

CAPTAIN THOMAS NEALE'S ACCOUNT OF HIS PASSAGE IN THE SWIFT GRAB, FROM BENCOOLEN TOWARD THE BASSES DE CHAGOS, AND THE SEYCHELLE ISLANDS

(Neale had been sent from Bombay on 10 March 1772 to look for the Three Brothers and the Seven Brothers, but had been forced to make for Bencoolen where he arrived on 2 May. He left on 7 May and sailed west to the Chagos)

"At 4 p.m. June 1, saw two ranges of islands: the body of one bore / SWbW and the body of the other ENE. I immediately steered for those in the ENE which were distant near 5 leagues, and by 10 o'clock was within a mile of one of them .. I continued making short tacks till the morning, when I sent the boat on shore, which soon after returned laden with cocoa-nuts and boobies; but, as the landing here was very difficult, on account of the great surf, I made sail to the eastward ... and about 9 discovered a very fine bason. ... The boat landed there upon a fine sandy beach, without any danger. I gave them firearms to shoot with, but they had no occasion to use them: the birds were so tame, they might be taken off the trees. We found no water here. ... The cocoa-nut grows upon almost all this range of islands. There are ten of them in number: they are joined to each other by a reef of rocks. ... the other range of islands seen to the SWbW are innumerable." (224).

Neale's account is followed by "An account of the Swift Grab's Journal, from Bencoolen toward the Seychelle Islands" (log excerpt).

Source: W. Herbert, W. Nicholson and others. 1780. A new directory for the East-Indies ... A work originally begun upon the plan of the Oriental Neptune, augmented and improved by Mr W. Herbert, Mr W. Nicholson, and others; and now methodised, corrected, and further enlarged, by Samuel Dunn. London: Henry Gregory. 5th edition, i-xxxvi, 1-554. See pp 223-225 and 226-232. Neale's account in a letter to Herbert had first been published in the 4th edition, the letter dated 1775.

Before this expedition, Neale had been in the Chagos with the Greyhound, Capt David Simmons, 1768.

W. HERBERT, W. NICHOLSON → 1780. A new directory for the East-Indies...  
A work originally begun upon the plan of the Nautical Neptune, augmented and  
improved by W. W. Herbert, W. W. Nicholson, & others; and now methodised,  
corrected, and further enlarged, by Samuel Dunn. London: Henry Gregory. ed. 5.  
1-xxvi, 1-554. Wh. 10.78.

4th edition contained 'An account of the Swift gulls' nests, from Barcelona  
toward the Caysholle Islands; in which are felt in with the shoals, and  
Islands of Chagos; determining the situation of those dangers more exactly than  
by Captain Thomas Neale, Commander of the said gulls.  
heretofore known.' In a letter to Mr William Herbert, late Editor of the New  
Directory for the East-Indies, 1775' [ix]

of the Laccadive Islands; 112-120

of Islands in the Indian Ocean. 214-217

Captain Thomas Neale's account of his voyage in the Swift gulls, from  
Barcelona toward the Bonas de Chagos, & the Caysholle Islands. 223-225

left Barcelona 7 May 1772. [Having been sent from Bombay 10-3-1772 to look for  
3 or 7 Bortons, but found none in Barcelona, etc. 2 Aug 1772]  
'At 4 pm June 1, saw two ranges of islands: the body of one bore/  
SW by W and the body of the other ENE. I immediately closed for three  
in the ENE which were distant near 5 leagues, and by 10 o'clock was  
within a mile of one of them... I continued making short tacks till the  
morning, when I sent the boat on shore, which soon after returned laden  
with cocoa-nuts and breadfruit; but, as the landing here was very difficult,  
on account of the great surf, I made sail to the eastward... and about  
9 descended a very fine bay... The boat landed three upon a fine  
sandy beach, without any danger. I gave them freedom to do as they  
but they had no occasion to use them: the birds were so tame, they  
might be taken off the trees. We found no water here... The cocoa-nut  
grows upon almost all this range of islands. There are ten of them in  
number: they are joined to each other by a reef of rocks... The  
other range of islands seen to the SW by W are innumerable.. [224]

Neale had previously been in Chagos with the Greyhound, Capt David  
Simmons, 1768

I make it my purpose to dwell in this preliminary discourse on these  
objects only, which most excite my attention. Among the number of those I  
revere, for instance, the harbor of Diego Garcia, & the aspect of the  
island itself is, beyond all comparison, the most beautiful in the world.  
Its form resembles a horse shoe. Its greatest breadth is not more than  
four miles; the ground is however sufficiently elevated to serve as  
a fine & shelter to a vast number of vessels, which afford a secure  
room to the most numerous fleets. This cove is four leagues long, & is  
main breadth is about one league. Its excellent harbor has two entrances  
to the north. The roads are extremely fine. Its situation I ascertain it  
to be in the 7 deg. 14 min. South latitude, & in the 68  
degree east longitude for the relation of Paris.

At the bottom. A voyage to Madagascar & the East Indies by the Atalante  
bottom, to which is added, the island's names in the Chinese, Arabic,  
illustrated with an account of Madagascar drawn by M. de la Motte.  
Paris - for the French, by Joseph Truffaut, M.A. London: E. Jeffery. 1793  
48-49

"This island is one of the wonderful phenomena of this globe".

James Harsburgh 1809: 131

list of names sent to the late Sir John  
Parrish in the Naval Department of the Admiralty  
Glasgow the Admiralty the Admiralty 1896

J. Marshall. Royal Naval Academy 1823-1830

INDIA OFFICE RECORDS

BOMBAY SECRET AND POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS

Vol. 73, 1786

---

Diego Garcia Expedition 1786

To whom these Presents may come or concern  
Greeting

I, Richard Thomas Benjamin Price Esqr. a Senior Merchant in the Service of the Honble the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies, at their Presidency of Bombay. In virtue of full Power and Authority vested in me by my Superiors the Honble Rawson Hart Boddan Esqr. President of and for all Affairs of the said Honble Company on the Coasts of India, Persia, and Arabia, Governor and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Castle of Island Bombay etc. and Council, have this day taken full and ample Possession of the Island of Chagos or Diego Garcia, and all its Dependencies in the name of our Most Gracious Sovereign George the third of Great Britain, France and Ireland King Defender of the faith etc. And of the said Honble Company for their use and behoof. In Witness whereof, I have caused the British Flag to be hoisted with the usual Formallities, and taken, and publickly executed this Instrument of Possession to which I have subscribed my name and affixed the Seal of the aforesaid Honble Company at Diego Garcia, on the fourth day of May in the 26th year of the reign of his Majesty King George the third and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty six 1786.

H. B. Price  
Chief

Honble Com-  
pany's Seal

Possession taken of this Instruement

Executed by Richard Thomas Benjamin Price Esqr in the  
Presence of us

Richmond Smyth. Second

T. C. Sartorius. Captain

William Robinson. Captn.

Joseph Smyth. Captn.

William Broughton

Archibald Blair

Thomas Hardie

Arthur Disney

Galbraith Tredennick

G. L. Emmet

William Drummond

Samuel Speak

William Relph

Joseph James Surgeon

John Price Surgeon

Gabriel Alvares Asst Surgeon

John Wales

George Thomas

John Conrad Sartorius to Council, 18 January 1786

Accepts "employment on a secret and distant Service which is soon to take place"; points out that his financial position is such that his creditors must be satisfied before he can leave India.

Consultation, 24 January 1786

Agrees an advance of Rs 30,000 to cover Sartorius' debts

Consultation, 6 May 1786

A letter read from Messrs Price and Smyth, as entered in the Secret Diary, "acquainting us of their having arrived with the vessels employed on the Secret Service off Anjengo on the 22nd March, six days after they had left this place. Ordered the Bardane who had engaged to proceed on this Service and received three months impress be searched for and seized to answer for his conduct. and an enquiry be made why a gunner was sent contrary to express orders who had been for some time afflicted with a stubborn venereal disorder" (77-79).

Consultation, 23 June 1786

Read despatches brought by the vessel Admiral Sir Edward Hughes from the Chief of Council, New Settlement of Diego Garcia (83).

R. J. B. Price and T. Richmond Smyth letter to Council, Diego Garcia, 3 June 1786

X Expedition arrived at Diego Garcia on 27 April; met by five 'Coffrees' bearing a letter dated 13 April 1776 stating that a settlement had been established by M. De Normand. They also had a second letter dated 1 May 1784 concerning fisheries and giving a list of people in the settlement. Price and Smyth consider that since none of the people on the atoll had been there before 1 May 1784 the first letter was a fabrication intended to establish prior claim. The second letter was in fact dated ten years after Capt Sheriff had taken possession for the English, with whom legal right to the island therefore lay.

On 28 April the expedition landed at the French Village, "a dozen huts of the meanest appearance covered from the Top to bottom with dried branches of the Cocoa Nut Trees". "A fine breed of Hogs and fowls was perceived, the soil perfectly sandy, and only so much of the Ground cleared away as was barely sufficient for the erection of their Huts, as on all sides were the Cocconut Tree, some Trees of a very extraordinary size, others less and all below an impenetrable underwood. A passage had been cut thro' there direct across to the Sea Shore, the Breadth of the land appeared to be about Six or seven hundred yards, tho' no difference in the soil except where the sand was blackened by the fall of leaves and branches, that by the rain and by the exclusion of the Rays of the Sun, had rotted, but which when again expsed to the enlivening heat of the Sun returned to its primitive state, notwithstanding what Naturalists alledge, that this manure forms the first covering of all uninhabited lands, and is called garden Mould. We returned home by another passage lower down made for a Turtle cart, which was under asked on the inside of the Bay".

29 April: explored to the north where M. Sainfie had lived in March and April; another turtle road. Atte pted to land people and cattle there without success; subsequently landed late in the evening at the original location.

30 April: started clearing land to the south: marquees erected.

1-3 May: tents soaked by torrential rain.



4 May: the flag was hoisted and possession taken "in the name of our most Gracious Sovereign Lord George the third, and for the use and behoof of the United English East India Company." The rain continued and there was a need for a storehouse, "as we found from the information of the French Coffees the surface of the ground was frequently covered with Water from heavy rains - that the place swarmed with rats worms and dangerous insects against all which a good foundation was absolutely required to preserve our provisions and Stores."

5 May: orders were issued to Captain Sartorius to carry out the survey but he declined to do this on the grounds that the marine surveying would be more appropriate for Lieut Blair. There was need for speed as the vessel Admiral Hughes was due to leave for Bombay on 20 May. Sartorius is unable to accept performing the survey in a hurry because of the need for accuracy.

15 May: still raining.

"18. The Trees and Plants were landed on the 13th in very good order, and put into the Ground that had been prepared; but we are under much doubt if from the observations we have had the opportunity of making there is depth of soil to bring them to any perfection, as the whole soil is a very light sand; no kind of Mould anywhere to be found, that Water is in no part lower than four feet and an half, in many within three feet yet the supply appears to be afforded from the height of the Tides, many of the Wells between the Spring tides having become totally Dry - that various kinds of Seeds have been sowed, which have come up with surprising quickness, tho' four or five Days after the leaves have all become yellow - that we are afraid the information of the French Coffees in their attempts may prove too true, being that everything they had sowed came up a few inches above the Ground and then died away. Whether this alarming appearance proceeds from the Air or the Water we cannot take upon us as yet to say but should all our attempts to raise any kind of vegetable prove ineffectual we must be in a very distressed situation. ... The very Grass that is only here to thrive scattered about the Cattle Sheep and Goats refuse, preferring the leaves of the Cocoa Nuts that have taken root in every part, how far this Food may be conducive to their support time alone can evince, or how long it may prove innocent, as as the French Coffrees inform us, all their Sheep and Goats died in the course of Six Weeks;

it is true they had not the assistance of Grain, but our stock of that Article being but trifling we may while it lasts keep the animals alive, tho' to improve the Breed or their Flesh we cannot conceive possible, and if Grain of all kinds must absolutely be supplied to keep in mere existence the animals necessary for support, what must be the expense to attempt rearing a number for the refreshment of Ships that may call here in the hope of Supplies? "

20. The ship was engaged in taking in 200 tons of coral ballast, and while doing so the men turned many turtle: "we mentioned to Capt Smith the Impropriety of taking more than was absolutely necessary for his Ships Company's consumption", because of the Company orders against disturbing the turtle unnecessarily. Because the disturbance continued general orders were issued including an absolute prohibition.

