

French commerce

Although France was not far behind England and the United Provinces when she established an East India Company in 1604, the venture represented a hope, not a fulfilment. A group from Saint-Malo in Brittany had managed to send two ships to the Moluccas, the legendary spice islands of Indonesia, as early as 1601, but successive attempts to found a viable trading company were frustrated until Richelieu's Eastern Company was created in 1642 through the amalgamation of Paris and Dieppe promoters. Even this commercial syndicate was short-lived, however, and in the evolution of the French unitary state in the 17th century trade in the Far East was too often subordinated to political ends. Colonization and the dream of empire weighed at least as heavily as mercantile advantage.

The successive French trading monopolies operating in eastern waters throughout most of the 18th century differed fundamentally from those of their main competitors in Britain, Denmark and the United Provinces. They were agents of government, largely controlled by the state, rather than independent commercial undertakings, and their personnel, at home, at sea and abroad, was always more national in its composition than that of their rivals.

The Eastern Company of 1642 was preoccupied with settlement, trade and missionary endeavour on Madagascar. Some interest was shown in the possibility of using Saldanha Bay as an anchorage and refreshment station on the voyages of its ships. Etienne de Flacourt of Orleans spent some days there in 1648 on his outward voyage from La Rochelle in the *Saint-Laurent* and was at Saldanha Bay again for three weeks in 1655, after Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape, on his return in the *Ours*.

A new East India Company founded by Colbert in September 1664 almost collapsed at the outset through its continued concentration of effort on the colonization of Madagascar. Saldanha Bay remained an objective and a tenuous right of possession was maintained there until the outbreak of the Franco-Dutch War in 1672. Officers from the *Saumacque* raised a pillar at the bay in 1666 bearing the French royal arms and the claims of that country were again asserted in 1670 when Louis XIV's Persian squadron under Jacob Blanquet de la Haye called at the Cape. This fleet, intended to establish French power in the east on a firm basis, was a disastrous failure, but men of commercial vision such as the Dutch East India Company's former employee François Caron of Brussels and the Parisian François Martin laid the foundations for future French commerce in the Indies. The island of Bourbon (Réunion) in the Mascarenes took the place of Madagascar in French colonization schemes, and factories, not all of them destined to become permanent, were set up on Java in Indonesia, at Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf, at Surat, north of Bombay, at Pondicherry on the Coromandel coast and at Masulipatnam to the north of it, as well as on the Malabar coast. Pondicherry, founded in 1672, was to become the centre of the French commercial empire in the east and was defended from 1706 by the fortress of Saint-Louis.

The company was reformed in March 1685, just as two royal vessels sailed for Siam (Thailand) in a bid to extend French influence in that region and in the Chinese Empire. These ships, the *Oyseau* and the *Maligne*, called at the Cape on 31 May of that year and the Jesuit scientist-missionaries aboard, among them Jean de Fontaney from Brittany, leader of the party, and Guy Tachard from the Angoumois, took astronomical readings there. Tachard and a second group of Jesuit astronomers were at the Cape again in June 1687 with a squadron despatched to Siam. This expedition, which hoped to secure a useful foothold on the Bay of Bengal at Mergui, now in Lower Burma, failed in its aim. This lack of success, however, was offset by the achievement of Martin's son-in-law André Boureau Deslandes in making Chandernagore in Bengal an important link in the chain of French commerce in the east. It was in this period that the French Calvinist refugees began to reach the Cape and it is from Tachard's pen that we have a picture of the arrival of a number of them in 1688, when the Jesuit was homeward-bound from the Indies on the *Gaillard*.

The outbreak of the War of the League of Augsburg in 1688 seriously disrupted French trade beyond the Cape. Two vessels, the *Normande* and the *Coche*, were taken by the Dutch in Table Bay and Pondicherry fell to the same nation in 1693 and was not returned until 1699. As early as 1681 the French East India Company had permitted private shipping to trade in eastern waters in association with the older monopoly and it was as a private venture that the *Amphitrite* was sent out in 1698 to inaugurate French commerce

with China. This trade was absorbed into a chartered company in 1705 and further reorganized along monopoly lines in 1712. The War of the Spanish Succession, however, ruined the older East India Company, which was compelled to lease its trade to merchants in Paris and Saint-Malo after 1706.

In 1719 Louis XV took the advice of the expatriate financier John Law from Edinburgh and merged much of French commerce in the Americas and West Africa with the India and China trade. The resultant Company of the Indies was reconstituted in 1723 after the failure of Law's economic system and its financial stability was buttressed by the revenue from the royal tobacco monopoly. The Company of the Indies was saddled for almost a decade with the Atlantic commerce it had inherited from the Law era, but from 1732 it could be considered essentially a monopoly trading to the Indies and China. With headquarters in Paris and port facilities at Lorient on the roadstead formed by the confluence of the Scorff and the Blavet in southern Brittany, protected by the citadel of Port-Louis, the company flourished until the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756, despite some setbacks during the Anglo-French naval war of 1744-1748.

