

= Action of 24 October 1798 =

The Action of 24 October 1798 was a minor naval engagement of the French Revolutionary Wars , fought between a British Royal Navy frigate and two ships of the Batavian Republic . The Dutch ships were intercepted in the North Sea within hours of leaving port , 30 nautical miles (56 km) northwest of the Texel , by the British ship HMS Sirius . Both Dutch vessels were carrying large quantities of military supplies and French soldiers , reinforcements for the French and Irish forces participating in the Irish Rebellion of 1798 . Although the rebellion had been defeated a month earlier , word of the British victory had not yet reached the European continent , and the Dutch force was intended to supplement a larger French squadron sent earlier in October . The French had already been defeated at the Battle of Tory Island and the Dutch suffered a similar outcome , both ships defeated in turn by the larger and better armed British vessel .

Captain Richard King on Sirius discovered the Dutch ships early on 24 October , when they were separated by 2 nautical miles (3 @.@ 7 km) and thus unable to mutually support one another . Targeting the smaller ship , Waakzaamheid , King was able to outrun her in an hour and force her to surrender without a fight . Turning his attention on the larger vessel , Furie , King rapidly overhauled her as well and opened a heavy fire , to which Furie was only able to ineffectively reply . Within half an hour she too had surrendered . Both ships were taken to Britain , repaired and commissioned in the Royal Navy . The defeat ended the last effort by the continental nations to land soldiers in Ireland , and signified the last action of the Irish Rebellion .

= = Background = =

Following the French Revolution in 1789 , a political organisation was formed in Ireland named the Society of United Irishmen . Crossing social and religious boundaries , this organisation embraced republican principles with the stated goal of removing British government control from Ireland . When Britain went to war with the French Republic in 1793 , the organisation was declared illegal and driven under cover , many of its senior members going into exile in Europe or America . These men continued to call for armed resistance to the British government , and in 1796 persuaded the French Directory to launch the Expédition d 'Irlande , a large scale invasion of Ireland . The expedition was a disaster , with thousands of French soldiers drowned without a single man successfully landed . Subsequently the French @-@ controlled government of the Batavian Republic , formerly the Dutch Republic , was persuaded to make an attempt on Ireland in October 1797 , but their fleet was intercepted and defeated by Admiral Adam Duncan at the Battle of Camperdown .

In May 1798 , the arrest of a number of the leaders of the United Irishmen provoked the Irish Rebellion of 1798 , a widespread uprising across Ireland . The Rebellion took the British authorities by surprise , but the introduction of regular British Army troops rapidly defeated the Irish armies and the last resistance was brought to an end in September with the surrender of a small French force at the Battle of Ballinamuck . The French authorities had also been taken by surprise by the uprising , and were consequently unprepared : the forces they deployed were inadequate to face the much larger British armies operating in Ireland at the time . News of this defeat had still not reach the continent by October , when a second French invasion force set out . Closely watched by the Royal Navy as soon as it left Brest , the squadron was defeated on 12 October 1798 at the Battle of Tory Island : fewer than a third of the French ships returned to France .

The Dutch had also been persuaded to send reinforcements to the United Irishmen during the rebellion , but like the French they were unprepared for the sudden uprising and their contributions were not ready until 24 October . Two Dutch ships had been ordered to take on troops and supplies : the 36 @-@ gun frigate Furie under Captain Bartholomeus Pletz and the 24 @-@ gun corvette Waakzaamheid under Captain Meindert van Neirp , who assumed command of the expedition . Although both ships were small and poorly armed , each carried a number of French soldiers for service in Ireland , Furie embarking 165 and Waakzaamheid 122 . In addition , the ships carried over 6 @,@ 000 stands of arms and large quantities of other military stores with which to arm the

Irish irregular forces that they expected to meet .

= = Battle = =

Departing on the night of 23 / 24 October , the Dutch ships made rapid progress and at 08 : 00 were 30 nautical miles (56 km) northwest of the Texel , sailing westwards towards the English Channel . Within sight of the Dutch ships however was the British frigate HMS Sirius , a new ship of 1 ,049 long tons (1 ,066 t) , rated as 38 -gun ships but actually carrying 44 . She was commanded by Captain Richard King , who had participated in the campaign against the Expédition d'Irlande two years earlier . Sirius had been stationed off the Texel to watch for Dutch movements and intercept any ships of smaller or equal size entering or leaving the waterway . Although van Neirop 's squadron outnumbered King 's ship , the British vessel was much larger and faster , and the Dutch were also hampered by their position : the two ships were more than 2 nautical miles (3 .7 km) apart , too far to offer mutual support against their opponent .

King 's first target was the smaller and slower Waakzaamheid , which was windward of Furie and thus would have to sail into the wind to link with Pletz 's ship . King rapidly closed with the corvette , avoiding contact with the larger Furie as he did so . At 09 : 00 Sirius came alongside Waakzaamheid and fired a gun at her , prompting van Neirop to immediately surrender . Furie had not attempted to come to the flagship 's aid and resistance against the much larger Sirius would have been futile . King despatched boats containing a prize crew and removed most of the prisoners from Waakzaamheid , placing them below decks on Sirius . Once the prize was secure , King immediately set off in pursuit of Furie , which was attempting to flee to the west and had nearly disappeared over the horizon . For the rest of the day the pursuit continued , Furie unable to escape the faster British ship , which steadily gained during the afternoon until at 17 : 00 was within range of the Dutch frigate .

King 's fire was heavy , but Pletz resisted , responding with his own cannon and continuing his attempts to escape . For half an hour the engagement continued , the distance between the ships varying as Pletz attempted to manoeuvre out of King 's range . The British crew were better gunners than the Dutch , and the musketry of the French soldiers aboard had little effect on Sirius as the range between the ships was too great for muskets to be effective . As a result , damage and casualties mounted aboard Furie although Sirius was barely touched , only one shot striking the bowsprit and one man wounded . At approximately 17 : 30 , Pletz surrendered , having lost eight dead and 14 wounded and with his ship badly damaged . King transferred the prisoners and placed a prize crew on Furie before returning to his base at the Nore with his prizes .

= = Aftermath = =

The capture of the Dutch ships was the end of the final attempt by a continental nation to land troops in Ireland during the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars that followed them . Furie and Waakzaamheid were both purchased for the Royal Navy , Furie returned to her pre-war name of Wilhelmina and Waakzaamheid under the same name . The corvette was regraded and the number of guns aboard were reduced to 20 as her frame was not deemed strong enough to carry 24 . Richard King remained in Sirius until 1802 , and subsequently commanded the ship of the line HMS Achille , participating at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 .