

= Troude 's expedition to the Caribbean =

Troude 's expedition to the Caribbean was a naval operation by a French force under Commodore Amable @-@ Gilles Troude during the Napoleonic Wars . The French squadron departed from Lorient in February 1809 in an attempt to reach and resupply the island colony of Martinique in the Caribbean Sea , then under invasion from a British expeditionary force . The force arrived much too late to affect the outcome of the successful invasion and took shelter from a British squadron in the Îles des Saintes , where they were blockaded by part of the British invasion fleet , led by Vice @-@ Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane . Two weeks after the French ships arrived , British troops invaded and captured the Saintes , constructing mortar batteries to bombard the French squadron . With his position unsustainable , Commodore Troude decided to break out .

Attempting to escape under cover of darkness on 14 April , the French squadron was spotted by a number of small British ships stationed close inshore . These ships raised the alarm and the main British squadron followed in pursuit . The rearmost French ship of the line , Hautpoult , was closely followed by the small brig HMS Recruit , which succeeded in delaying Hautpoult long enough that the main British squadron was able to attack and overwhelm her in a running battle that lasted three days and ended off the coast of Puerto Rico . The British suffered 45 casualties , the French nearly 100 . The remainder of the French squadron escaped , with the two surviving ships of the line sailing directly for France , eventually reaching Cherbourg in May .

The French expedition 's two frigates , both only partially armed , were detached during the action and took shelter in harbour at Guadeloupe . In June , heavily laden with trade goods , they attempted to escape to Europe , but were pursued by elements of the British blockade force . Félicité was overrun after four days of manoeuvre , submitting to the more powerful British frigate HMS Latona without a fight . Furieuse was able to escape immediate pursuit , but was subsequently discovered on 3 July by the smaller British ship HMS Bonne Citoyenne . In a fierce engagement two days later , the small British ship was able to defeat and capture the French vessel , which was later commissioned into the Royal Navy .

= = Background = =

During the Napoleonic Wars , the French Navy suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the British Royal Navy , culminating in the destruction of much of their Mediterranean Fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 . Unable to compete at sea , the French were increasingly confined to their principal naval bases , especially Brest on the Biscay coast and Toulon in the Mediterranean . With British squadrons patrolling the entrances to these ports , the French found it difficult not only to conduct regular overseas trade , but also to supply and reinforce their overseas colonies . As a result , the colonies faced financial collapse and the constant threat of attack by British forces , especially in the Caribbean , where by 1809 their island colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe were surrounded by British held islands and blockaded by a strong British fleet under Vice @-@ Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane .

During the summer of 1808 , messages arrived in France from Martinique , outlining the desperate situation of their supplies , morale and economy . It was determined that reinforcements and food supplies would be sent and the frigate Thétis was despatched in November 1808 . Within days , Thétis had been captured at the Action of 10 November 1808 , and subsequent operations had mixed success : the frigate Amphitrite reached Martinique , but a number of smaller ships were intercepted and defeated , both in Europe and the West Indies . In desperation , a major operation was planned , intended to transport substantial supplies and sufficient troops to resist the inevitable British invasion on Martinique . To this end , Commodore Amable @-@ Gilles Troude was provided with the ships of the line Courageux , Polonais and Hautpoult , with the frigates Félicité and Furieuse en flûte as armed storeships , carrying the bulk of the supplies .

On 21 February 1809 , a large French fleet under Admiral Jean @-@ Baptiste Willaumez attempted to escape Brest and was chased by the blockade squadron and driven to shelter under the Ile d 'Aix . Shortly afterwards , three French frigates attempted to break out of Lorient , but were challenged

