

= HMS Speedy ( 1782 ) =

HMS Speedy was a 14 @-@ gun Speedy @-@ class brig of the British Royal Navy . Built during the last years of the American War of Independence , she served with distinction during the French Revolutionary Wars .

Built at Dover , Kent , Speedy spent most of the interwar years serving off the British coast . Transferred to the Mediterranean after the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars , she spent the rest of her career there under a number of notable commanders , winning fame for herself in various engagements and often against heavy odds . Her first commander in the Mediterranean , Charles Cunningham , served with distinction with several squadrons , assisting in the capture of several war prizes , such as the French frigates *Modeste* and *Impérieuse* . His successor , George Cockburn , impressed his superiors with his dogged devotion to duty . Speedy 's next commander , George Eyre , had the misfortune to lose her to a superior French force on 9 June 1794 .

She was soon retaken , and re @-@ entered service under Hugh Downman , who captured a number of privateers between 1795 and 1799 and fought off an attack by the large French privateer *Papillon* on 3 February 1798 . His successor , Jahleel Brenton , fought a number of actions against Spanish forces off Gibraltar . Her last captain , Lord Cochrane , forced the surrender of a much larger Spanish warship , the *Gamo* . Speedy was finally captured by a powerful French squadron in 1801 and donated to the Papal Navy by Napoleon the following year . She spent five years with them under the name *San Paulo* , but was struck around 1806 .

= = Design and construction = =

Speedy was one of two brig @-@ sloops built to the same design by Thomas King of Dover , Kent . She and her sister ship HMS *Flirt* were constructed to provide small , fast escort vessels with hulls shaped like a cutter , rather than the more seaworthy but slower ship @-@ sloop . King had for some time specialised in these types of vessels , and the design capitalised on that experience . Speedy was so named to symbolise this new approach , and measured 207 21 ? 94 tons bm with a total length of 78 feet 3 inches ( 23 @.@ 85 m ) . She was armed with fourteen four @-@ pounder and twelve half @-@ pounder swivel guns , and carried a complement of 90 men . Ordered on 23 March 1781 , she was laid down at King 's yard in June that year and launched on 29 June 1782 . She moved to Deptford , Kent , to be fitted @-@ out and have her hull covered with copper plates between 16 July and 25 October 1782 ; at her completion she had cost £ 4 @,@ 200 7s 3d to build .

= = Early career = =

Speedy was commissioned under Commander Josias Rogers in May 1783 and was assigned to serve in the North Sea , operating out of the Humber estuary . After four years on this station she was paid off ( placed in reserve ) in January 1787 and began a refit at Woolwich in April that year . This work was completed by July at a cost of £ 1 @,@ 801 , and she was recommissioned in May that year under Commander John Maude , still on the Humber station .

From November 1790 she was under Commander Richard Lane , who was her captain until she was paid off in October 1791 . Speedy then underwent another refit , this time at Deptford between June and December 1792 , at a cost of £ 3 @,@ 000 , and was recommissioned in November 1792 under Commander Charles Cunningham .

= = French Revolutionary Wars = =

Cunningham had previously been serving in the East Indies in command of the 16 @-@ gun sloop HMS *Ariel* . By the time he returned to take up his new command the French Revolutionary Wars had broken out and he was sent to join Lord Hood 's fleet in the Mediterranean , arriving there in April 1793 . He was largely employed in carrying despatches and maintaining communications with

other ships scattered throughout the Mediterranean ports . On 5 October 1793 Speedy accompanied HMS Bedford and HMS Captain into Genoa , where they captured a French frigate , Modeste , and two armed tartanes in the Raid on Genoa . In this action , Speedy sent two boats to board the tartanes while Bedford bombarded Modeste . The French crews of the tartanes attempted to resist and two of their crewmembers were wounded , but the British did not suffer any casualties . Captain and Speedy then sailed to the Gulf of Spezia where they caught another French frigate , Imperieuse , at anchor . Imperieuse was scuttled by her crew , but was subsequently salvaged and recommissioned as HMS Imperieuse . Cunningham was promoted to captain and given command of the prize , with his commission backdated to the day of the capture , 12 October 1793 .