"23. The Turtle is to be caught in almost every part of the Island without is most Assuredly the first food that could be furnished by Nature for tho' from 4 to 500 lb weight it is nourishing and far from Cloying the meat of it bearing even to be salted. that in appearance of taste has a similitude to coarse grained Beef yet not so tough. No care or attention shall be wanting on our part to prevent the disturbance of these Animals that seem to come upon the Beach very near the Year round every three or four days, that such numbers we hope might be caught to provision a few Ships were the Island clearer and the communication more free. Whereas at present we have but two places that roads are made to the out side that since our arrival having been more frequented than before, are not so plenty where the cart can travel, but our attention shall as soon as the more necessary works are furnished be paid to this."

"29th. The Harbour we have reason to believe will answer any expectation the Honble Company may have formed of it, though it possesseth many dangers to those unacquainted. The lowness of the land might cause us to believe that violent winds would have great effects on ships at anchor were it not from its being sheltered from heavy swells and a tolerable good Ground for anchoring yet Lieut Blair's report which we daily expect will enable us to be more particular."

"30th. The Soil we have already described is very poor light and dry sand, not being capable with a little depth before water is to be found to yield any thing substantial. Grass tho' to be picked up in small quantities being refused by the Cattle from its Saltish Taste and probably from its rankness; Hogs and Fowls we are induced to believe will thrive very well; Turtle and Fish are to be caught in plenty. Cocoa Nuts abound in every part of the Island and whenever we have dug water has flowed in with great Briskness, apparently sweet and wholesome."

"31st. It may be risking opinion to say from the appearance of the Island and the many trees that even now are thrown up bodily that it was some hundred years since a mere bank of sand that has received from other Islands Cocoa Trees and the various other Trees and low wood it is now so thick with. - The Cocoa Tree is propagated from the Nuts that fall on the Ground which there take root and shoot up in the most extraordinary thick manner, yet hence more of the Trees have any Hold of the Soil, that the South east winds which seem to prevail as to time of strength, have given these trees in general an inclination to the N.W. they grow to a much greater height than in India and appear in a very flourishing state."

"32. The other Trees on the East Side bear no similitude to the Indian Trees, have no solidity or Property for building and we are yet unable to describe them less Generally. Yet are sorry to observe, not a Fruit Tree is on the Island or any eatable Vegetable unless the young leaves of the Cocoa Nut just taking root may be termed so from the Cattle and Hogs naturally preferring them to any thing else. From the Experiments we have already made on a spot for a Garden the vegetation appears very quick. Cucumbers, Saladding, Radishes, Melons, Beans etc have come up tho' the third leaf becoming yellow without affecting the two first gives us hope as we close this to say something with certainty of the apprehensions we were given to entertain of the Fatality attending young Plants, that if affected by any thing we judge the Winds we have experienced from the Southward, that are dry and violent may deprive the Plants of their Strength causing thereby a kind of Blight that no care can recover them from. Potatoes and yam have been planted, the first have made their appearance and flatter us with more hope of success and than anything else, sandy light soil being congenial to the nature of them. - Further than a garden we cannot for some time venture on, but as soon as spots can be cleared

for all sorts of Grain they will be put to the trial tho' we fear as this is the dry season it may be improper. the Drought and heat probably being obstacles that care and attention will not be able to rectify, for no sooner is water thrown on beds or ground newly turned up, but so quickly penetrating it leaves the surface in a quarter of an Hour as dry as it was before it received it. The French Coffrees say the Wet Season generally happens in December, January, February and March continuing some time all April, and we have experienced that this year it did not break up till near the middle of May so that if our endeavours should not be successful till then we must be content to wait and try that season which we can only conjecture may prove beneficial from the account that if rain falls for only forty eight hours the Ground is overflowed which can proceed from no other Cause than the shallowness of the Soil, that is in such a short time so much replenished to allow it being carried off as speedily as other soils would, that though this would answer for Matty we doubt other grains requiring more dryness, would survive such Inundation and coldness at its tender roots, and as the Sand surrounding the Harbour is in no place broader than 800 or 1000 yards a very inadequate proportion of earth to the water, yet being so full of trees and under wood in every part it will require great labour and pains for a thousand people to clear it even for experiments, that if successful will be an object of great consideration, tho' if all this trouble should prove of no avail to procure so necessary an aliment for Cattle or good sweet grass or grasses of any kind our Supplies must even be greater of Cattle, Grain and Hay from India, if the Company expect their Ships are to be supplied with live Cattle, for though it is true we may be supplied with plenty of turtle and Fish which first may prove better food and longer kept fit for use on board Ships than Cattle we are dubious if such provision will be considered suitable to long voyages or Cruizes; the Cocoa may however as usual prove a fine antiscorbutic vegetable that with the salutary air hitherto experienced may conduce to affect a speedy recovery to the crews of ships tainted with the scurvy." Also mentions the advantage of Diego Garcia to the Company because of its strategic location vis-a-vis Mauritius.

Report by Capt Sartorius to R. T. B. Price; Diego Garcia, 3 June 1786.

Sartorius states that the best harbour is "the inside shore of the western point of this Island"; the lagoon mouth islets can be used as defences.

Additional reasons for choosing this area for the harbour include:

"Thirdly the plenty of good water which may be had in the West Point, together with a Dry Soil less encumbered with underwood, I believe yet plenty of Cocoa Nut trees and such trees as will afford firewood. These considerations, with plenty of better fish, than can be caught towards the bottom of the Harbour, are advantages of such a nature which leave no doubt whether this part of the Island should not be preferred... for the creative Principal Town on Diego Garcia."

However, Sartorius then stresses the disadvantages of the island as a whole. "The Soil throughout the Island is a sand in some places more solid than in others, but wherever it is dug up you are sure to find water from three to four feet from the surface but more frequently under three. for three or four days it retains a Taste like Water which has been confined on board Ship a considerable time after which it becomes perfectly clear well tasted and keeps good in Casks. The facility of procuring water here proved a Great obstacle to the raising a foundation for any considerable Building or Fortification, for as the true level of the Island for almost two thirds of it, is scarce three or four feet above high water mark at Spring Tides, it is evident that many places will require Piles to establish a solid foundation ..." He notes the absence of local timber for piles: there is only one tree with suitable wood, but that is too small; and this timber splits in the sun and is thus useless for structures.

"The second sort of tree is of an Enormous size to so extremely brittle that a whole branch of fifteen or sixteen inches diameter will break off the Tree before it is one third cut through. There is besides these two sorts a quantity of smaller sort of Wood which grows to the size of rafters and may be made to answer the purpose of roofing houses. ... The Cocoa Nut tree here exceeds everything in height and beauty, but can only be considered for building to answer for sheds."

"I have not been able to discover all over the island a stone fit for building. The (b)locks are all of a Gravelly and Sandy nature which not only break to pieces when cut with a chisel but decay and waste gradually when washed by the Sea ..."

"The Island whose shores are so nearly level with the Sea, can boast of little or no natural advantages, except what it may receive from Art together with a strong Garrison, and as it is not likely that such an expensive project will take place so as to fortify the whole of the Island, being sixty or seventy miles in circumference ..." Sartorius suggests fortifying less than two miles from West Point to the bottom of the bay. Materials would have to be brought from Bombay to fortify the islets by constructing walls across the reef. Since ships cannot get within half a mile of the shore there is a need for jetties. Hence he suggests that the garrison might occupy moored ships rather than live on shore.

Capt Sartorius's Instructions to Lieut Archibald Blair, 7 May 1786.

Instructed the survey the lagoon entrances, including the principal entrance by White and Red Beach Island, and also Black and White Beach Island; to look at the anchorages; and to make a plan of the lagoon.

/538-541

Remarks and an Explanation of the Draught of the Harbour of Diego Garcia.

A. Blair. 2 June 1786.

(Includes, p. 541:)

Meteorological Journal at Diego Garcia from 7th May to 3d June 1786.

| Day of<br>the<br>Month | Medium heat, in a Tent of two of<br>Fahrenheit's thermometers |                  |                  |                  | winds         | weather and remarks        |
|------------------------|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
|                        | sunrise   | noon             | sunset           | tent at night    |               |                            |
| 7                      | 78  | 86               | 77               | 81               | ESE           | Rainy                      |
| 8                      | 78  | 84 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 84               | 81 $\frac{1}{2}$ | SE            | Fair weather               |
| 9                      | 79  | 85 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 84               | 80 $\frac{1}{2}$ | ..            | do. Brisk gales            |
| 10                     | 78  | 84               | 82               | 81               | ..            | do do                      |
| 11                     | 78  | 82 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 82               | 81               | S             | Strong winds               |
| 12                     | 78  | 84 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 79               | S             | do but cloudy              |
| 13                     | 78  | 84               | 82               | 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ | S by E        | do do                      |
| 14                     | 77  | 83 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 81               | 80               | SSE           | do do /times               |
| 15                     | 77  | 85               | 82               | 80               | Sly           | do heavy showers at        |
| 16                     | 76  | 83               | 81               | 80               | ..            | do showers around /noon    |
| 17                     | 78  | 83               | 80               | 79               | ESE           | light winds fair           |
| 18                     | 77  | 84 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 79               | 78               | Ely           | very light winds and       |
| 19                     | 74  | 83               | 79               | 76               | ..            | calm p.m.                  |
| 20                     | 73  | 86               | 83               | 79               | ..            | calm in the morning, fair  |
| 21                     | 78  | 87               | 84               | 80               | ..            | very light winds, do       |
| 22                     | 78 $\frac{1}{2}$  | 87               | 82               | 81               | ..            | do do                      |
| 23                     | 79  | 85               | 82               | 80               | ESE           | moderate breezes do        |
| 24                     | 78  | 84               | 82               | 81               | SE            | strong winds, cloudy and   |
| 25                     | 79  | 82               | 80               | 80               | SE            | very rainy                 |
| 26                     | 77  | 82               | 79               | 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ | Sly           | do rain in the             |
| 27                     | 79  | 83 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 81               | 80               | ..            | evening                    |
| 28                     | 79  | 85               | 82               | 81               | ..            | strong gales               |
| 29                     | 79  | 84               | 82               | 80               | SE to SE by S | do rain in the             |
| 30                     | 79  | 84               | 81               | 80               | SE            | evening, cloudy            |
| 31                     | 79  | 85               | 81               | 80               | Sly           | do rain 3 p.m. and         |
| 1                      | 79  | 85               | 80               | 79               | SE            | cloudy night               |
| 2                      | 78  | 81               | 80               | 79               | SE            | do but fair - a little     |
| 3                      | 77  | 83               | 80               | 79               | SE            | cloudy in the evening      |
|                        |   |                  |                  |                  | SE to SE by S | cloudy threatening         |
|                        |   |                  |                  |                  | Sly           | weather                    |
|                        |   |                  |                  |                  | SE            | rain at noon, hard squalls |
|                        |   |                  |                  |                  | SE            | fair brisk gales           |
|                        |   |                  |                  |                  | Sly           | windy and rainy            |
|                        |   |                  |                  |                  | variable      | do do clear night          |
|                        |   |                  |                  |                  | -             | do but fair                |



Instructions left at Diego Garcia by Monsr Le Normand for the French Negroes residing there. Diego Garcia, 1 May 1784.

The Island said to have been granted to Le Normand by Messrs Souillac and Cheveneau Governor and Inspector of the Isle of France.

Le Normand particularly insists that there shall be no free services for ships calling at the island: all goods and services must be provided against receipts. Negro labour is to be charged at 3 livres per day. "Each Turtle over and above what they have consumed on the Island must be paid for at the rate of eighty livres" but only enough can be supplied to get the ship to the next port of call or to the Ile de France. Cocconuts will be charged at the rate of 12 livres per hundred brought to the shore; but labour for carrying them to the ship must be charged additionally.