The Company of the Indies never placed quite so heavy an emphasis on the China trade as did most of its competitors, but consolidated its position in the Indian Ocean region. Colonization of the Ile de France (Mauritius) began in 1721, eight years after France had claimed the island following Dutch withdrawal from it. The Ile de France was to become the chief French possession in the Mascarenes and a focus of naval power in the east. A factory was founded at Mahé on the Malabar coast in 1721, made permanent after military and naval action in 1725. Others were established at Yanam on the Bay of Bengal in 1723 and at Karikal on the Coromandel coast in 1739. French commercial rights were reasserted at the coffee port of Mokha in 1737 and further expansion took place at St Mary's Bay on Madagascar and in the Seychelles before the war of 1756-1763.

French contacts with the Cape of Good Hope in the years 1735-1755 reflect, therefore, considerable commercial activity to the eastward, interrupted in some measure, however, during the power struggle with Britain of 1744-1748, to which we shall turn our attention in a separate chapter. All the voyages discussed here were of a pacific nature and most of them were of ships sailing between Lorient and the Ile de France, Bourbon, India and China.

Our point of departure is the arrival in Table Bay on 28 February 1735 of the 44 gun *Condé* with a complement of 190 men, which had sailed from the Lorient roadstead by way of Cadiz and was bound for China under the command of the experienced Jacques Morellet. As they peered through the mist towards the shore those aboard were just able to descry the little fort, as they described it, nestling on the water's edge and the windmill in the furthest part of the bay.

Landmarks like the Castle, the mill, the church in the township and the gallows at Green Point served mariners as bearings for securing a good anchorage in Table Bay, as appears from the log of the *Condé* on a later voyage to China in March 1739 under the captaincy of Herbert de la Portebarré, one of several French captains mentioned in these pages who came to hold the coveted cross of Saint-Louis for services rendered to the state. Captains and navigators were not, however, left to their own devices in finding a suitable place to anchor. Assistance in this matter was a normal courtesy extended to visiting ships at the Cape, as is instanced by Jean-Christophe d'Argy de la Châtre of Lorient, captain of the *Duc de Parme* on a voyage to Bengal in January 1751.

In that age of imperfect navigational aids captains were seldom entirely certain of their precise position until landfall was made. There are many entries in ships' logs which note, for example, a difference in longitude at the Cape compared with that recorded on the charts. This problem is remarked on in the log of the *Comte de Toulouse*, bound for Bengal in 1738 under the command of a captain of Irish background, Richard Butler de Trovern, and in that of the *Maurepas*, sailing to the same destination in 1753 with the future Lorient port commander Jacques-Pierre-Guillaume Buisson de la Vigne as captain.

This intrepid sailor from Saint-Malo has other claims to fame. He was ennobled by Louis XVI in 1776 and his granddaughter and ward Céleste married the writer Chateaubriand. Buisson de la Vigne's brother François-André served in the French navy during the War of the Austrian Succession and was crippled by a knee injury sustained in action in 1747. As first lieutenant of the company ship the *Diane* he fell sick on a voyage to the Indies in 1752 and was transferred in the South Atlantic to the London East Indiaman *Prince of Wales*. He was landed at the Cape by her captain William Peck on 30 March and was taken to the home of the burgher Bestbier, where he died two days later. The French lieutenant, born in Pondicherry, was in his 34th year.

Navigation in Cape waters required special caution, although the log of the *Prince de Conti*, sailing for China in 1737 under the captaincy of Julien Danycan from Saint-Malo, expresses surprise that the channel into the roadstead was far safer than had been anticipated. Return ships frequently kept the south-east coast of Africa in sight and descriptions which might be of service to future navigators in those waters were filed by the French company. One of these, undated, draws attention to the petrels whose flight indicates the proximity of land and from a British source in French hands comes a view of the Cape on a foggy day early in 1745: "A high Cliff Point having a very remarkable Rock upon the Descent of the Bluff. This Rock much like a Tower or Chimney. Likewise a small round Rock or Island (off) the Point bearing W."

