

= HMS Hermione (1782) =

HMS Hermione was a 32 @-@ gun fifth @-@ rate frigate of the Royal Navy . She was notorious for having the bloodiest mutiny in British naval history , which saw her captain and most of the officers killed . The mutineers then handed the ship over to the Spanish , with whom she remained for two years before being cut out and returned to Royal Navy service under the names Retaliation and later Retribution .

= = Early years = =

HMS Hermione was the lead ship of a six @-@ ship class of frigates designed by Edward Hunt and termed the Hermione class . She was launched on 9 September 1782 from Teast 's of Bristol , having cost £ 11,350.14s.4d to build , with a further £ 4,570.2s.2d spent on dockyard expenses , and £ 723.16s.9d on fitting out .

She was commissioned initially under Captain Thomas Lloyd , who commanded her until she was paid off in April 1783 . She recommissioned that same month under Captain John Stone , who sailed her to Nova Scotia on 17 October , after which she was paid off in 1785 . Hermione may have then been recommissioned under Captain William H. Ricketts during the Spanish Armament of 1790 , though this is uncertain . She did , however , undergo a repair between October 1790 and June 1792 , followed by a period spent refitting at Chatham Dockyard until January 1793 . She was recommissioned in December 1792 under Captain John Hills , under whom she sailed to Jamaica on 10 March 1793 .

She served in the West Indies during the early years of the French Revolutionary Wars . On 4 June , Hermione , under Hills , participated in the British attack on Port @-@ au @-@ Prince , where she led a small squadron that accompanied the troop transports . Hermione had five men killed and six wounded in the attack . The British captured the town and its defences , and in taking the port they also captured a large number of merchant vessels . Hermione was among the vessels that shared in the capture on 17 July of the Lady Walterstasse . Hills died from yellow fever (fatal " Black Vomit ") , at Port Royal , Jamaica , in September 1794 . Captain Philip Wilkinson replaced Hills and was himself replaced in February 1797 ? the year of the Spithead and Nore mutinies ? by Captain Hugh Pigot .

Pigot was a cruel officer who meted out severe and arbitrary punishment to his crew . During a nine @-@ month period , as captain of his previous command HMS Success he ordered at least 85 floggings , the equivalent of half the crew ; two men died from their injuries .

Hermione was sent to patrol the Mona Passage between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico . Under Pigot , she destroyed three privateers at Puerto Rico on 22 March 1797 . On 20 April Hermione was the lead ship in a squadron formed of the 32 @-@ gun frigates HMS Mermaid and HMS Quebec , the 14 @-@ gun brig HMS Drake , and the cutter HMS Penelope . The squadron cut out nine ships at the Battle of Jean @-@ Rabel without suffering any casualties . On 6 September 1797 she was in company with HMS Diligence and HMS Renommee when Diligence captured a Spanish 6 @-@ gun packet ship with troops on board .

= = Mutiny = =

Midshipman David Casey was an experienced junior officer who had distinguished himself to Captain Pigot during the previous months , but his disrating was one of the primary triggers to the mutiny . About a week before the mutiny , Casey was at his station on the main top , and the captain noticed that a gasket , one of the ties that held the sail securely , had not been tied by one of the sailors under his supervision . Casey was brought before the captain , and apologised for the oversight and took responsibility for it . The captain demanded that Casey apologise on his knees , a completely unacceptable and debasing demand for a gentleman . Casey refused to be humiliated in such a way . Pigot offered him one more opportunity and when Casey once more refused , the captain ordered that Casey receive 12 lashes (more commonly a sailor 's punishment than that of a

junior officer) , and he was disgraced , which would effectively end his career as a naval officer . Casey was a popular officer amongst the crew and they felt that he was punished unfairly . The topmen began to plot mutiny .

Pigot had also developed the practice of frequently flogging the last sailor down from working aloft . On 20 September 1797 , Pigot ordered the topsails to be reefed after a squall struck the ship . Dissatisfied with the speed of the operation because " these would be the yard @-@ arm men , the most skilful topmen " he gave the order that the last men off the yard would be flogged . This policy was particularly unreasonable as the men would be spaced along the yard , and the two whose stations were furthest out would always be the last down . Three young sailors , in their haste to get down , fell to their deaths on the deck . One of the sailors hit and injured the master , Mr. Southcott . Pigot ordered their bodies thrown into the sea with the words " throw the lubbers overboard " ; a particularly offensive insult in the seaman 's vocabulary . He then instructed two boatswain 's mates to flog the rest of the topmen when they complained . The topmen were also flogged the next morning .

The combination of the humiliation of Casey , the deaths of the topmen , and the severe punishment of the rest of the sailors appears to have driven the crew to mutiny . These factors , however , were arguably the final events in a series of harsh and brutal punishments by the captain . Dudley Pope , in his book *The Black Ship* , argues that it was not Pigot 's cruelty that drove the men to mutiny but the general injustice that he showed in his favouritism to some and overly harsh punishment of others . Had Pigot remained more even @-@ handed in his leadership , the mutiny might have been avoided .