A shed and a fish-drying rack are to be constructed on "the Island which is near the entrance of the Harbour", for salting and drying all sorts of fish. "As during the great heat of the day the Negroes cannot be employed in Fishing for fear of the fish being tainted by the Sun, they must collect feathers of the sea fowls and upon the Days when the badness of the weather will prevent them from launching their boat into the water they must pack up the Feathers into empty barrels which must be previously well dried. Francois must take charge of this business and Francois de Montareau must remain at the Fishing Settlement to take care of the provision of utensils. The fishing will continue for two months after which the negroes must be employed in gathering cocoa nuts which must be brought to the seaside to the number of 120,000. ... The fishing of Turtles\* /(footnote)\*I believe he means the land Tortoise) must sometimes be an employment. but they must only take those which come back again from the Northward and if the weather be so bad as to prevent them from taking fish they must be employed in catching the turtles which are on the sea side but as soon as the bad weather is over they must return as soon as possible to the former fishing at the Small Island. The Shells of the Turtles must be packed up in parcels and a statement made of the number signed by the two Francois ..."

Consultation, 26 July 1786

Unanimous resolution:

"That the Chief Mr Price, Captn Sartorius. the Commanding Officer and Surveyor, Lieut Frederick the European Artillery, field pieces and their stores be withdrawn.

That the Settlement be left in charge of Mr Smyth as Resident with an allowance of Rs 1000 per month and Rs 200 per month for his table, Mr Broughton to remain as his assistant, Lieut Disney in command of the Detachment and Ensign Emmitt to be still employed in the Surveying Branch.

That they be ordered to return the Drake, to keep the Experiment, Viper, Pathama Boat and Cutter to complete the Survey of the Island and be further employed in execution of the Honble Company's command ... "

Decided also to send six months' provisions to the Settlement.

This resolution followed a Minute by the President, R. H. Boddam, dated 25 July 1786 /618-620/ stating that the only use of Diego Garcia would be in the survey of nearby islands, and for this purpose it is not worth the cost. He found not the "least glimpse of Hope that it will ever yield any Grain whatever". "The Honble the Secret Committee must have been greatly deceived by the French drafts and description". Recommends reduction of the establishment along the lines adopted in the resolution of 26 July.

The decision conveyed in a letter from R. H. Boddam to R. T. B. Price, Bombay, 31 July 1786 /626-631/.

Letter to Council from R. Price, Diego Garcia, 20 August 1786.

Price had travelled to West Point on 16 June for an inspection:

"This Point is certainly very open clear and airy, all wind blowing uninterruptedly upon it. The Ground appeared covered with a verdure of coarse grained grass more diffusely than any part we have hitherto seen. The trees were stuck only the Edges of the land between them it was clear or only filled with Brush Wood the sort appeared somewhat different and more stony than at Flagstaff Point ..."

"With the observations we have been able to make since of the Sod and Grass, we are sorry to say the first does not turn out near so well as at Flag Staff Point the latter no way different, as the Cow that was sent down refused it though eating of somewhat else swelled and died, but we are still more concerned to see the ~~fatality~~ attending the Cattle, Sheep. Goats. Poultry and Pidgeons at this point. The Buffaloe being now in a state we doubt its recovery. That though the Cows on the plain at West Point that were sent as experiments might die for want of proper care and grain yet that is not the case with those here. The different kinds of Poultry have died very suddenly. Pigeons drop down dead from the flight and every young Pig Chicken or duckling die in much greater proportions than in India. But our greater concern is the swarm of Rats their destructive progress into our Gardens, where they demolish all sorts of vegetables that have withstood every other inconvenience."

Mentions lepers from Mauritius present at this time on the west side.

"We are daily more disheartened to think of means to subsist without the least flattering hopes of profit or advantage."

/ 755-758

Letter from R. J. B. Price to R. Smyth, Diego Garcia, 24 September 1786

"A stone cutter belonging to this Settlement, having been regularly bred a dyer, some time since made a discovery of a shrub that grows in great abundance on this Island, whose root gives a fine crimson purple and yellow color to white cloths. It is the same that the Madrass Palampores, Petticoats, Chintz etc are stained with; but which he is of the opinion is naturally much stronger, and more flourishing, than what grows in India; that the colors produced from it carry the appearance of more brightness and durability".

Samples have been sent to Bombay. It has the advantage of being a useful product, but the disadvantage that it would excite the French to look for it on neighbouring islands if they got to know of it.

17  
Consultation 6 October 1786

The Bombay Grab and the Morning Star to go to Diego Garcia to withdraw the establishment.

Consultation 27 November 1786

The Drake rather than the Bombay Grab to go with the Morning Star to withdraw the Diego Garcia establishment.

Letter from R. H. Boddam to J. R. Smyth at Diego Garcia, 27 November 1786 /812-3/

Notice of withdrawal of the Settlement. The returning party ordered to determine the position of Minboy on the return journey to Bombay.

Correspondence from Capt W. Robinson concerning complaints made about him  
by Price, concerning the delivery of stores in September 1786 /1786:706/

Robinson's behaviour subsequently upheld. •

INDIA OFFICE RECORDS

BOMBAY SECRET AND POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS

Vol. 74, 1787

---

Diego Garcia Expedition 1786

Capt Sartorius to Price at Diego Garcia, 15 September 1786 /10-12/

Capt Sartorius to Council, Bombay, 4 January 1787

Complains at the transcript of his report to Price as forwarded to Council but gives no emendations.

20

INDIA OFFICE RECORDS

SECRET

BOMBAY: LETTERS RECEIVED 23 DECEMBER 1781 to 24 JANUARY 1780

---



R. H. Boddam and others, Bombay Castle, Political and Secret Department,  
13 January 1786, to Honble the Committee of Secrecy of the Honble the  
Court of Directors, at their House in Leadenhall Street,

Honorable Gentlemen,

On the 9th Instant by the Surprize Packet, via Fort St George and  
Anjengo, we had the honor to receive your Commands of the 8th July last,  
for taking possession of and settling the Island of Diego Garcia.

These commands shall be carried into speedy effect; and by an  
early future opportunity we will have the honor to communicate to you  
the steps we take to carry your views into execution.

We have the honor to be with the utmost respect,

Honorable Gentlemen,

Your most faithful,

obedient, humble Servants;

(Received in London overland, 10 July 1786)

18 March 1786

To

The Honble the Committee of Secrecy of the Honble the Court of Directors  
at their House in Leadenhall Street.

Honble Gentlemen,

On the 13th of January we had the honor of acknowledging receipt of your  
Commands for 10110.40.81.52.8122.504.11786.54.40.61.52.51 - 52.24.77.78.40.41  
[\*settling the island of Diego Garcia] which we determined to carry into  
speedy effect.

As a Storeship was indispensably necessary, and we could freight none  
large enough without incurring a very considerable Expense, we waited some  
time for the Arrival of your Ship the Admiral Hughes, on Board of which  
we have since laden all the Stores and Provisions 642.64 54.2772.8122.12060.  
4207.22.61.81.80 [\*intended for the new Establishment] and this Vessel,  
under Command of the Drake, accompanied by the Viper Cruizer, and a new  
advice boat left this the 15th Instant and will probably 6440.6206.8122.  
11425.11786.8117.5002.24.80.40.51.81.6018.8122.12416.11786.8122.12057.12206  
[\*arrive at the place of their destination by the middle of the next month].

We have entrusted the Chief management of this Enterprize to two of your  
Senior Servants, Messrs Richard Thomas Benjamin Price and John Richmond Smyth,  
assisted by Captain Sartorius our Eldest Captain of Engineers, who is  
appointed, Engineer, Surveyor and Commanding Officer of the Detachment and is  
not only an excellent Officer, but a Man of good sense and sound judgement -

The Honble the Governor General and Council have communicated to us their  
642.613.22.40.25.48.40.51.81.11786.5705.78.24.80.20.101.41.77.105.8042.8122.  
12477 [\*intended Mission of Col. Cathcart to the Mauritius]. We think it  
necessary to transmit to your Honors a Copy of our 10177.11742.25.1074.54.40.  
61.52.51.52.24.77.78.40.41 [\*Secret Orders in case] should be found to be [\*  
1074.66.56.6255.54.11252.40.51.81.11786.6480.4175.24.81.12117.11745.8122.  
11425.6187.6282.61.54.6538.810] In actual authorized possession of any European  
Nation or the place to be attacked after they had] \*4207.61.54 [\*established]  
themselves there, and we flatter ourselves these Instructions will meet with  
your Approbation.

We have the honor to be with the highest respect /Honble Gentlemen/

your most faithful and most Obedt Servt. R. H. Boddam. S. Grillon. R. Sparks

To Committee of Secrecy, 9 June 1786, from Boddam and Council at Bombay

Acknowledge receipt of second copy of letter of 8 July 1785.

Send 'a Packet containing Copies of the President's Minute and Plan for carrying your Orders into execution, our separate Consultations, and Instructions to the Chief and Council, Sailing Orders to Captain William Robinson, and of the General List and Return of the Civil, and Military and Artificers employed on this Service'.

Drake left Anjengo on 22 March; Admiral Hughes expected in June.

Received in London 6 March 1787.

To Honble the Committee of Secrecy, 23 June 1786, from Boddam and Council at Bombay.

Admiral Hughes arrived; forwarding to Fort St George 'copies of the Survey of the Harbour and the Advices received from the Chief and Council, the substance of which we shall shortly take into consideration'.

Received in London 6 March 1787.

To Honble Committee of Secrecy, 31 July 1786.

Paragraph 17 onwards deals with Diego Garcia Expedition.

Drake left Anjengo on 22 March, arrived at Diego Garcia 27 April.

'19. Having taken these Advices into the most serious Consideration and well weighed every the most minute Circumstance that could lead us to form a Judgment, we were unanimously of opinion your Honors would not resolve on keeping up a permanent Settlement at a place, which seems to promise no other apparent advantage than that of being a fit station for surveying and exploring the numerous Islands and Shoals around and to the southwards of the Line and which it is so undeniably proved could be neither maintained, fortified or defended without incurring an enormous and continued expense, we came to a resolution of reducing the Establishment, but not entirely withdrawing it until we could receive your firm Determination on the advices from your Chief and Council.'

More information given: Scorpion directed to call en route to Bussora; Bombay Crab with provisions; details of reduction given; Viper and Experiment to remain at Diego Garcia; Lieut Blair with Viper to complete their survey of neighbouring islands.

22. When the season opens will pay particular attention to orders for survey in paras 27 and 28 of letter of 8 March; so far hampered by lack of a small vessel.

Received in London 17 December 1786

To Honble Committee of Secrecy, 27 November 1786

'14. On the 28th Ult. the Bombay Grab returned from Diego Garcia, with the Chief Captn Sartorius and the European Artillery on board of her. leaving the charge of the Settlement in its reduced state, with Mr John Richmond Smyth in which condition we meant it should remain; until your Pleasure was known, in reply to our advices by the Scorpion.

15. The Honble the Governor General and Council having been pleased however to direct that this Settlement should be entirely withdrawn, we have dispatched the Drake and Morning Star on that service, with orders to the Resident to evacuate the Island and return to the Presidency.

16. We have farther directed that the Surveyor Lieut Archd Blair in the Viper, in his way back to Bombay, should determine the relative Position of the Laccadives, Malicoy with the head of the Maldives, agreeable to the 27th Paragraph of your Commands of the 25th March last. -

Received in London overland 7 April 1787

To Honble Committee of Secrecy, 28 April 1787

'2. Our Vessels sent to withdraw the Settlement of Diego Garcia returned from thence with the Detachment, Stores Provisions the 11th and 21st Ultimo and ... we transmit Copy of Lieut Archibald Blair our Surveyor Proceedings the Viper on his return from the Island, as well as his Remarks relative to outward coast of Diego Garcia, with some Observations on the Winds, Weather and Currents, accompanied by necessary Charts and Views.