and destroyed at the Action of 24 February 1809 . These operations were the preliminaries to the Battle of Basque Roads in April , but also provided the cover required for Troude 's force to escape Lorient while the British were engaged elsewhere . Travelling rapidly across the Atlantic , the French encountered no British warships but were able to seize a number of lone British merchant ships , from whom Troude learned that the invasion of Martinique was already underway . While Troude 's expedition had been preparing at Lorient , Cochrane had been preparing his own operation to Martinique , following the interception of the same despatches warning of the island 's low morale and preparedness in the summer of 1808 . Amassing an expeditionary force of 44 ships and 10 @, @ 000 men at Carlisle Bay , Barbados , Cochrane began the invasion on 30 January 1809 and his troops rapidly overran the French defences , despite stiff resistance in the central highlands . By 10 February , the only remaining point in French hands was Fort Desaix , which held out until the magazine was breached on 24 February , at which point Governor Louis Thomas Villaret de Joyeuse surrendered unconditionally .

= = Îles des Saintes = =

Troude was wary on his arrival in the Leeward Islands on 29 March , refusing to approach Martinique and instead anchoring near the Îles des Saintes until the situation in the islands could be established . Before he could make contact with nearby Guadeloupe , he was discovered by patrolling British warships and a warning sent to Cochrane , who was on his flagship HMS Neptune off Martinique . Within hours Neptune was cruising off the Saintes , joined by the ships of the line HMS Pompee , HMS York , HMS Belleisle , HMS Captain , HMS Polyphemus and a number of smaller warships that could operate closer inshore . Blockading the Saintes was a difficult task : the French had three channels through which they could escape , too many to be effectively blocked by the forces at Cochrane 's disposal . In addition , the Troude 's force could not be attacked directly , the width of the channels making it impossible for the British ships to attack in full strength .

For two weeks the British and French squadrons watched one another , the British unable to attack and the French unable to escape . In an effort to break the deadlock , Cochrane sent to Martinique for a body of 3 @, @ 000 men under Major @-@ General Frederick Maitland . With this force he launched a surprise invasion of the islands on 14 April , the amphibious operation commanded by Captain Philip Beaver in HMS Acasta and executed successfully with only minor casualties . Parties of seamen went ashore in the wake of the soldiers , working rapidly to establish a battery of two 8 @-@ inch howitzers on Morne @-@ Russell . These guns began firing during the afternoon and by 20 : 00 Troude had given orders for his squadron to sail through the western channel during the night .

In their efforts to monitor the French , Cochrane 's squadron had become divided , so that Neptune and Pompee were the only ships within reach of Troude 's squadron when they passed through the channel . Neither ship was well placed to fight the larger French force and both were taken by surprise , only alerted to the French escape by the brig HMS Hazard under Captain Hugh Cameron shortly before 22 : 00 . Pompee was closest to the French , and Captain William Charles Fahie managed to fire two broadsides into the rearmost ship , Hautpoult before the Troude 's squadron pulled away from her . Neptune , Pompee and the small brig HMS Recruit took up the chase , the fast Recruit annoying the French with persistent minor attacks , while Neptune came too close to Hautpoult and was fired on , losing one man killed and four wounded . The French escape , while necessitated by the British battery , was actually a feint : the frigates Félicité and Furieuse had remained hidden off the Saintes during the night and at 09 : 00 on 15 April , with the main combat continuing to the west , slipped away into Basse @-@ Terre on Guadeloupe , chased in vain by HMS Intrepid under Captain Warwick Lake . French batteries drove off the British pursuit and the frigates were anchored in harbour and their stores successfully unloaded .

= = Battle = =

During the night of 14 ? 15 April 1809 , contact was maintained with the French squadron by

Recruit , Captain Charles John Napier firing on the rearmost ship Hautpoult and coming under fire from the French stern @-@ chasers , guns situated in the rear of a ship to fire on pursuers . Shortly after 04 : 00 , Pompee came within range and began to fire her bow @-@ chasers , the chase continuing westwards into the Caribbean Sea . Frustrated by her inability to escape Recruit , Hautpoult eventually turned and fired a broadside at 10 : 45 , causing severe damage but failing to dissuade Napier , who immediately counter @-@ attacked . Hautpoult 's manoeuvre caused her to lose ground to her pursuers and throughout the day the squadrons exchanged shots , neither causing significant damage but the French being driven deeper into British held waters and unable to drive off their opponents .