Cape weather could be capricious. The *Prince de Conti* ran into a heavy storm on her approach in 1737 and a fearful crew prayed that God would be merciful and calm the elements. Fortunate on that occasion, she was ultimately wrecked in 1746 off Belle-Ile near the Quiberon peninsula. The *Comte de Toulouse*, sailing out in 1738, took more than a week to round the Cape from Table Bay in the teeth of contrary winds and the *Lys* was so disabled by a storm off the Cape that she had to be abandoned in Todos-os-Santos Bay on the Brazilian coast in 1747. Her cargo was brought to Lisbon by the Portuguese. Ships which did not call at the settlement often passed the Cape well out of sight of land on outward voyages. The passage was customarily marked by a religious ceremony. When the explorer and future governor of Bourbon, Jean-Baptiste-Charles Bouvet de Lozier, rounded the Cape in 1749 aboard another *Lys*, this time a naval vessel, the usual *Te Deum* was sung at an early morning Mass to give thanks for the safe delivery of the ship at the most dangerous point on its voyage to Pondicherry. Bouvet de Lozier was described in 1769 as the most skilful officer the company had ever employed.

His fame rests in part on his Antarctic expedition of 1738-1739, commemorated in the name of Bouvet Island. Bouvet de Lozier touched at the Cape on his return voyage aboard the frigate *Marie*. He arrived on 28 February 1739, but was unable to move to the normal anchorage until 4 March. His first task was to rent a house ashore to accommodate the sick aboard, the usual practice in such cases with French and other captains. Daniël van den Henghel, still acting governor at that time, refused to accept bills of exchange for the costs of the visit to the Cape and as Bouvet de Lozier had already exhausted his cash reserves he had to find another avenue to pay his debts. He was, however, able to turn for help to the captains of two visiting French ships, Etienne Lobry of the *Philibert* and Jacques de la Chesnaye of the *Duc d'Orléans*, both bound for Pondicherry and Bengal. It was the *Philibert's* last voyage. She was lost in calm weather at the mouth of the Ganges on 24 June 1739 through the negligence of a British pilot and although her crew were saved, her cargo could not be recovered. The *Duc d'Orléans* had a longer career, but foundered in a cyclone off Madras in October 1746 with great loss of life. Her captain, Gabriel-Joseph Béard du Désert, tried to reach shore by clinging to a chicken-coop, but was dislodged by a wave and drowned when safety was almost assured. Bouvet de Lozier sailed from the Cape on 31 March 1739, calling at the island of Trinidad off the Brazilian coast on his way back to France in order to investigate its possibilities as a refreshment station for French ships. The *Marie* reached Lorient on 24 June.

The chief navigator of the *Marie*, Jean Catin, was a man of parts, but there were exceptions to the general excellence of such officers. When the *Maurepas* returned from Bengal in 1754, her log was tersely endorsed to the

effect that its author, Jean-Baptiste Crété of Saint-Aubin, neither knew how to write nor to navigate. The company's comment on the log of a sister-ship the *Saint-Priest*, commanded by Louis de Saint-Médard, which reached Lorient from the Indies in 1752 after a voyage round the Cape, goes further in its condemnation. The navigator, it was stated, was so careless and ignorant that his account simply wasn't worth examining.

The most famous navigator of the period to visit the Cape was the sea-captain and hydrographer Jean-Baptiste-Nicolas-Denis d'Après de Mannevillette of Havre-de-Grâce (Le Havre) in Normandy. One of the greatest cartographers of the day, he published the *Neptune oriental* in 1745, an invaluable collection of charts which was subsequently revised and also translated into English. Among his other publications was a navigational guide for voyages between France and the Indies. This work of 1765 ran into a second edition and also appeared in English and Dutch. The cartographer's abilities were given special recognition by the company in 1762 when he was appointed director of maps and plans at Lorient, where he died on 1 March 1780 at the age of 73. In 1767 he was decorated with the order of Saint-Michel.

Jean-Baptiste d'Après first sailed to the east as a boy of twelve and was second lieutenant on the *Prince de Conti* when she called at the Cape on her voyage to China in 1737. In November 1750 he left Lorient as captain of the *Glorieux*, bound for the Ile de France. After touching at Rio de Janeiro and Saldanha Bay the *Glorieux* reached Table Bay on 19 April 1751, where the chief officer Pierre Chartier of Port-Louis presented the ship's papers to the new governor Rijk Tulbagh. The officers of the *Glorieux* included among their number a scion of a noted French seafaring family, the sub-lieutenant Julien Magon de la Villebague. Also on board was the distinguished astronomer, the Abbé Nicolas-Louis de la Caille from Rumigny in north-eastern France, accompanied by his artisan servant Poitevin. La Caille was to remain in the settlement for more than 22 months in order to carry out important scientific observations. He sailed for the Ile de France on 8 March 1753 aboard Sanguinet's *Puisieux*, bound for China.

