

= Raid on Batavia ( 1806 ) =

The Raid on Batavia of 27 November 1806 was an attempt by a large British naval force to destroy the Dutch squadron based on Java in the Dutch East Indies that posed a threat to British shipping in the Straits of Malacca . The British admiral in command of the eastern Indian Ocean , Rear @-@ Admiral Sir Edward Pellew , led a force of four ships of the line , two frigates and brig to the capital of Java at Batavia ( later renamed Djakarta ) , in search of the squadron , which was reported to consist of a number of Dutch ships of the line and several smaller vessels . However the largest Dutch ships had already sailed eastwards towards Griessie over a month earlier , and Pellew only discovered the frigate Phoenix and a number of smaller warships in the bay , all of which were driven ashore by their crews rather than engage Pellew 's force . The wrecks were subsequently burnt and Pellew , unaware of the whereabouts of the main Dutch squadron , returned to his base at Madras for the winter .

The raid was the third of series of actions intended to eliminate the threat posed to British trade routes by the Dutch squadron : at the Action of 26 July 1806 and the Action of 18 October 1806 , British frigates sent on reconnaissance missions to the region succeeded in attacking and capturing two Dutch frigates and a number of other vessels . The raid reduced the effectiveness of Batavia as a Dutch base , but the continued presence of the main Dutch squadron at Griessie concerned Pellew and he led a second operation the following year to complete his defeat of the Dutch . Three years later , with the French driven out of the western Indian Ocean , British forces in the region were strong enough to prepare an expeditionary force against the Dutch East Indies , which effectively ended the war in the east .

= = Background = =

In early 1806 , Pellew was relieved by the news that a large French squadron under Rear @-@ Admiral Charles Linois had sailed out of the Indian Ocean and into the Atlantic . The departure of Linois after three years of operations in eastern waters freed Pellew 's small squadron based at Madras for operations against the Dutch East Indies . Pellew 's particular target was the island of Java , where the principal Dutch squadron and their base at Batavia were located . The Dutch Kingdom of Holland was a French client state under Emperor Napoleon 's brother Louis Bonaparte and Batavia had been used by Linois in his preparations for the Battle of Pulo Aura , in which a valuable British convoy came under attack , and its position close to the Straits of Malacca threatened British trade with China .

Pellew 's departure for the East Indies was delayed by the Vellore Mutiny in the spring , and instead he sent frigates to reconnoitre the situation of the Dutch forces in the region . In July , HMS Greyhound under Captain Edward Elphinstone cruised in the Molucca Islands and captured a Dutch convoy at the Action of 26 July 1806 off Celebes . Three months later another frigate , HMS Caroline under Captain Peter Rainier , cruised successfully in the Java Sea and managed to capture a Dutch frigate at the Action of 18 October 1806 from the entrance to Batavia harbour . Shortly before Rainier 's engagement , the principal ships of the Dutch squadron , the two ships of the line Pluto and Revolutie , had sailed westwards towards the port of Griessie , Rear @-@ Admiral Hartsinck seeking to divide his forces in preparation for the coming British attack to prevent their complete destruction .

Pellew sailed from Madras in the early autumn of 1806 , expecting the full Dutch squadron to be present and preparing accordingly with the ship of the line HMS Culloden under Captain Christopher Cole as his flagship , accompanied by HMS Powerful under Captain Robert Plampin , HMS Russell under Captain Thomas Gordon Caulfield and HMS Belliqueux under Captain George Byng . The ships of the line were accompanied by the frigate HMS Terpsichore under Captain Fleetwood Pellew , Admiral Pellew 's son , as well as the brig HMS Seaflower under Lieutenant William Fitzwilliam Owen .

= = Pellew 's attack = =

By 23 November , Pellew 's squadron was approaching the Sunda Strait from the southwest when he encountered the British frigate HMS Sir Francis Drake , which he attached to his force . Three days later , the squadron passed the port of Bantam and seized the Dutch East India Company brig Maria Wilhelmina , continuing on to Batavia during the night . At the approaches to the port , the squadron separated , with the frigates and brig passing between Onrust Island and the shore while the ships of the line took a longer route through deeper water . Although Terpsichore was able to surprise and capture the corvette William near Onrust Island , the main body of the squadron was spotted by Dutch lookouts from a distance , who initially mistook the approaching vessels for a French squadron . The Dutch officers , led by Captain Vander Sande on the frigate Phoenix , decided that resistance against such a large British squadron was useless : the only warships remaining in the harbour were the Phoenix and six small armed ships , none of which could contend with the approaching British force . In an effort to dissuade the British from pressing their attack , the Dutch captains all drove their vessels ashore , joined by the 22 merchant vessels that were anchored in the harbour .

Determined to prevent the Dutch from refloating the grounded ships , Admiral Pellew ordered landing parties to assemble in the boats of his squadron alongside Terpsichore . From there , under distant covering fire from the British frigates , Fleetwood Pellew led the boats against Phoenix , coming under fire from the grounded vessels and gun batteries ashore . Passing through the bombardment from the shoreline , Pellew 's men boarded Phoenix to find that the Dutch crew had just abandoned the vessel , scuttling the frigate as they departed . Although now useless as a ship , Phoenix 's guns were turned on the other beached vessels to cover the British boats as they spread out to board and burn them . This operation was followed by the destruction of 20 grounded merchant ships in the harbour , although two others were successfully refloated and captured . In a final act before withdrawing to the squadron offshore , Captain Pellew set fire to the wreck of Phoenix , burning the ship to the waterline . The entire operation was conducted under heavy fire from the shore , but British casualties were only one Royal Marine killed and three men wounded .

Without sufficient troops to attempt a landing at Batavia itself , Admiral Pellew withdrew from the harbour . Preparing his prizes for the return to Madras , he ordered all prisoners taken from the captured and burnt ships returned to shore under condition of parole . The captured William was found to be in such a poor state of repair that it was not worth keeping the corvette and Admiral Pellew ordered the ship burnt , noting in his official report that Lieutenant Owen , who as senior lieutenant would otherwise have been placed in command , should be recompensed with another command as reward for his services in the engagement . With his preparations complete , Pellew then ordered his squadron to disperse , Culloden sailing to Malacca .

= = Aftermath = =

The British raid on Batavia had destroyed 28 vessels . In addition to Phoenix , William and the merchant ships , Pellew 's squadron had burnt the 18 @-@ gun brigs Aventurier and Patriot , the 14 @-@ gun Zee @-@ Ploeg , the 10 @-@ gun Arnistein , the 8 @-@ gun Johanna Suzanna and the 6 @-@ gun Snelheid . Just three ships were captured : two merchant vessels and Maria Wilhelmina . The elimination of the smaller vessels of the Dutch squadron was an important victory for Pellew , leaving only the larger ships of the line at large . These ships were old and in poor condition , limiting the threat they posed to British trade routes . Nevertheless , Pellew returned to the Java Sea in 1807 in search of the warships , destroying them at the Raid on Griessie in November , a year after the success at Batavia . A lack of resources in the region and the threat posed by the French Indian Ocean island bases delayed larger scale British operations against the East Indies until 1810 , when a series of invasions rapidly eliminated the remaining Dutch presence in the Pacific .