At 20 : 00 , Troude ordered Hautpoult to steer to the northwest while he took Courageux and Polonais southwest in an effort to divide the pursuit . Pompee and Recruit kept with Hautpoult , while Neptune , accompanied by the brig HMS Hawk continued to follow Troude 's main force . During the night however Troude outdistanced Neptune , and on the morning of 16 April Cochrane ordered all available ships to converge on Hautpoult . The lone French ship of the line had finally forced the damaged Recruit to retire , but could see Pompee and Neptune to the southeast and the newly arrived frigates HMS Latona under Captain Hugh Pigot and HMS Castor under Captain William Roberts to the northeast , with the Spanish coast of Puerto Rico directly north . During the day the chase continued , Neptune falling behind but Pompee remaining in sight and the frigates gaining on Hautpoult . At 17 : 00 , Puerto Rico appeared on the horizon , the French forced to follow the coastline westwards . During the night , the British pursuers were confused by the overcast sky , which helped Hautpoult to partially obscure herself among the lights from shore .

At 02 : 45 on 17 April , Castor closed within range of Hautpoult and opened fire , exchanging broadsides with the much larger French ship for 75 minutes and slowing her sufficiently for Pompee to come within range . Sailing between Castor and the French ship , Fahie closed within 50 yards (46 m) and opened fire with his broadside . Within 15 minutes Hautpoult attempted to escape by pulling forward and engaging with Castor again , but the damage done to her sails and rigging hindered the manoeuvre and Pompee pulled across her stern , threatening to rake her . With defeat inevitable , the French captain surrendered , Neptune , York , Captain , Hazard , Hawk , Recruit , Polyphemus , HMS Ethalion and HMS Ringdove all coming within sight as dawn broke , joining Pompee , Castor and Latona .

= = = Aftermath = = =

Hautpoult had fought hard during the engagement and was badly damaged , suffering between 80 and 90 casualties . Pompee was also badly damaged , losing nine killed and 30 wounded , including Fahie wounded . Other casualties were suffered on Castor , with one killed and five wounded ; Neptune one killed and four wounded and Recruit one wounded . In total , British losses were 11 killed and 40 wounded . Cochrane ordered Pompee and the newly captured French ship back to port , promoting Napier to command the ship of the line for his service on Recruit and despatching York and Captain to hunt for Troude 's remaining squadron . Despite their efforts , Troude evaded pursuit and eventually reached Cherbourg in May . In addition to Napier there were further promotions and awards and Hautpoult was taken into the Royal Navy as HMS Abercromby . Four decades later the battle was among the actions recognised by a clasp attached to the Naval General Service Medal , awarded upon application to all British participants still living in 1847 .

= = Félicité and Furieuse = =

During May 1809 , the frigates Félicité and Furieuse remained at Guadeloupe , taking on stores and preparing for their eventual return journey to France . Although they were both large frigates , they had been largely disarmed in France to create space for cargo : Furieuse was provided with only 20 cannon (including 12 carronades) and a crew of just 200 , while Félicité had even fewer defences , carrying just 14 cannon and 174 men . Watching these ships was a small British blockade force led by Hugh Pigot in Latona with a few brigs and sloops , Cochrane 's invasion fleet having been

dispersed .

== Félicité ==

On 14 June under the cover of darkness , the French frigates set sail , laden with colonial merchandise for sale in France . They were immediately spotted leaving Basse @-@ Terre by the blockade squadron , but although the brig HMS Haughty managed to fire a few shots before they pulled away , only Latona and Cherub under Captain Thomas Tudor Tucker were able to maintain contact . Throughout 15 , 16 and most of 17 June the chase continued , until the frigates separated : Furieuse led Cherub away from Latona and then outdistanced her , disappearing into the Atlantic . Félicité was unable to escape Latona however , and on 18 June was overrun . Outgunned by his larger opponent , Félicité 's captain surrendered immediately . An old and worn ship , she was not deemed worthy of purchase into the Royal Navy and was instead sold to Haiti , reappearing in 1812 as the Améthyste under the control of a privateer commissioned by Haitian rebels . Captain Yeo quickly attacked and captured her during the Action of 3 February 1812 .