Cunningham was replaced by Commander George Cockburn in the command of Speedy , which remained in the Mediterranean . His first duties were limited to carrying despatches and passengers between Toulon and Genoa , after which he was ordered to join Captain Sutherland of HMS Diadem , who was commanding a squadron blockading Genoa . The small fleet was caught in winter storms and several ships were badly damaged , forcing Sutherland and his squadron to seek shelter in nearby ports and to make repairs , with the exception of Speedy , which remained on station . Sutherland put into Hyères Bay and reported the dispersal of his squadron to Lord Hood , also noting that nothing had been heard of Speedy since the gales . Once Diadem had been repaired Sutherland returned to Genoa , and was surprised to discover Speedy still there patrolling the port , not once having left her task . While single @-@ handedly maintaining the blockade , she had managed to capture several vessels . Sutherland ordered Speedy , which was by now running desperately short of water , to Hyères to refit . At the same time , Sutherland sent a complimentary report of Cockburn to Lord Hood . On 20 January 1794 , Cockburn was rewarded with an acting commission as post @-@ captain of the frigate HMS Inconstant , followed a month later by a permanent command of the frigate HMS Meleager .

Commander George Eyre took over command of Speedy in February 1794 . Speedy supported the siege and capture of Bastia , after which Eyre was ordered to join Diadem off Nice . While making his way there on 9 June , he ran into a French fleet under Rear @-@ Admiral Pierre Martin , which had sailed from Toulon several days earlier . Eyre attempted to escape , but the wind and sea favoured the larger vessels , and Speedy was chased down and captured . Eyre was brought aboard Admiral Martin 's flagship and was told that the National Convention had recently ordered that no quarter should be given to the English or Hanoverians , and that had Martin 's ship been first alongside , he would have sunk Speedy . The sudden appearance of a British fleet curtailed the interview , and the French hurried back to Gourjean roadstead outside Toulon , taking Speedy and the captured British crew with them .

= = Recapture = =

Speedy spent only a brief time sailing under the French flag . On 25 March 1795 her captain mistook Captain Thomas Fremantle 's Inconstant for a French ship and she was recaptured and taken back into British service .

In early March the following year , Speedy , under the command of Thomas Elphinstone , joined a squadron cruising off Oneglia , Italy , under Commodore Horatio Nelson , consisting of the 64 @-@ gun ships HMS Agamemnon and HMS Diadem , the 32 @-@ gun frigates HMS Meleager and HMS Blanche and the ship @-@ sloop HMS Peterel . On 25 April the squadron steered for Laöna bay , the commodore having received intelligence that a large convoy , laden with stores for the French army , had anchored off the town of Finale . When the squadron arrived , however , they found only four vessels moored under the guns of some batteries . The shore batteries opened fire on Peterel as led the boats of the squadron to the attack . Despite the fire , the British were able to capture the four vessels and suffered only three men wounded .

In an action on 31 May the squadron chased the French ketch Genie , a gunboat of one gun , and five merchant ships , which took refuge near the guns of a shore battery . At 3 p.m. Agamemnon , Blanche , Peterel and Speedy approached them and anchored in 4 fathoms ( 7 @.@ 3 m ) of water . The four British ships fired their cannons , which disabled the shore battery , and then sent in

several boats under heavy fire from the guns of Genie and the gunboat ; the British successfully boarded and captured both ships . In the meantime , the merchant ships had beached themselves to avoid capture . Under heavy musket fire from the beach , the British captured and re @-@ floated the four merchant vessels , and destroyed one . Among the British , one man was killed and three were wounded in the operation .