3. On the 26th of February our President laid before us a letter addressed him by the Viconte de Souillac, Governor General of the French Establishment in India, on the subject of our having taken Possession of Diego Garcia, Copy translate of which, as well as of the President's Reply, are enclosed in this Packet.'

Received in London 27 September 1787

To Honble Committee of Secrecy, 28 July 1787

Trans it large scale plan of Diego Garcia by Lieut Blair, and Lieut Emmitt's survey.

Received in London - May 1788.

1784 English sent 6 ships of war from  
Barbary.

When French moved English ready left;  
French went home recording their possessions.

M. le Normand as base.

M. le Normand starts oil extraction ~~at~~ still on  
mainland from capital.

Univille?

INDIA OFFICE RECORDS

BOMBAY SECRET AND POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS

Vol. 73, 1786

---

Diego Garcia Expedition 1786



To whome these Presents may come or concern

Greeting

I, Richard Thomas Benjamin Price Esqr. a Senior Merchant in the Service of the Honble the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies, at their Presidency of Bombay. In virtue of full Power and Authority vested in me by my Superiors the Honble Rawson Hart Boddam Esqr. President of and for all Affairs of the said Honble Company on the Coasts of India, Persia, and Arabia, Governor and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Castle of Island Bombay etc. and Council, have this day taken full and ample Possession of the Island of Chagos or Diego Garcia, and all its Dependencies in the name of our Most Gracious Sovereign George the third of Great Britain, France and Ireland King Defender of the faith etc. And of the said Honble Company for their use and behoof. In Witness whereof, I have caused the British Flag to be hoisted with the usual Formallities, and taken, and publickly executed this Instrument of Possession to which I have subscribed ny name and affixed the Seal of the aforesaid Honble Company at Diego Garcia, on the fourth day of May in the 26th year of the reign of his Majesty King George the third and in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty six 1786.

R. B. Price  
Chief

Honble Com-  
pany's Seal

Possession taken of this Instrument

Executed by Richard Thomas Benjamin Price Esqr in the  
Presence of us

Richmond Smyth. Second

T. C. Sartorius. Captain

William Robinson. Captn.

Joseph Smyth. Captn.

William Broughton

Archibald Blair

Thomas Hardie

Arthur Disney

Galbraith Tredennick

G. L. Emmit

William Drummond

Samuel Speak

William Relph

Joseph James Surgeon

John Price Surgeon

Gabriel Alvares Asst Surgeon

John Wales

George Thomas

5

John Conrad Sartorius to Council, 18 January 1786

Accepts "employment on a secret and distant Service which is soon to take place"; points out that his financial position is such that his creditors must be satisfied before he can leave India.

Consultation, 24 January 1786

Agrees an advance of Rs 30,000 to cover Sartorois' debts

Consultation, 6 May 1786

A letter read from Messrs Price and Smyth, as entered in the Secret Diary, "acquainting us of their having arrived with the vessels employed on the Secret Service off Anjengo on the 22nd March, six days after they had left this place. Ordered the Bardane who had engaged to proceed on this Service and received three months impress be searched for and seized to answer for his conduct. and an enquiry be made why a gunner was sent contrary to express orders who had been for some time afflicted with a stubborn venereal disorder" (77-79).

Consultation, 23 June 1786

Read despatches brought by the vessel Admiral Sir Edward Hughes from the Chief of Council, New Settlement of Diego Garcia (83).

R. J. B. Price and T. Richmond Smyth letter to Council, Diego Garcia, 3 June 1786

Expedition arrived at Diego Garcia on 27 April; met by five 'Coffrees' bearing a letter dated 13 April 1776 stating that a settlement had been established by M. Le Normand. They also had a second letter dated 1 May 1784 concerning fisheries and giving a list of people in the settlement. Price and Smyth consider that since none of the people on the atoll had been there before 1 May 1784 the first letter was a fabrication intended to establish prior claim. The second letter was in fact dated ten years after Capt Sheriff had taken possession for the English, with whom legal right to the island therefore lay.

On 28 April the expedition landed at the French Village, "a dozen huts of the meanest appearance covered from the Top to bottom with dried branches of the Cocoa Nut Trees". "A fine breed of Hogs and fowls was perceived, the soil perfectly sandy, and only so much of the Ground cleared away as was barely sufficient for the erection of their Huts, as on all sides were the Cocconut Tree, some Trees of a very extraordinary size, others less and all below an impenetrable underwood. A passage had been cut thro' there direct across to the Sea Shore, the Breadth of the land appeared to be about Six or seven hundred yards, tho' no difference in the soil except where the sand was blacken'd by the fall of leaves and branches, that by the rain and by the exclusion of the Rays of the Sun. had rotted, but which when again expsed to the enlivening heat of the Sun returned to its primitive state, notwithstanding what Naturalists alledge, that this manure forms the first covering of all uninhabited lands, and is called garden Mould. We returned home by another passage lower down made for a Turtle cart, which was under asked on the inside of the Bay".

29 April: explored to the north where M. Sainfie had lived in March and April; another turtle road. Attempted to land people and cattle there without success; subsequently landed late in the evening at the original location.

30 April: started clearing land to the south: marquees erected.

1-3 May: tents soaked by torrential rain.

4 May: the flag was hoisted and possession taken "in the name of our most Gracious Sovereign Lord George the third, and for the use and behoof of the United English East India Company." The rain continued and there was a need for a storehouse, "as we found from the information of the French Coffees the surface of the ground was frequently covered with Water from heavy rains - that the place swarmed with rats worms and dangerous insects against all which a good foundation was absolutely required to preserve our provisions and Stores."

5 May: orders were issued to Captain Sartorius to carry out the survey but he declined to do this on the grounds that the marine surveying would be more appropriate for Lieut Blair. There was need for speed as the vessel Admiral Hughes was due to leave for Bombay on 20 May. Sartorius is unable to accept performing the survey in a hurry because of the need for accuracy.

15 May: still raining.

"18. The Trees and Plants were landed on the 13th in very good order, and put into the Ground that had been prepared; but we are under much doubt if from the observations we have had the opportunity of making there is depth of soil to bring them to any perfection, as the whole soil is a very light sand; no kind of Mould anywhere to be found, that Water is in no part lower than four feet and an half, in many within three feet yet the supply appears to be afforded from the height of the Tides, many of the Wells between the Spring tides having become totally Dry - that various kinds of Seeds have been sowed, which have come up with surprising quickness, tho' four or five Days after the leaves have all become yellow - that we are afraid the information of the French Coffees in their attempts may prove too true, being that everything they had sowed came up a few inches above the Ground and then died away. Whether this alarming appearance proceeds from the Air or the Water we cannot take upon us as yet to say but should all our attempts to raise any kind of vegetable prove ineffectual we must be in a very distressed situation. ... The very Grass that is only here to thrive scattered about the Cattle Sheep and Goats refuse, preferring the leaves of the Cocoa Nuts that have taken root in every part, how far this Food may be conducive to their support time alone can evince, or how long it may prove innocent, as as the French Coffrees inform us, all their Sheep and Goats died in the course of Six Weeks;

it is true they had not the assistance of Grain, but our stock of that Article being but trifling we may while it lasts keep the animals alive, tho' to improve the Breed or their Flesh we cannot conceive possible, and if Grain of all kinds must absolutely be supplied to keep in mere existence the animals necessary for support, what must be the expense to attempt rearing a number for the refreshment of Ships that may call here in the hope of Supplies?"

20. The ship was engaged in taking in 200 tons of coral ballast, and while doing so the men turned many turtle: "we mentioned to Capt Smith the Impropriety of taking more than was absolutely necessary for his Ships Company's consumption", because of the Company orders against disturbing the turtle unnecessarily. Because the disturbance continued general orders were issued including an absolute prohibition.

"23. The Turtle is to be caught in almost every part of the Island without is most Assuredly the first food that could be furnished by Nature for tho' from 4 to 500 lb weight it is nourishing and far from Cloying the meat of it bearing even to be salted. that in appearance of taste has a similitude to coarse grained Beef yet not so tough. No care or attention shall be wanting on our part to prevent the disturbance of these Animals that seem to come upon the Beach very near the Year round every three or four days, that such numbers we hope might be caught to provision a few Ships were the Island clearer and the communication more free. Whereas at present we have but two places that roads are made to the out side that since our arrival having been more frequented than before, are not so plenty where the cart can travel, but our attention shall as soon as the more necessary works are furnished be paid to this."

"29th. The Harbour we have reason to believe will answer any expectation the Honble Company may have formed of it, though it possesseth many dangers to those unacquainted. The lowness of the land might cause us to believe that violent winds would have great effects on ships at anchor were it not from its being sheltered from heavy swells and a tolerable good Ground for anchoring yet Lieut Blair's report which we daily expect will enable us to be more particular."

"30th. The Soil we have already described is very poor light and dry sand, not being capable with a little depth before water is to be found to yield any thing substantial. Grass tho' to be picked up in small quantities being refused by the Cattle from its Saltish Taste and probably from its rankness; Hogs and Fowls we are induced to believe will thrive very well; Turtle and Fish are to be caught in plenty. Cocoa Nuts abound in every part of the Island and whenever we have dug water has flowed in with great Briskness, apparently sweet and wholesome."

"31st. It may be risking opinion to say from the appearance of the Island and the many trees that even now are thrown up bodily that it was some hundred years since a mere bank of sand that has received from other Islands Cocoa Trees and the various other Trees and low wood it is now so thick with. - The Cocoa Tree is propagated from the Nuts that fall on the Ground which there take root and shoot up in the most extraordinary thick manner, yet hence more of the Trees have any Hold of the Soil, that the South east winds which seem to prevail as to time of strength, have given these trees in general an inclination to the N.W. they grow to a much greater height than in India and appear in a very flourishing state."

"32. The other Trees on the East Side bear no similitude to the Indian Trees, have no solidity or Property for building and we are yet unable to describe them less Generally. Yet are sorry to observe, not a Fruit Tree is on the Island or any eatable Vegetable unless the young leaves of the Cocoa Nut just taking root may be termed so from the Cattle and Hogs naturally preferring them to any thing else. From the Experiments we have already made on a spot for a Garden the vegetation appears very quick. Cucumbers, Saladding, Radishes, Melons, Beans etc have come up tho' the third leaf becoming yellow without affecting the two first gives us hope as we close this to say something with certainty of the apprehensions we were given to entertain of the Fatality attending young Plants, that if affected by any thing we judge the Winds we have experienced from the Southward, that are dry and violent may deprive the Plants of their Strength causing thereby a kind of Blight that no care can recover them from. Potatoes and yam have been planted, the first have made their appearance and flatter us with more hope of success and than anything else, sandy light soil being congenial to the nature of them. - Further than a garden we cannot for some time venture on, but as soon as spots can be cleared

for all sorts of Grain they will be put to the trial tho' we fear as this is the dry season it may be improper. the Drought and heat probably being obstacles that care and attention will not be able to rectify, for no sooner is water thrown on beds or ground newly turned up, but so quickly penetrating it leaves the surface in a quarter of an Hour as dry as it was before it received it. The French Coffrees say the Wet Season generally happens in December, January, February and March continuing some time all April, and we have experienced that this year it did not break up till near the middle of May so that if our endeavours should not be successful till then we must be content to wait and try that season which we can only conjecture may prove beneficial from the account that if rain falls for only forty eight hours the Ground is overflowed which can proceed from no other Cause than the shallowness of the Soil, that is in such a short time so much replenished to allow it being carried off as speedily as other soils would, that though this would answer for Matty we doubt other grains requiring more dryness, would survive such Inundation and coldness at its tender roots, and as the Sand surrounding the Harbour is in no place broader than 800 or 1000 yards a very inadequate proportion of earth to the water, yet being so full of trees and under wood in every part it will require great labour and pains for a thousand people to clear it even for experiments, that if successful will be an object of great consideration, tho' if all this trouble should prove of no avail to procure so necessary an aliment for Cattle or good sweet grass or grasses of any kind our Supplies must even be greater of Cattle, Grain and Hay from India, if the Company expect their Ships are to be supplied with live Cattle, for though it is true we may be supplied with plenty of turtle and Fish which first may prove better food and longer kept fit for use on board Ships than Cattle we are dubious if such provision will be considered suitable to long voyages or Cruizes; the Cocoa may however as usual prove a fine antiscorbutic vegetable that with the salutary air hitherto experienced may conduce to affect a speedy recovery to the crews of ships tainted with the scurvy." Also mentions the advantage of Diego Garcia to the Company because of its strategic location vis-a-vis Mauritius.

