ½-past 6, having got up a jury mainmast, and after sails set, the PEGASUS cast us off. 6.5 Observed one of the prizes, an 84-gun ship, sink with great part of her crew. The RATTLER and boats of the nearest ships employed taking up the crew of the ship that sunk. At 10, bent a repaired foresail. Moderate and fair weather. The Admiral's light E by S 1 mile. Committed the body of Robert Moore to the deep, slain in battle.

Monday, 2 June 1794

AM—At daylight no appearance of the remains of the beaten French fleet. 31 sail of masted ships in company, and 8 hulks. Mustered the ship's company. Found 14 men killed. Lieutenant Dawes and 20 men severely wounded.

T. Sturges Jackson, *Logs of the Great Sea Fights, 1794–1805*. (London:1899), 1:67–71.