= = Downman and Brenton = =

Elphinstone was succeeded in August 1797 by Commander Hugh Downman , who made several cruises with Speedy . On 3 February 1798 she encountered the large privateer Papillon , mounting 18 guns and carrying 160 men , while sailing off Vigo . The Papillon attacked Speedy , which had a reduced crew ; her master Mr Marshall and 12 men were aboard a Spanish prize Speedy had taken earlier . The two ships fought each other for two days ; by the second day Downman had exhausted his supply of shot , and resorted to firing nails and pieces of iron hoop at his opponent . Having observed his captain 's predicament , Marshall secured the Spanish crew below deck and took the prize crew off in a small boat to go to Downman 's assistance . After a fierce fight the Papillon was driven off ; Speedy suffered losses of five killed and four wounded . Downman then recaptured his prize and returned to Lisbon to carry out repairs . During his time in command of Speedy , Downman captured five privateers , altogether mounting 17 guns and 28 swivels , and carrying 162 men . For his efforts in protecting British trade out of Oporto , the merchants presented him with a letter of thanks , and a piece of plate valued at £ 50 . As a reward for his good service , Downman was advanced to post @-@ captain on 26 December 1798 and appointed commander of the 32 @-@ gun HMS Santa Dorothea , a frigate that had recently been captured from the Spanish in the Action of 15 July 1798 .

Downman was succeeded in January of the following year by Commander Jahleel Brenton , who was based at Gibraltar . While sailing off Gibraltar in company with the British privateer Defender on 9 August 1799 , Brenton came across three small Spanish warships , mounting twenty 6 @-@ pounders in total . The Spanish ran into a small sandy bay and anchored in a line so as to bring their guns to bear simultaneously on the British ships . Speedy and Defender sailed up and down for two hours firing broadsides , but without much effect . Defender only had 22 men on board and decided to sail further out to sea to meet one of her boats . Brenton thought the effort of keeping under sail was aiding the enemy , and anchored Speedy within 30 yards ( 27 m ) of the middle ship . The two exchanged a fierce cannonade for three quarters of an hour , after which the Spanish abandoned their ships and made for the shore . Two of the ships ran ashore and the third was immediately captured . Speedy launched her boats to recover the other two , coming under musket fire from the Spanish on the hillside as they did so . The British got both vessels off and took them into Gibraltar , along with two men wounded during the operation .

On 3 October Speedy , while sailing once again off Gibraltar , spotted ten small ships coming out of Algeciras , gunboats apparently attempting to attack a British convoy that was then passing . Brenton identified the ships as merchantmen , attempting to evade the British at Gibraltar in the bad weather . On Speedy 's approach , they scattered , four sheltering under a fort . Speedy approached and fired on them , causing their crews to abandon their ships . They were driven ashore by the wind , and despite sending boats out , it was impossible to get them off , so they were left to be reduced to wrecks . Three days later , Speedy was standing off Europa Point when twelve gunboats were sighted coming out of Algeciras to attack two merchant ships making their way past Gibraltar . One , the Unity , was carrying wine and spirits for the fleet . Their combined firepower far outweighed that of Speedy , but Brenton turned his ship towards them , covering the escape of one of the merchantmen with his fire . The gunboats were attempting to catch the Unity when Brenton took his ship through the flotilla , close enough to break many of their oars , maintaining a constant fire from his guns and with every spare member of the crew firing muskets . The Spanish flotilla broke and fled . Speedy suffered two men killed and one wounded , and sustained considerable damage to her rigging and below her waterline . She was unable to return to Gibraltar in the rising wind , and was forced to run along the coast to Tétouan Bay , where her shot @-@ holes were

plugged to allow her to make her way back . During the engagement with the gunboats , the guns in the fortress of Gibraltar had not fired in support of Speedy . When Brenton asked why , the Governor of Gibraltar , General Charles O 'Hara , replied that he had arranged with the Governor of Algeciras for the guns never to be fired at the gunboats so as not to annoy the inhabitants of the town .