Report by Capt Sartorius to R. T. B. Price; Diego Garcia, 3 June 1786.

Sartorius states that the best harbour is "the inside shore of the western point of this Island"; the lagoon mouth islets can be used as defences. Additional reasons for choosing this area for the harbour include:

"Thirdly the plenty of good water which may be had in the West Point, together with a Dry Soil less encumbered with underwood, I believe yet plenty of Cocoa Nut trees and such trees as will afford firewood. These considerations, with plenty of better fish, than can be caught towards the bottom of the Harbour, are advantages of such a nature which leave no doubt whether this part of the Island should not be preferred... for the creative Principal Town on Diego Garcia."

However, Sartorius then stresses the disadvantages of the island as a whole. "The Soil throughout the Island is a sand in some places more solid than in others, but wherever it is dug up you are sure to find water from three to four feet from the surface but more frequently under three. for three or four days it retains a Taste like Water which has been confined on board Ship a considerable time after which it becomes perfectly clear well tasted and keeps good in Casks. The facility of procuring water here proved a Great obstacle to the raising a foundation for any considerable Building or Fortification, for as the true level of the Island for almost two thirds of it, is scarce three or four feet above high water mark at Spring Tides, it is evident that many places will require Piles to establish a solid foundation ..." He notes the absence of local timber for piles: there is only one tree with suitable wood, but that is too small; and this timber splits in the sun and is thus useless for structures.

"The second sort of tree is of an Enormous size to so extremely brittle that a whole branch of fifteen or sixteen inches diameter will break off the Tree before it is one third cut through. There is besides these two sorts a quantity of smaller sort of Wood which grows to the size of rafters and may be made to answer the purpose of roofing houses. ... The Cocoa Nut tree here exceeds everything in height and beauty, but can only be considered for building to answer for sheds."



"I have not been able to discover all over the island a stone fit for building. The (b)locks are all of a Gravelly and Sandy nature which not only break to pieces when cut with a chisel but decay and waste gradually when washed by the Sea ..."

"The Island whose shores are so nearly level with the Sea, can boast of little or no natural advantages, except what it may receive from Art together with a strong Garrison, and as it is not likely that such an expensive project will take place so as to fortify the whole of the Island, being sixty or seventy miles in circumference ..." Sartorius suggests fortifying less than two miles from West Point to the bottom of the bay. Materials would have to be brought from Bombay to fortify the islets by constructing walls across the reef. Since ships cannot get within half a mile of the shore there is a need for jetties. Hence he suggests that the garrison might occupy moored ships rather than live on shore.

/ 537-538

Capt Sartorius's Instructions to Lieut Archibald Blair, 7 May 1786.

Instructed the survey the lagoon entrances, including the principal entrance by White and Red Beach Island, and also Black and White Beach Island; to look at the anchorages; and to make a plan of the lagoon.

/538-541

Remarks and an Explanation of the Draught of the Harbour of Diego Garcia.

A. Blair. 2 June 1786.

(Includes, p. 541:)

Meteorological Journal at Diego Garcia from 7th May to 3d June 1786.

| Day of<br>the<br>Month | Medium heat, in a Tent of two of<br>Fahrenheit's thermometers |                  |                  |                  | winds         | weather and remarks                             |
|------------------------|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|---|
|                        | sunrise   | noon             | sunset           | tent at night    |               |   |
| 7                      | 78  | 86               | 77               | 81               | ESE           | Rainy   |
| 8                      | 78  | 84 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 84               | 81 $\frac{1}{2}$ | SE            | Fair weather                                    |
| 9                      | 79  | 85 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 84               | 80 $\frac{1}{2}$ | ..            | do. Brisk gales                                 |
| 10                     | 78  | 84               | 82               | 81               | ..            | do do   |
| 11                     | 78  | 82 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 82               | 81               | S             | Strong winds                                    |
| 12                     | 78  | 84 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 79 $\frac{1}{4}$ | 79               | S             | do but cloudy                                   |
| 13                     | 78  | 84               | 82               | 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ | S by E        | do do   |
| 14                     | 77  | 83 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 81               | 80               | SSE           | do do /times                                    |
| 15                     | 77  | 85               | 82               | 80               | Sly           | do heavy showers at                             |
| 16                     | 76  | 83               | 81               | 80               | ..            | do showers around<br>/noon                      |
| 17                     | 78  | 83               | 80               | 79               | ESE           | light winds fair                                |
| 18                     | 77  | 84 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 79               | 78               | Ely           | very light winds and<br>calm p.m.               |
| 19                     | 74  | 83               | 79               | 76               | ..            | calm in the morning, fair                       |
| 20                     | 73  | 86               | 83               | 79               | ..            | very light winds, do                            |
| 21                     | 78  | 87               | 84               | 80               | ..            | do do   |
| 22                     | 78 $\frac{1}{2}$  | 87               | 82               | 81               | ESE           | moderate breezes do                             |
| 23                     | 79  | 85               | 82               | 80               | SE            | strong winds, cloudy and<br>very rainy          |
| 24                     | 78  | 84               | 82               | 81               | SE            | do rain in the<br>evening                       |
| 25                     | 79  | 82               | 80               | 80               | Sly           | strong gales                                    |
| 26                     | 77  | 82               | 79               | 79 $\frac{1}{2}$ | ..            | do rain in the<br>evening, cloudy               |
| 27                     | 79  | 83 $\frac{1}{2}$ | 81               | 80               | ..            | do rain 3 p.m. and<br>cloudy night              |
| 28                     | 79  | 85               | 82               | 81               | ..            | do but fair - a little<br>cloudy in the evening |
| 29                     | 79  | 84               | 82               | 80               | SE to SE by S | cloudy threatening<br>weather                   |
| 30                     | 79  | 84               | 81               | 80               | Sly           | rain at noon, hard squalls                      |
| 31                     | 79  | 85               | 81               | 80               | SE            | fair brisk gales                                |
| 1                      | 79  | 85               | 80               | 79               | Sly           | windy and rainy                                 |
| 2                      | 78  | 81               | 80               | 79               | variable      | do do clear night                               |
| 3                      | 77  | 83               | 80               | 79               | -             | do but fair                                     |

/ 542-545

Instructions left at Diego Garcia by Monsr Le Normand for the French Negroes residing there. Diego Garcia, 1 May 1784.

The Island said to have been granted to Le Normand by Messrs Souillac and Cheveneau Governor and Inpsector of the Isle of France.

Le Normand particularly insists that there shall be no free services for ships calling at the island: all goods and services must be provided against receipts. Negro labour is to be charged at 3 livres per day. "Each Turtle over and above what they have consumed on the Island must be paid for at the rate of eighty livres" but only enough can be supplied to get the ship to the next port of call or to the Ile de France. Cococnuts will be charged at the rate of 12 livres per hundred brought to the shore; but labour for carrying them to the ship must be charged additionally.

A shed and a fish-drying rack are to be constructed on "the Island which is near the entrance of the Harbour", for salting and drying all sorts of fish. "As during the great heat of the day the Negroes cannot be employed in Fishing for fear of the fish being tainted by the Sun, they must collect feathers of the sea fowls and upon the Days when the badness of the weather will prevent them from launching their boat into the water they must pack up the Feathers into empty barrels which must be previously well dried. Francois must take charge of this business and Francois de Montareau must remain at the Fishing Settlement to take care of the provision of utensils. The fishing will continue for two months after which the negroes must be employed in gathering cocoa nuts which must be brought to the seaside to the number of 120,000. ... The fishing of Turtles" <sup>/(footnote)\*I believe he means the land Tortoise)</sup> must sometimes be an employment. but they must only take those which come back again from the Northward and if the weather be so bad as to prevent them from taking fish they must be employed in catching the turtles which are on the sea side but as soon as the bad weather is over they must return as soon as possible to the former fishing at the Small Island. The Shells of the Turtles must be packed up in parcels and a statement made of the number signed by the two Francois ..."

Consultation, 26 July 1786

Unanimous resolution:

"That the Chief Mr Price, Captn Sartorius. the Commanding Officer and Surveyor, Lieut Frederick the European Artillery, field pieces and their stores be withdrawn.

That the Settlement be left in charge of Mr Smyth as Resident with an allowance of Rs 1000 per month and Rs 200 per month for his table, Mr Broughton to remain as his assistant, Lieut Disney in command of the Detachment and Ensign Emmitt to be still employed in the Surveying Branch.

That they be ordered to return the Drake, to keep the Experiment, Viper, Pathama Boat and Cutter to compleat the Survey of the Island and be further employed in execution of the Honble Company's command ... "

Decided also to send six months' provisions to the Settlement.

This resolution followed a Minute by the President, R. H. Boddam, dated 25 July 1786 /618-620/ stating that the only use of Diego Garcia would be in the survey of nearby islands, and for this purpose it is not worth the cost. He found not the "least glimpse of Hope that it will ever yield any Grain whatever". "The Honble the Secret Committee must have been greatly deceived by the French drafts and description". Recommends rduction of the establishment along the lines adopted in the resolution of 26 July.

The decision conveyed in a letter from R. H. Boddam to R. T. B. Price, Bombay, 31 July 1786 /626-631/.

Letter to Council from R. Price, Diego Garcia, 20 August 1786.

Price had travelled to West Point on 16 June for an inspection:

"This Point is certainly very open clear and airy, all wind blowing uninterruptedly upon it. The Ground appeared covered with a verdure of coarse grained grass more diffusely than any part we have hitherto seen. The trees were stuck only the Edges of the land between them it was clear or only filled with Brush Wood the sort appeared somewhat different and more stony than at Flagstaff Point ..."

"With the observations we have been able to make since of the Sod and Grass, we are sorry to say the first does not turn out near so well as at Flag Staff Point the latter no way different, as the Cow that was sent down refused it though eating of somewhat else swelled and died, but we are still more concerned to see the fatality attending the Cattle, Sheep. Goats. Poultry and Pidgeons at this point. The Buffaloe being now in a state we doubt its recovery. That though the Cows on the plain at West Point that were sent as experiments might die for want of proper care and grain yet that is not the case with those here. The different kinds of Poultry have died very suddenly. Pigeons drop down dead from the flight and every young Pig Chicken or duckling die in much greater proportions than in India. But our greater concern is the swarm of Rats their destructive progress into our Gardens, where they demolish all sorts of vegetables that have withstood every other inconvenience."

Mentions lepers from Mauritius present at this time on the west side.

"We are daily more disheartened to think of means to subsist without the least flattering hopes of profit or advantage."

/ 755-758

Letter from R. J. B. Price to R. Smyth, Diego Garcia, 24 September 1786

"A stone cutter belonging to this Settlement, having been regularly bred a dyer, some time since made a discovery of a shrub that grows in great abundance on this Island, whose root gives a fine crimson purple and yellow color to white cloths. It is the same that the Madrass Palampores, Petticoats, Chintz etc are stained with; but which he is of the opinion is naturally much stronger, and more flourishing, than what grows in India; that the colors produced from it carry the appearance of more brightness and durability".

Samples have been sent to Bombay. It has the advantage of being a useful product, but the disadvantage that it would excite the French to look for it on neighbouring islands if they got to know of it.

Consultation 6 October 1786

The Bombay Grab and the Morning Star to go to Diego Garcia to withdraw the establishment.

Consultation 27 November 1786

The Drake rather than the Bombay Grab to go with the Morning Star to withdraw the Diego Garcia establishment.