The evening of 21 September 1797 , a number of the crew , drunk on stolen rum , rushed Pigot 's cabin and forced their way in after overpowering the marine stationed outside . They hacked at Pigot with knives and cutlasses before throwing him overboard . The mutineers , probably led by a core group of just 18 men , went on to murder another eight of Hermione 's officers : the first lieutenant , Samuel Reed ; the second lieutenant , Archibald Douglas ; the third lieutenant , Henry Foreshaw ; the marine commander , Lieutenant McIntosh ; Boatswain William Martin ; Purser Stephen Turner Pacey ; Surgeon H.T. Sansum ; and the captain 's clerk . Two midshipmen were also killed , and all the bodies were thrown overboard . Three warrant officers survived : the gunner and carpenter were spared because they were considered useful to the ship , and Southcott the master was spared so he could navigate . Southcott lived to be a key witness , along with Casey , who was also spared , and their eyewitness accounts and testimony were key to the trials of many of the mutineers . Three petty officers joined the mutiny , one midshipman , Surgeon 's Mate Cronin , and Master 's Mate Turner .

Fearing retribution for their actions , the mutineers decided to navigate the ship toward Spanish waters . One reason the master 's life was spared was that Turner could not navigate the ship properly without his help . The Hermione sailed to La Guaira , where they handed the ship over to the Spanish authorities . The mutineers claimed they had set the officers adrift in a small boat , as had happened in the mutiny on the *Bounty* some eight years earlier . The Spanish gave the mutineers just 25 dollars each in return , and presented them with the options of joining the Spanish army , heavy labour , or refitting their ship . The Spaniards took Hermione into service under the name *Santa Cecilia* ; her crew included 25 of her former crew , who remained under Spanish guard .

= = Recapture and renaming = =

Meanwhile , news of the fate of HMS Hermione reached Admiral Sir Hyde Parker when HMS *Diligence* captured a Spanish schooner . Parker wrote to the governor of La Guaira , demanding the return of the ship and the surrender of the mutineers . Meanwhile he despatched HMS *Magicienne* under Captain Henry Ricketts to commence negotiations . He also set up a system of informers and posted rewards that eventually led to the capture of 33 of the mutineers , some of whom were tried aboard HMS *York* , and at least one aboard HMS *Gladiator* . Of these , 24 were hanged and gibbeted , one was transported , and eight were acquitted or pardoned . To Parker 's fury , Admiral

Richard Rodney Bligh had issued pardons to several mutineers . Acting against regulations Parker forced Bligh to resign his command and return to Britain in the summer of 1799 .

Santa Cecilia , under the command of Captain Don Ramon de Chalas , had meanwhile sat in Puerto Cabello until Captain Edward Hamilton , aboard HMS Surprise , cut her out of the harbour on 25 October 1799 . Hamilton led a boarding party to retake Hermione and , after an exceptionally bloody action , sailed her out of danger under Spanish gunfire . The Spanish casualties included 119 dead ; the British took 231 Spaniards prisoner , while another 15 jumped or fell overboard . Hamilton had 11 men injured , four seriously , but none killed . Hamilton himself was severely wounded .

For his daring exploit , Hamilton was made a knight by letters patent , a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (2 January 1815) , and eventually became a baronet (20 October 1818) . The Jamaica House of Assembly awarded him a sword worth 300 guineas , and the City of London awarded him the Freedom of the City in a public dinner on 25 October 1800 . In 1847 , the Admiralty awarded Hamilton a gold medal for the recapture of Hermione , and the Naval General Service Medal with the clasp , " Surprise with Hermione " , to the seven surviving claimants from the action .

= = Return to British service = =

Parker renamed Santa Cecilia the Retaliation . In late 1799 or early 1800 , Retaliation captured four vessels . These were the two American brigs Gracey , sailing from Trinidad bound for Baltimore with a cargo of sugar , honey , and hides ; the Peggy , sailing from Cartagena to New York with a cargo of sugar , coffee , cotton , fustick , and hides ; and the Danish sloop Sisters , which was sailing from Jamaica to Baltimore with a cargo of sugar , and which had just left St Thomas .

The Admiralty then renamed her Retribution on 31 January 1800 . She was recommissioned in September 1800 at Jamaica under Captain Samuel Forster . Apparently before that she detained an American schooner sailing from Port Republic with a cargo of coffee and logwood .

In early 1801 Retribution detained the Spanish schooner La Linda , which was sailing from Campeachy to Havana , and the American schooner Sea Horse , which was sailing from Porto Cavello to New York . Retribution sent both into Jamaica .

On 1 October Melampus , Juno , and Retribution were in company when they captured the Aquila .

= = Fate = =

Retribution arrived at Portsmouth in the third week of January 1802 . She was subsequently fitted at Woolwich in October 1803 for service for Trinity House at a cost of £ 484 , equal to £ 39 @ , @ 861 @ . @ 05 today . She was broken up at Deptford in June 1805 .

= = In popular culture = =

Captain Sawyer , commander of the ship of the line HMS Renown in the Horatio Hornblower novel Lieutenant Hornblower , is based on Captain Pigot , sharing many of the same mannerisms . Sawyer was portrayed by actor David Warner in the A & E miniseries Hornblower episodes " Mutiny " and " Retribution " .