= = Cochrane = =

Brenton was promoted to post @-@ captain , and in March 1800 Commander Lord Cochrane took over . Cochrane was less than impressed with his new command , declaring that Speedy was " little more than a burlesque of a vessel of war " . His cabin had only 5 feet ( 1 @.@ 5 m ) of headroom ; when Cochrane wished to shave he had to open a skylight and set his shaving equipment out on the quarterdeck . On another occasion he walked the quarterdeck with Speedy 's entire broadside , seven pieces of four @-@ pounder shot , in his pockets . In an attempt to increase the firepower of his new command he asked for and was given two 12 @-@ pounder long guns to use as bow and stern chasers , but the scantlings could not support them and they had to be removed . He then requested his 4 @-@ pounders be upgraded to 6 @-@ pounders , but his gunports were not big enough . He had better luck with his mast , taking a spar from HMS Genereux that was considered too large for Speedy , but which Cochrane felt improved her speed .

In early May Cochrane was escorting a convoy from Cagliari to Leghorn . On 11 May a ship which turned out to be the 6 @-@ gun privateer Intrépide was spotted capturing one of the merchant ships in the convoy , at which point Cochrane chased the Intrépide and forced her to surrender . Three days later , as the convoy passed the island of Montecristo , five rowing boats emerged from one of the island 's coves and captured two of the rearmost merchant ships . Cochrane immediately gave chase , and recaptured them early the next morning . He was then given a free hand to raid enemy shipping in the area , and captured seven or eight vessels that June and July , including the 10 @-@ gun privateer Asuncion off Bastia on 25 June and the privateer Constitution off Caprea on 19 July . On 22 September he captured a large Neapolitan vessel and , on bringing her into Port Mahon , discovered that the Spanish had taken notice of his depredations and were preparing a frigate to capture Speedy .

Cochrane prepared for an encounter with this Spanish vessel by painting Speedy to resemble a Danish brig then in the Mediterranean , the Clomer . He also appointed a Dane as quartermaster and found him a Danish naval officer 's uniform . While cruising off Alicante on 21 December , Speedy encountered an enemy frigate , but tricked her into thinking she was a neutral vessel . Cochrane again used this false flag technique to his advantage ; on 22 January he was sailing with a convoy of Danish merchantmen under a Danish flag , pretending to escort them . When a 10 @-@ gun French ship and 8 @-@ gun Spanish brig approached , Cochrane hoisted British colours and attacked , capturing both of them .

Then on 24 February Cochrane captured the French naval brig Caroline , of four guns , which had been carrying ordnance stores from Genoa to Alexandria .

= = = Speedy and Gamo = = =

Speedy was cruising off Barcelona at dawn on 6 May 1801 when she sighted a large enemy frigate . The frigate , a xebec @-@ rigged vessel named Gamo , carrying 319 men , was armed with 8- and 12 @-@ pounder guns and 24 @-@ pounder carronades . This amounted to a total broadside of 190 pounds , more than seven times that of Speedy . Furthermore , Cochrane had only 54 men on board ; the rest were serving as prize crews . Instead of evading the frigate , Cochrane closed on her , and at 9 : 30 a.m. Gamo fired a gun and hoisted Spanish colours . In return Cochrane hoisted American colours . The Spanish hesitated , allowing Cochrane to get closer , hoist British colours , and evade the first broadside . Gamo fired another , which Cochrane again evaded , holding fire until Speedy ran alongside and locked her yards in Gamo 's rigging . Gamo attempted to fire upon her smaller opponent , but her guns were mounted too high and could not be depressed sufficiently ,

causing their shot to pass through Speedy 's sails and rigging . Cochrane then opened fire with his 4 @-@ pounders double- and treble @-@ shotted , their shots passing up through the sides and decks , killing the Spanish captain and boatswain with the first broadside .