Letter from R. H. Boddam to J. R. Smyth at Diego Garcia, 27 November 1786 /812-3/

Notice of withdrawal of the Settlement. The returning party ordered to determine the position of Minicoy on the return journey to Bombay.



Correspondence from Capt W. Robinson concerning complaints made about him by Price, concerning the delivery of stores in September 1786 /1786:706/

Robinson's behaviour subsequently upheld.

INDIA OFFICE RECORDS

BOMBAY SECRET AND POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS

Vol. 74, 1787

---

Diego Garcia Expedition 1786

Capt Sartorius to Price at Diego Garcia, 15 September 1786 /10-12/

Capt Sartorius to Council, Bombay, 4 January 1787

Complains at the transcript of his report to Price as forwarded to Council but gives no emendations.

INDIA OFFICE RECORDS

SECRET

BOMBAY: LETTERS RECEIVED 23 DECEMBER 1781 to 24 JANUARY 1780

---

R. H. Boddam and others, Bombay Castle, Political and Secret Department,  
13 January 1786, to Honble the Committee of Secrecy of the Honble the  
Court of Directors, at their House in Leadenhall Street,

Honorable Gentlemen,

On the 9th Instant by the Surprize Packet, via Fort St George and  
Anjengo, we had the honor to receive your Commands of the 8th July last,  
for taking possession of and settling the Island of Diego Garcia.

These commands shall be carried into speedy effect; and by an  
early future opportunity we will have the honor to communicate to you  
the steps we take to carry your views into execution.

We have the honor to be with the utmost respect,

Honorable Gentlemen,

Your most faithful,

obedient, humble Servants;

(Received in London overland, 10 July 1786)

18 March 1786

To

The Honble the Committee of Secrecy of the Honble the Court of Directors  
at their House in Leadenhall Street.

Honble Gentlemen,

On the 13th of January we had the honor of acknowledging receipt of your  
Commands for 10110.40.81.52.8122.504.11786.54.40.61.52.51 - 52.24.77.78.40.41  
[<sup>\*</sup>settling the island of Diego Garcia] which we determined to carry into  
speedy effect.

As a Storeship was indispensably necessary, and we could freight none  
large enough without incurring a very considerable Expense, we waited some  
time for the Arrival of your Ship the Adairal Hughes, on Board of which  
we have since laden all the Stores and Provisions 642.64 54.2772.8122.12060.  
4207.22.61.81.80 [<sup>\*</sup>intended for the new Establishment] and this Vessel,  
under Command of the Drake, accompanied by the Viper Cruizer, and a new  
advice boat left this the 15th Instant and will probably 6440.6206.8122.  
11425.11786.8117.5002.24.80.40.51.81.6018.8122.12416.11786.8122.12057.12206  
[<sup>\*</sup>arrive at the place of their destination by the middle of the next month].

We have entrusted the Chief management of this Enterprize to two of your  
Senior Servants, Messrs Richard Thomas Benjamin Price and John Richmond Smyth,  
assisted by Captain Sartorius our Eldest Captain of Engineers, who is  
appointed, Engineer, Surveyor and Commanding Officer of the Detachment and is  
not only an excellent Officer, but a Man of good sense and sound judgement -

The Honble the Governor General and Council have communicated to us their  
642.613.22.40.25.48.40.51.81.11786.5705.78.24.80.20.101.41.77.105.8042.8122.  
12477 [<sup>\*</sup>intended Mission of Col. Cathcart to the Mauritius]. We think it  
necessary to transmit to your Honors a Copy of our 10177.11742.25.1074.54.40.  
61.52.51.52.24.77.78.40.41 [<sup>\*</sup>Secret Orders in case] should be found to be [<sup>\*</sup>  
1074.66.56.6255.54.11252.40.51.81.11786.6480.4175.24.81.12117.11745.8122.  
11425.6187.6282.61.54.6588.810 [<sup>\*</sup>in actual authorized possession of any European  
Nation or the place to be attacked after they had] \*4207.61.54 [<sup>\*</sup>established]  
themselves there, and we flatter ourselves these Instructions will meet with  
your Approbation.

We have the honor to be with the highest respect /Honble Gentlemen/

your most faithful and most Obedt Servt. R. H. Boddam. S. Grillon. R. Sparke

To Committee of Secrecy, 9 June 1786, from Boddam and Council at Bombay

Acknowledge receipt of second copy of letter of 8 July 1785.

Send 'a Packet containing Copies of the President's Minute and Plan for carrying your Orders into execution, our separate Consultations, and Instructions to the Chief and Council, Sailing Orders to Captain William Robinson, and of the General List and Return of the Civil, and Military and Artificers employed on this Service'.

Drake left Anjengo on 22 March; Admiral Hughes expected in June.

Received in London 6 March 1787.

To Honble the Committee of Secrecy, 23 June 1786, from Boddam and Council at Bombay.

Admiral Hughes arrived; forwarding to Fort St George 'copies of the Survey of the Harbour and the Advices received from the Chief and Council, the substance of which we shall shortly take into consideration'.

Received in London 6 March 1787.

To Honble Committee of Secrecy, 31 July 1786.

Paragraph 17 onwards deals with Diego Garcia Expedition.

Drake left Anjengo on 22 March, arrived at Diego Garcia 27 April.

'19. Having taken these Advices into the most serious Consideration and well weighed every the most minute Circumstance that could lead us to form a Judgment, we were unanimously of opinion your Honors would not resolve on keeping up a permanent Settlement at a place, which seems to promise no other apparent advantage than that of being a fit station for surveying and exploring the numerous Islands and Shoals around and to the southwards of the Line and which it is so undeniably proved could be neither maintained, fortified or defended without incurring an enormous and continued expense, we came to a resolution of reducing the Establishment, but not entirely withdrawing it until we could receive your firm Determination on the advices from your Chief and Council.'

More information given: Scorpion directed to call en route to Bussora; Bombay Crab with provisions; details of reduction given; Viper and Experiment to remain at Diego Garcia; Lieut Blair with Viper to complete their survey of neighbouring islands.

22. When the season opens will pay particular attention to orders for survey in paras 27 and 28 of letter of 8 March; so far hampered by lack of a small vessel.

Received in London 17 December 1786

To Honble Committee of Secrecy, 27 November 1786

'14. On the 28th Ultio. the Bombay Grab returned from Diego Garcia, with the Chief Captn Sartorius and the European Artillery on board of her. leaving the charge of the Settlement in its reduced state, with Mr John Richmond Smyth in which condition we meant it should remain; until your Pleasure was known, in reply to our advices by the Scorpion.

15. The Honble the Governor General and Council having been pleased however to direct that this Settlement should be entirely withdrawn, we have dispatched the Drake and Morning Star on that service, with orders to the Resident to evacuate the Island and return to the Presidency.

16. We have farther directed that the Surveyor Lieut Archd Blair in the Viper, in his way back to Bombay, should determine the relative Position of the Laccadives, Malicoy with the head of the Maldives, agreeable to the 27th Paragraph of your Commands of the 25th March last. -

Received in London overland 7 April 1787



To Honble Committee of Secrecy, 28 April 1787

'2. Our Vessels sent to withdraw the Settlement of Diego Garcia returned from thence with the Detachment, Stores Provisions the 11th and 21st Ultimo, and ... we transmit Copy of Lieut Archibald Blair our Surveyor Proceedings in the Viper on his return from the Island, as well as his Remarks relative to the outward coast of Diego Garcia, with some Observations on the Winds, Weather and Currents, accompanied by necessary Charts and Views.

3. On the 26th of February our President laid before us a letter addressed him by the Vicomte de Souillac, Governor General of the French Establishment in India, on the subject of our having taken Possession of Diego Garcia, Copy translate of which, as well as of the President's Reply, are enclosed in this Packet.'

Received in London 27 September 1787

To Honble Committee of Secrecy, 28 July 1787

Trans it large scale plan of Diego Garcia by Lieut Blair, and Lieut Emmitt's survey.

Received in London - May 1788.

To whose Honor & Service may come of certain Great

I, Richard Thomas Benjamin Price Esq, a Senior & the United  
the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the West Indies, at their  
Assembly of London. In virtue of full Power & Authority vested in me by my  
Superiors the Honble Rowland Hart Esq, President of & for all Affairs of the  
said United Company in the Coasts of India, Persia, & Arabia, Governor & Council in  
Chief of His Majesty's Castle of Island Bombay &c. & Council, have then & they taken  
full & ample Possession of the Island of Chagos or Diego Garcia, & all its  
Dependences in the name of our most famous Sovereign George the third of Great Britain,  
France & Ireland King Defender of the faith &c. And of the said United Company  
for their use & Behoof. In witness whereof, I have caused the British flag to be  
hoisted with the usual Formidities, & there, & publicly executed this Instrument  
Possession to which I have subscribed my name & affixed the Seal of the aforesaid  
United Company at Diego Garcia, on the fourth day of May in the 26th year  
of the reign of his Majesty King George the third & in the year of our Lord one  
thousand seven hundred & eighty six. 1786

R. B. Price  
Chief

United Com-  
pany's Seal

Possession taken of this Instrument

Granted by Richard Thomas Benjamin Price Esq in the  
Presence of us.

Nicholas Smyth. Secy.

T. C. Santorins. Captain

William Robinson. Capt.

Joseph Smyth. Captain.

William Broughton.

Archibald Blair

Thomas Hardie

Arthur Disney

Galbraith Tiedennick

G. L. Emmitt

William Brumwood

Joseph James Symon.

John Rice Symon

Gabriel Alvarez West Symon

John Wales

George Thomas.

J. SANTORIUS: 18 JAN 1786. Accepts "employment in a secret & distant Service which is soon to take place". JOHN CONRAD SANTORIUS.

Consultation 24 Jan 1786. Payment etc. Advance of 3000 Rs to cover Santorius' debts.

Consultation 6 May 1786. Recd a letter from Messrs Price & Smyth, is entered in the Secret Diary, acquainting us of their having arrived with the vessels employed in the Secret Service off Anjengo on the 22<sup>d</sup> March, six days after they had left this place.

Ordered the Bandere who had engaged to proceed in this Service to remain three months unless he was called for & sent to answer for his conduct. or an enquiry be made why a general was sent contrary to express orders who had been for some time afflicted with a dangerous venereal disorder.

[77-79]

Consultation 23 June 1786.

Recd dispatches <sup>by</sup> ~~from~~ Admiral Sir Edward Hughes for Chief of Council, New Settlement of Dg.

[83]

Letter to Council, D.C., 3 June 1786, from R. J. B. Price and T. Richmond Smyth.

[496-528]

Arrived 27 April.

Five 'Coffins' with letters dated 13 April 1776 saying M. le Normand had established a settlement on the 1 May 1784, about 1000 people, but of people. None of the people there before 1784 - first paper fabricated. 20 years 10 yrs after Capt Shariff had been present - rights with Coffins.

28th landed at the French village, 'a dense bank of the nearest appearance covered for the top to bottom with dead branches of the Cacao Nut trees'. 'A fine breed of dogs & fowls was possessed, the soil perfectly sandy, & only 20 mts of the ground cleared away & was barely sufficient for the sustenance of their huts, & on all sides were the Coconut trees, some trees of a very extraordinary size, others less and all below an impenetrable underwood. A passage had been cut thro' these dense direct courses to the sea shore, the breadth of the land appeared to be about six or seven hundred yards; tho' no difference in the soil except where the sand was thickened by the fall of leaves & branches, which by the rain & by the exclusion of the rays of the sun, had rotted, but which when again exposed to the antiseptic heat of the sun returned to its primitive state, notwithstanding what Naturalists allege, that this manner forms the first covering of all uninhabited lands, and is called garden mould. We returned home by another passage lower down made for a Turtle cove, which was under a kind of a cave inside of the Bay.'

29 explored in N where M. SAINTIE had lived in March & April, turtle road  
Toad a land people & cattle there without fences; landed at E 1st?