== Furieuse ==

Although Furieuse had escaped Cherub 's pursuit , she still had to cross the Atlantic . Passing up the Eastern Seaboard of the United States , her commander , Lieutenant Gabriel @-@ Etienne @-@ Louis Le Marant Kerdaniel , raided British merchant shipping and was consequently delayed . At 15 : 00 on 5 July , the 20 @-@ gun sloop HMS Bonne Citoyenne under Captain William Mounsey , on passage from Halifax , Nova Scotia to Quebec , spotted Furieuse to the southwest taking possession of a British merchant ship . As Bonne Citoyenne approached , Kerdaniel abandoned the merchant ship and sailed northwards , Mounsey giving chase but trailing 5 nautical miles (9 @. @ 3 km) behind throughout the day .

As darkness fell , Furieuse disappeared ahead , Mounsey pursuing in the hope of rediscovering his opponent during the night . At 03 : 00 on 6 July , the British lookouts spotted the French ship in the distance and the chase began again , Bonne Citoyenne proving much faster than the French ship as the wind strengthened . At 09 : 10 it became clear to Kerdaniel that he could not escape his opponent and instead turned to meet her , opening fire five minutes later as Bonne Citoyenne came within range . Mounsey replied immediately , the two ships exchanging fire at close range for nearly seven hours , the smaller and more manoeuvrable Bonne Citoyenne successfully turning several times to vary her broadsides and prevent her guns overheating . In the exchange , the British ship fired 129 broadsides , while Furieuse only managed 70 : Bonne Citoyenne lost three cannon to fractures caused by the intense heat generated by repeated firing . With his ammunition spent , Mounsey swung towards Furieuse at 18 : 16 to board and capture her , at which point Kerdaniel , whose ship was battered and unmanoeuvrable , surrendered .

Due to her small size and high speed , Bonne Citoyenne suffered minimal casualties of one man killed and five wounded , although the ship itself was badly damaged . French losses were far more severe , with 35 killed , 37 seriously wounded including her captain , and 20 lightly wounded . Furieuse , built as a 40 @-@ gun frigate , had proven unable to match the speed and agility of the smaller ship and as a result her reduced armament had proven inadequate when faced with Mounsey 's determined opposition . It was not until 01 : 30 on 7 July that temporary repairs were complete and the two ships began the long , slow journey to Halifax , Nova Scotia . The following day however , two of the Furieuse 's masts collapsed and Mounsey was forced to take her in tow , both ships in constant danger of foundering . After 25 days in tow , Furieuse arrived in Halifax . Mounsey and his officers were widely praised for their success and Mounsey was given command of the repaired and newly purchased HMS Furieuse several months later as a reward . His first lieutenant was also promoted and the whole crew benefitted from the award of prize money . As with the April engagement , the capture of Furieuse was among the actions recognised by a clasp attached to the Naval General Service Medal .

= = Subsequent operations = =

The failure of Troude 's squadron to escape the British pursuit highlights the dominance of the Royal Navy in the Atlantic by 1809 . With Martinique gone , and French Guiana and San Domingo falling the same year , Guadeloupe was the only remaining French possession in the West Indies . Despite the supplies carried by Troude 's ships , the situation there was desperate : food shortages and financial crisis causing a collapse in the island 's morale . When a further effort to resupply the island was defeated in December 1809 , the French losing two more frigates , the inhabitants had no alternative but to wait for the inevitable British invasion . In January 1810 , Cochrane ordered an amphibious landing on Guadeloupe , which rapidly overwhelmed the weakened defenders and eliminated the last remaining French colony in the Caribbean Sea .