Seeing their disadvantage the Spanish second @-@ in @-@ command assembled a boarding party , at which Cochrane drew off and pounded their massed ranks with shot and musket fire before drawing in close again . After having their attempts to board frustrated three times , the Spanish returned to their guns . Cochrane then decided to board the Gamo , and assembled his entire crew into two parties , leaving only the ship 's doctor aboard . The British rushed the Gamo , some boarding from the bow with faces blackened to look like pirates , the rest boarding from the waist . There was a hard @-@ fought battle between the two crews , until Cochrane called down to the doctor , at the time the only person on Speedy , ordering him to send another 50 men over . At the same time he ordered the Spanish colours to be torn down . Thinking that their officers had surrendered the ship , the remaining Spanish seamen stopped fighting . The British had lost three men killed and nine wounded , while the Spanish had lost 14 killed and 41 wounded , a casualty list exceeding Speedy 's entire complement . The British then secured the Spanish prisoners below deck and made their way back to Port Mahon . Stung that he had been beaten by such an inferior foe , the Spanish second @-@ in @-@ command asked Cochrane for a certificate assuring him that he had done all he could to defend his ship . Cochrane obliged , with the equivocal wording that he had " conducted himself like a true Spaniard " . Cochrane was amused to learn that this certificate had later secured the Spanish officer further advancement . In 1847 the Admiralty awarded the Naval General Service Medal with clasp " Speedy 6 May 1801 " to all surviving claimants from the action .

= = = Later actions and capture = = =

Cochrane returned to the coast off Barcelona in June 1801 , and joined the 16 @-@ gun HMS Kangaroo in attacking a Spanish convoy of 12 merchant ships and 5 armed vessels anchored under the guns of a large tower . After a sharp action fought between the afternoon of 9 June and the morning of 10 June , the two ships sank or drove ashore all of the ships with the exception of three brigs , which they captured . Three weeks later he was cruising off Alicante when he encountered several merchant vessels , which ran ashore . Rather than wasting time trying to get them off , he burnt them , but in doing so attracted the attention of a foe vastly more powerful than the Gamo .

A formidable French squadron under the command of Rear @-@ Admiral Charles @-@ Alexandre Léon Durand Linois had left Toulon bound for Cadiz to collect reinforcements for Napoleon 's army in Egypt . On 3 July they sighted and chased Speedy , and Cochrane ordered the guns , boats , and provisions thrown overboard to lighten the ship . The French caught up nonetheless , and after narrowly avoiding the broadside of Desaix , Cochrane struck his colours . He was taken aboard Desaix , where her captain , Christy @-@ Pallière , recognised Cochrane 's accomplishments by refusing to accept his sword . Cochrane was taken along with the fleet and watched the Battle of Algeciras Bay from Desaix . He and the crew of Speedy were later exchanged after the battle . On returning to Gibraltar he was court @-@ martialled for the loss of his ship , and honourably acquitted .

= = French and Papal career = =

The French took Speedy to Toulon with the fleet , where she became a pawn in Napoleon 's efforts at diplomacy with Pope Pius VII , whose presence he wanted at his coronation as emperor . Speedy , by now named Saint Paul and inscribed with the words " Donné par le premier consul Bonaparte au Pape Pie VII " ( " Given by the First Consul Bonaparte to Pope Pius VII " ) in gilt letters on her poop cabin , sailed with an escort from Toulon on 14 December 1802 bound for Civitavecchia as a present to the Pope . She arrived there on 16 December where the Papal Navy took her into service under the name San Paulo . She remained there until being struck c.1806.

= = HMS Sophie = =

Some of Speedy 's later exploits under Cochrane were used in the plot of the novel Master and Commander , part of Patrick O 'Brian 's Aubrey ? Maturin series , though the ship described by O 'Brian matches only Speedy 's spar dimensions and armament , and is named HMS Sophie . Cochrane is replaced in the book by the fictional Jack Aubrey , who repeats many of Cochrane 's real @-@ life exploits including the defence of a convoy and the recapture of one of its merchants from a privateer , and the capture of a large Spanish frigate , based on the Gamito , but renamed Cacafuego for the novel .