30 started clearing to S. this year's cleared

1-3 May tented in the sand dunes

4 May. They landed, possession taken 'in the name of our most famous Sovereign Lord George the Third, & for the use & behoof of the United English East India Company'  
more rain, road for observation, 'as we find for the information of the French Coffers  
the surface of the ground was frequently covered with water from heavy rains - the  
the sea continued with high winds & dangerous insects & most all which a good  
foundation was absolutely required to procure and provisions to stores

5 May 'Santism' named his where to do survey but declined - went blind to do  
meine way instead: need to go to ship Hydro to leave in 20th. Santism  
labours speed.

13th The Kees & Hicks were landed in the 13th in very good order, & put into the ground that had been prepared; but we are under much doubt if for the Barachans we have had the opportunity of making there is depths of soil to bring them to any perfection, as the whole soil is a very light sand; no kind of mud anywhere to be found, and water is in no part lower than four feet to one half, in many within three feet yet the supply appears to be afforded for the height of the Tides, many of the wells between the Spring holes having become nearly dry - that various kinds of seeds have been sown, which have come up with surprising quickness, tho' but a few days after the sowing have all become yellow - that we are glad the information of the French coffers in their attempts may prove to true, being that everything they had sown came up or few bushes close the ground as then died away. Whether this showing ignorance made for the 14th at the water we cannot take upon us as yet to say but doubt all our attempts to raise any kind of vegetable prove ineffectual we must be in a very distressed situation. The very few that is only here is those scattered about the cattle, sheep & goats refuse, preferring the leaves of the Cord. Nicks that have taken root in every part, but for this food may be productive in their support time does come winter, as last long it may prove inconstant, so as the French coffers before us, all their sheep & goats died in the course of six weeks; this true they had not the assistance of grain, but one stroke of that stroke being but trifling we may while it lasts keep the animals alive, tho' to improve the breed as their Flocks we cannot conceive possible, and if grain of all kinds must absolutely be applied to keep in more sustenance the animals necessary for support, what must be the expense to attempt restoring a market for the refreshment of ships that may call here in the hope of supplies?

20th. Ship taking two tons coal ballast - turned very turtle - we mentioned to Capt Smith the impropriety of taking more than was absolutely necessary for his ship's company's consumption - reference to Company orders against disturbing turtle (p. 511). Absolute prohibition in general orders.

25th. The Turtle is to be caught in almost any part of the Island without is most  
Assuredly the first food that could be furnished by Nature for tho' for 4 to 500 lb  
weight it is something id for for Claying the meat of it bearing even to be salted.  
Under an appearance of Turtle has a multitude to come forward they get not so tough.  
No care is otherwise shall be wanting or no part to prevent the disturbance of these  
animals that seem to come upon the beach very near the year round every  
three or four days, that only numbers we hope might be caught to provision a few  
ships under the Island demand and the communications more free, whereas at present  
we have but two places that boats are made to the mt side which come and  
animal having been more frequented than before, we are at a party where the cant  
can travel, but in attendance shall as far as the <sup>more</sup> gathering makes to one  
finished be paid to this?

29th. The Harbour we have reason to believe will remain away apart from the  
Humble Company may have found of it, though it possesses many dangers to those  
unacquainted. The tides of the land might cause us to believe that violent winds  
would have great effects on ships at anchor more it not from its long shelter  
from heavy swells as a shelter the port found for anchoring yet but Blair's report  
which we daily report will enable us to be more particular.

30th. The soil we have directly described is very poor light & dry and, not being  
capable into a little depth before water is to be found to yield any thing  
substantial. Grass tho' to be picked up in small quantities being refused by the  
Cattle for the Surtish Turtle is probably for its lackers; Hogs & Fowls we are  
inclined to believe will thrive very well; Turtle & Fish are to be caught in plenty.  
Coconut trees stand in every part of the Island and whenever we have dug water  
has found in with great briskness, apparently sweet & wholesome.

31st. It may be a rising opinion to try for the appearance of the Island as the many  
trees that were once are shown by history that it was some hundred years since  
more timber of such that has remained for the Islands Coconuts trees off & the various  
now trees to last word 'dies' now so thick with. - The coconut tree is propagated  
for the natives that fall in the forest which there the soil is short of in the  
most extraordinary thick manner, yet have none of the trees have any kind of  
the soil, that the South West winds which seem to prevail in a time of drought  
have since more &

32. The other trees on the West Side bear no resemblance to the Indian trees, have  
no solidity or solidity for building & are not yet more to doubt than less generally,  
yet are easy to destroy, not a Fruit tree is on the Island at any considerable  
Vegetable when the young leaves of the Cocoa Nut just taking root may be turned to  
for the cattle & dogs actually professing them to any thing else. From the experiments  
we have already made on a spot for a Garden the vegetation appears very quick.  
Cucumbers, Saladting, Radishes, Melons, Beans etc have come up thro' the third leaf  
beginning yellow without affecting the two first leaves as hope as we do that on any  
something with constantly of the apprehensions we are given a sentiment of the Futility  
of depending young plants, that if affected by any thing we judge the winds we have experienced  
from the Southward, that we say & winds may deprive the plants of their strength  
causing thereby a kind of Blight that no care can remove them from. Potatoes & yams have  
been planted, the first have made their appearance & flatter us with more hope of  
success than any thing else, sandy light soil being congenial to the nature of them. -  
Further than a garden we cannot for some time venture on, but as soon as spots can be  
cleared for all sorts of fruits they will be put to the trial that we fear is that in  
the dry season it may be improper, the drought & heat probably being obstacles that  
care & attention will not be able to rectify, for as soon as water thrown on sand is  
found nearly turned up, but so quickly penetrating it leaves the surface in a quantity  
of mud that as dry as it was before it received it. The French coffees on the  
West Coast generally ripens in December, January, February & March continuing sometime  
all April, & we have experienced that this year it did not break up till near the  
middle of May so that if our endeavours should not be successful till then we must  
be content to wait & try that season which we can only conjecture may prove  
beneficial for the most that if rain falls for only forty eight hours the ground is  
overflowed which can proceed for no other cause than the deluges of the Sea,  
but is in such a short time too much replenished so that it being covered off a  
flood requiring more dykes, would involve such inundations for nothing we doubt should  
raise, & as the land surrounding the Harbour is in no place broader than 800 or  
1000 yards a very inadequate proportion of earth to the water, yet being so full of trees  
& under wood in many parts it will require great labour & pains for a thousand people to  
clear it even for representation, that if successful will be an object of great consideration,  
and if all this trouble should prove of no avail to procure so necessary an aliment for  
Galle as food sweet from a forest of one kind and another.

first may prove better food as longer kept fit for use on board ships than cattle. The  
distances of such provision will be considered outside to long voyages as Cures; the Cures of  
horses is most pure - fine nutritious vegetable food with the salutary and healthful  
vegetation of course to afford a ready remedy to the crew of ships tainted with the  
scurvy' [do change location via a via maritima]



Capt Sutherland report to R.T.B. Price, DG, 3 June 1786.

[530-536]

Best location 'the inside shore of the western point of New Island'.

Islets are dangerous.

'Thirdly the plenty of good water which may be had in the west point, together with a dry soil less encumbered with underwood, I believe yet plenty of Coromandel pines and such trees as will afford firewood. These considerations, with plenty of better fish, than can be caught towards the bottom of the Harbour, are disadvantages of such a nature which leave no doubt whether this part of New Island should not be preferred for the eventual Principal Town on New Georgia.

Disadvantages.

'The soil throughout the Island is a sand in some places more solid than in others, but whenever it is dug up you are sure to find water from three to five feet from the surface but more frequently water three feet. For three or four days it remains a Taste like water which has been confined in board ship a considerable time for which it becomes perfectly clear well tested & keeps good in casks. The facility of pouring water here proves a great obstacle to the raising a foundation for any considerable Building as Timberation, for as the true level of New Island for about two thirds of it, is scarce three or four feet above high water mark at Spring Tides, this evident that many places will require piles to establish a solid foundation.'

Lack of local timber for planks: only one tree, that too small, that can also split in two - useless for building.

'The second sort of tree is of an enormous size to so extremely brittle that a single branch of fifteen or sixteen inches diameter will break off the tree before it is well cut through. There is besides these two sorts a quantity of smaller sort of wood which grows to the use of refuse & may be made to answer the purpose of roofing houses. The Cocoa Nut tree here exceeds anything in height & beauty, but can only be considered for building to answer for chests.

'I have not been able to discover all over the island a stone fit for building. The [?] blocks are all of a granular & sandy nature which not only break to pieces when cut with a chisel but decay & waste gradually when exposed by the sea.'

The island where shines me so nearly level with the sea, can hold of little & no  
natural advantages, except what it may receive from Art together with - strong Garrison,  
and as it is not likely that such an expensive project will take place as to fortify the  
whole of this island, being sixty or seventy miles in circumference...

[ suggests fortifying < 2 miles from west point to bottom of bay. need for materials  
for building to fortify island. Ships cannot get within 2 m of shore - need for  
jetty's. suggests ship. rather than shore works for Garrison ]

Santonius' instructions to Capt. ~~Richard~~ Blair [537-8]

7 May 1786.

Survey the entrance; write to Red Beach Island (primary entrance)  
Black to White Beach Island.

Look at anchorage.

Make plan of harbor.

Barometer in Copenhagen <sup>1000</sup> brought <sup>1000</sup> Hubs <sup>1</sup> Diego Garcia.  
 A. Blair. 2 June 1786 [539-541]

metamorphical Journal of Diego Garcia from 7th May to 30 June 1786.

Day / Night  
 mch.

medium heat, in a Tent of two  
 9 Fahrenheit's thermometers

|    | Sunrise | Noon   | Sunset | Heat at night | Winds.        | Weather & remarks                            |
|----|---------|--------|--------|---------------|---------------|--|
| 7  | 78      | 86     | 77     | 81            | ESE           | Rainy  |
| 8  | 78      | 84 1/2 | 74     | 81 1/2        | SE            | Fair weather                                 |
| 9  | 79      | 85 1/2 | 84     | 80 1/2        | "             | do. brisk Gale                               |
| 10 | 78      | 84     | 82     | 81            | "             | do do  |
| 11 | 78      | 82 1/2 | 82     | 81            | S             | Strong winds                                 |
| 12 | 78      | 84 1/2 | 79 1/4 | 79            | S             | do but cloudy                                |
| 13 | 78      | 84     | 82     | 79 1/2        | S by E        | do do  |
| 14 | 77      | 83 1/2 | 81     | 80            | SSW           | do do  |
| 15 | 77      | 85     | 82     | 80            | Sly           | do heavy showers at times                    |
| 16 | 76      | 83     | 81     | 80            | "             | do showers about noon                        |
| 17 | 78      | 83     | 80     | 79            | ESE           | light winds fair                             |
| 18 | 77      | 84 1/2 | 79     | 78            | Ely           | very light winds + calm PM                   |
| 19 | 74      | 83     | 79     | 76            | "             | calm in the morning fair                     |
| 20 | 73      | 86     | 83     | 79            | "             | very light winds do                          |
| 21 | 78      | 87     | 84     | 80            | "             | do do  |
| 22 | 78 1/2  | 87     | 82     | 81            | ESE           | moderate breezes do                          |
| 23 | 79      | 85     | 82     | 80            | SE            | strong winds, cloudy & very rainy            |
| 24 | 78      | 84     | 82     | 81            | SE            | do rain in the evening                       |
| 25 | 79      | 82     | 80     | 80            | Sly           | strong gales                                 |
| 26 | 77      | 82     | 79     | 79 1/2        | "             | do. rain in the evening - cloudy             |
| 27 | 79      | 83 1/2 | 81     | 80            | "             | do. rain 3 PM & cloudy night                 |
| 28 | 79      | 85     | 82     | 81            | "             | do but fair - a little cloudy in the evening |
| 29 | 79      | 84     | 82     | 80            | SE to SE by S | cloudy threatening weather                   |
| 30 | 79      | 84     | 81     | 80            | Sly           | rain at noon, hard squalls                   |
| 31 | 79      | 85     | 81     | 80            | SE            | fair brisk gales                             |
| 1  | 79      | 85     | 80     | 79            | Sly           | windy & rainy                                |
| 2  | 78      | 81     | 80     | 79            | variable      | do. do does right                            |
| 3  | 77      | 83     | 80     | 79            | -             | do but fair                                  |

Instructors left at Diego Garcia by M<sup>ss</sup>. Le Normand for the French Negroes residing there. Diego Garcia, 1 May 1784. [542-545]

Granted to Le Normand in the name of the King by Messrs Savillac & Chevreaux, Secretaries & Inspectors of the Isle of France.

No free canoe for carrying ships. - everything against receipts  
Negroes about 3 livres per day.

'Each Turtle was to do what they have consumed on the Island must be paid for at the rate of eight livres' but only enough to get to the Isle of France.

12 livres for 100 canoes brought to the seaside + cost of carrying to ship.

'The Island which is near the entrance of the Harbour' - a dried & fish-drying rule. Salting & drying of all sorts of fish.

As during the great heat of the day the Negroes cannot be employed in fishing for fear of the fish being tainted by the sun, they [the Negroes] must collect feathers of the sea birds & upon the days when the badness of the weather will prevent them from landing their boat into the water they must pick up the feathers into empty barrels which must be previously well dried. François must take charge of this business & François Le Montreux must remain at the fishing followed by the care of the preservation of the fish. The fishing will continue for two months after which the Negroes must be employed in gathering cocoa nuts which must be brought to the seaside to the number of 120,000 ... The fishing of back fish for the Northwest & if the weather be so bad as to prevent them from taking fish they must be employed in catching the turtles which we as soon as possible to the fishes fishing at the small Island. The shells of the Turtles must be picked up in keels & a detestable note of the number signed by the two François ...

x. I believe he means the land Tortoise

26 July 1786: Consultations.

[614]

unanimous resolution:

That the Chief of Force, Captain Sartorius, the Commanding Officer of Smugglers, Lt. Frederick the European Artillery, field pieces & their stores be withdrawn.

That the Gallant be left in charge of the Smugglers as resident with an allowance of Rs 1000 per month & Rs 200 per month for his table, Mr Brighton to remain as his assistant, Lieut Disney in command of the Detachment to George Emmett to be still employed in the Smuggling branch.

That they be ordered to return the Order, to keep the Government, Viper, Patterson Boat & Cutter to employ the Smugglers of the Island & be further employed in execution of the Honble Company's commands.

Said to neither parties.

Minute by Lieutenant R. Boddam, 25 July 1786:

[618-625]

only one of us in Smugglers of neighboring islands - not within the coast  
not the 'last glimpse of hope that it will ever yield any further whetstones'  
"The Honble the Secret Committee must have been greatly deceived by the  
former drafts and temptation".

Remains reduction of establishment as in minute above.

Letter from Boddam to R. T. B. Price at DG, Bombay 31 July 1786 [626-631]

Letter from R. Price D<sup>y</sup> 20 Aug 1786. [680-691]

Trench on West Pt on 16 June.

This Point is certainly very open clear & airy, all wind blowing unintermittently upon it, the ground appeared covered with a verdure of coarse grained grass more luxuriant than any part we have hitherto seen. The trees were thick only on the sides of the land between them, & was clear & only filled with brush wood. The soil appeared somewhat different & more stony than at Fly Staff Point...

With the observations we have been able to make since of the soil & grass, we are sorry to say the first does not turn out near so well as at Fly Staff Point the latter is very different, as the Cow that was sent down refused it though eating of somewhat else & died, but we are still more concerned to see the facility attending the cattle, sheep, goats, poultry & pigeons at this point the buffaloes being <sup>now</sup> in a state we doubt its recovery. That though the Cows in the place at least find that some seeds or specimens might lie for want of proper care & grain yet that is not the case with those here. The different kinds of poultry have died very suddenly. Pigeons do not seem used for the flight & every young pig chicken & duckling lie in much greater proportion than in India. But we feared most to the women of India their destructive progress into our gardens, where they haulish all sorts of vegetables that have withstood any other invasions.

Copied present in the W & at this time; from Mauritius.

'we are daily more disappointed to think of means to subsist without the least prospecting hopes of profit or advantage' [690]

Correspondence from Capt W Robinson concerning complaints by Price Sept 1786 [706]

letter from R. J. B. Price to R. Smyth 29 24 Sept 1786 [755-758]

A stone called belonging to this Cathedral, having been regularly used a dye, some time since made a discovery of a stone last found in great abundance in this island, where was found a fine common purple and yellow cloth or white cloth. It is the same that the Medians Palampores, Patticots, Chantz be are stained with; but which he is of the opinion is relatively much stronger, & more flourishing, than what found in India; that the cloth produced from it carry the appearance of more brightness & durability [Smyth to Smyth.]

Notice of the French get to know of it.

Conclusion 6 October 1786, Bombay Govt & Ministry has to withdraw Dg establishment.

Conclusion 27 Nov. 1786 Diche & Ministry has now to go.

Bodham to J. R. Smyth at Dg; 27 Nov 1786 [812-3]

Notice of withdrawal; determine position of Ministry in return.

Charts A.C. 96

Charts A.C. 109. = DALRYMPLE'S CHARTS  
VOL. I

Secret

Bmsy. letters received 23 Dec 1791 to 24 Jan 1790.



Rt. Hon. Boddam & Sons, Bury Castle, Ald. + Secret Dept., 13 January 1786 to His Majesty the Committee of  
senary of His Majesty the King of Prussia, at their House in Leadenhall Street, 13 January 1786.

Honorable Gentlemen,

On the 9th Instant by the Surprise Packet, via Fort St George & Arjengo, we had the  
honour to receive your Commands of the 8th July last, for taking possession of and settling the  
Island of St. John.

These commands shall be carried into speedy effect; and by an early future opportunity  
we will have the honour to communicate to you the steps we take to carry your views into  
execution.

We have the honour to be with the utmost respect, /Honorable Gentlemen, /Your most  
faithful, /Obedient, humble Servants;

[Recd. on board 10th July 1786]

18 March 1786

To

The Honble the Committee of Council of the Honble the Court of Directors at that time in  
Leadenhall Street.

Honble Gentlemen.

On the 13th of January we had the honor of acknowledging receipt of your Comments for  
[settling the Island of Oyo Garcia]  
10110, 40.81.52.8122. 504. 11786. 54 40.61.52.51 - 52.24.77.79.40.41. which we  
determined to carry into speedy effect.

As a Storeship was indispensably necessary, & we could freight none large enough without  
incurring a very considerable Expence, we waited some time for the arrival of your ship the  
Admiral Hughes, on Board of which we have since taken all the Stores & Provisions.

[Understand for the new Settlement]

642. 64 54. 277. 8122. 12060. 4207. 22. 61.81. 80. & this vessel, under Command of

Stake, accompanied by the Vessel Courier, & a small Induce Boat left this the 15th

Instant & will probably [arrive at the place of destination by the middle of the next  
month] 6440. 6206. 8122. 11425. 11786 9117. 5002 24. 80. 40. 51.81.

6018, 9122. 12416, 11786. 8122. 12057. 1206.

We have entrusted the Chief management of this Enterprise to two of your Secret  
Servants, Messrs Richard Thomas Benjamin Price and John Richmond Smyth, assisted by  
Captain Sutorius our eldest Captain of Engineers, who is appointed, Engineer, Surveyor &  
Commanding officer of the Detachment & is not only an excellent officer, but a Man of good  
sense & sound judgement -

The Honble the Governor General & Council have communicated to that Honble 642.613  
[intended number of CR. Cathcart to the Mauritius]  
22.40.25.48, 40, 51. 81. 11786. 5705. 78 24 80. 20. 101. 41. 77, 105. 8042. 8122. 12477.

We think it necessary to transmit to your Honors a Copy of our [Secret Orders in case]  
10177. 11742. 25. 1074

54.40.61. 52.51. 52.24.77. 79. 40.41. should be found to be [in actual authorized  
possession of my Engineer's Actions at the place to be attacked after this] 1074.66.56.6258. 54. 11252.

40. 51.81. 11786. 6480. 4175. 24. 81 12117. 11745. 8122. 11425. 6197. 6282. 61. 54. 6588. 810  
[Established]

had 4207. 61. 54 themselves there, & we flatter ourselves these Instructions will meet with  
your Approbation.

We have the honor to be with the highest respect.

Honble Gentlemen /yours most faithful & most obedient Servt.

R. D. Borden

S. Gillan?

To Committee of Survey, 9 June 1786, from Boddam etc. at Bmsby

Ack. 2d copy of letter of 8 July 1785

Sends 'a packet containing copies of the President's minute & Plan for carrying your orders into execution, w<sup>th</sup> separate Considerations, and Instructions to the Chief & Council, Sailing orders to Captain William Boinson, to the General List & Return of the Civil, & Military & Artificers employed in this Service'.

Bodden left Anjengo on 22 March; Bodden expected June,

[Recd. 6 March 1787]

To Hisd the Committee of Survey, 23 June 1786, from Boddam etc. at Bmsby

Hughes arrived: forward to Fort St George 'copies of the Survey of the Harbour & the Stores received for the Chief & Council; the substance of which we shall shortly take into Consideration'.

[Recd. 6 March 1787]

To House Committee of Enquiry, 31 July 1786.

Para 17 → D2.

Diary etc left Ajengo 22 mths, arrived BQ 27 April

19. Having taken these Advices into the most serious Consideration & well weighed every the most minute Circumstance that could lead us to form a Judgment, we were unanimously of opinion your Honor would not resolve on keeping up a permanent Settlement at a place, which seems to promise no other apparent Advantage than that of being a safe station for surveying & exploring the numerous Islands & Shoals around & to the Southwards of the Line & which it is so undeniably proved could be better maintained, fortified & defended without incurring an enormous & continued expense, we came to a resolution of reducing the Establishment, but not entirely withdrawing it until we could receive your firm Determination on the Advice from your Chief & Council.

Now some Information. Scorpion desired to call on route to Bassora.

Building Crabs with provisions.

Details of reduction. Vijet & Agement to remain.

Bliss with Vijet to complete survey then look at neighbouring Shoals.

22. When soon your will pay particular attention to orders for money in paras 27, 28 of 9 mths later; hampered by lack of a small vessel.

[Recd. 17 Dec. 1786]

to H.M. Committee of Security 27 Nov 1786.

14. On the 28<sup>th</sup> Ult<sup>o</sup>. the Bombay Gov<sup>t</sup> returned for Dago Garcia, with the ship, Captain Sutherland & the European Artillery on board of her, bearing the charge of the Garrison in its reduced state, with the John Mohammed Smyth in which condition we meant it should remain; until your pleasure was known, in reply to our address by the Schooner.

15. As the H.M. the former Gov<sup>t</sup> & Council having been pleased to direct that the Garrison should be entirely withdrawn, we have dispatched the Arch & Morning Star on that service, with orders to the Resident to evacuate the Island & return to the Presidency.

16. We have further directed that the Surgeon had Aschd Blair in the Viper, in his way back to Bombay, should determine the relative position of the Lacadives, Malicou with the head of the Maldives, according to the 27<sup>th</sup> Paragraph of your Commands of the 28<sup>th</sup> March last.

[Recd. Newland 7 April 1787]

To Honble Committee of Senary, 28 April 1787.

2. On several cards to withdraw the Settlement of Diego Garcia returned for them with the Settlement, Stores Announces the 11<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Ultimo, and ... we transmit copy of last Antislav Slave and Smuggling Proceedings in the Viper in his return for the Island, as well as his Remarks relative to the outward Coast of Diego Garcia, with some descriptions of the Woods, weather & Currents, accompanied by necessary Charts & Views
3. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February Mr President laid before us a letter addressed him by the Vicomte de Sailly, former Consul of the French Settlement in India, on the subject of us having taken possession of Diego Garcia, copy translate of which, as well as of the President's reply, are enclosed in this packet.

[read. 27 Sept 1787]

To Honble Committee of Senary, 28 July 1787

large scale plan of DG by Blair, and last Committee's survey, ~~to be sent to the~~

[read. - May 1788]