Jean-Baptiste d'Après was again at the Cape in March 1752 as captain of the 22 gun frigate *Treize-Cantons* which had been sent from the Ile de France to survey the southern African coast in company with the small colonial-built snow the *Nécessaire*, commanded by Captain Trémolu. The news that nine men from the snow had been stranded at Algoa Bay alarmed the Cape authorities, who feared that France had plans to annex the region. Instructions were sent to the German-born leader of an exploring expedition in the vicinity, August Friedrich Beutler, to erect beacons proclaiming Dutch possession of the coast.

Cape fears, however, were misplaced. The voyage of the two ships from the Ile de France had no political design and the men had merely been sent on shore to obtain fresh water. Their boat had been smashed in a sudden storm and they had been unable to regain their ship. The two most senior of the stranded men, the second lieutenant Jacques-Thomas Perrot and the second bos'n François Rubion, at length succeeded in reaching the farm of a burgher Frederik Zeele near the Great Brak River and finally made contact with Beutler's party. The other seven, all ordinary seamen, perished in the attempt to reach safety. One of them, Hervé Coenan, was an epileptic whose disability contributed to his death. Perrot and Rubion were taken to the Swellendam settlement and from there travelled to the Cape, which they reached on 24 April 1752. Both the *Treize-Cantons* and the *Nécessaire* had by then sailed for the Ile de France, the latter carrying a cargo of wheat and with her crew deficiency made up by embarking men from Captain Selle's *Villeflix*, outward-bound for China. The two survivors, however, were able to obtain a passage to the island with the experienced captain from Brest, Jacques Lars de Lescouët, in command of the *Maréchal de Saxe*, also destined for China. La Caille informed Jean-Baptiste d'Après of the story of the two men's escape in a letter of 29 April.

The cartographer and his passenger La Caille have both left us some comments on the Cape scene at mid-century. For Jean-Baptiste d'Après the settlement was by far the best port of call on the route to the Indies, where good food and a healthy climate combined to make it a delightful place for rest and relaxation. The 21 sick sailors he lodged in a house rented as a hospital doubtless soon recovered. If only, the cartographer mused, the French colonies possessed just a few of the advantages of this flourishing refreshment station. Both he and La Caille praised the hospitality of the burgher Bestbier, with whom the latter stayed. Bestbier, who had served at one time in the French army, was described by Jean-Baptiste d'Après as the warmest friend the French had in the colony. He acted as an interpreter for La Caille during the astronomer's visit and helped him in many ways, including the loan of slaves. La Caille also spoke highly of the intellectual qualities of three leading personalities in the company hierarchy: the governor, Tulbagh, the secretary to the council of policy from 1741 to 1756, Josephus de Grandpreez of Valenciennes, and the erudite bibliophile Joachim Nikolaus von Dessin. Here were representatives of three of the four main national strains which went to make up the composition of contemporary Cape society; only a Scandinavian is missing.

The Abbé de la Caille's diary of his expedition to the southern hemisphere was first published posthumously in Paris in 1763. The remarks in it on the Cape did not entirely satisfy the former company employee Mentzel, who felt that the Frenchman's lack of knowledge of the Dutch language often led him astray. There is, however, much of value in La Caille's account and Mentzel

himself is not always above criticism. The German writer had left the Cape before La Caille's visit and was clearly not aware of changes in personnel there. The marine superintendent while the astronomer was at the Cape was indeed, despite Mentzel, the sea-captain Hendrik de Ruijter and the artillery officer deputed by Tulbagh to help La Caille in 1752 with his observations in the interior was, as the astronomer rightly says, Engelbert Muller. The confusion arises from the fact that the marine superintendent of Mentzel's day, Jacobus Möller, had died early in 1748.

La Caille was treated with the utmost consideration by Tulbagh, even to the provision of materials and labour for the construction of an observatory. The astronomer travelled fairly extensively in the Cape and Stellenbosch districts, witnessing the militia review of 1 November 1751 at Stellenbosch and attending, with other foreign visitors, the colonial centenary banquet of 8 April 1752. French guests also included the captains, first lieutenants and passengers of the *Treize-Cantons*, the *Nécessaire*, the *Villefrix* and the *Maréchal de Saxe*, as well as those aboard Mamineau-Brunet's *Philibert*, a later ship of that name returning via Bourbon from the Indies. La Caille was also the only foreigner present at a function held on 26 August of that year when Jacob Mossel was proclaimed governor general of the Dutch Indies and witnessed on the day of his departure from the colony the celebration of the birthday of the young prince stadtholder Willem V. La Caille's visit to Drakenstein in May 1752 enabled him to see the region originally populated by so many of the French Protestant refugees. He noted that the third generation knew no word of their grandparents' language and was informed that there would be none to speak it in twenty years' time save a handful of newcomers.

La Caille's assessment of the merits of Cape fruits and vegetables, and his assertion that they were expensive make interesting reading. Not everyone would agree with him about prices, however. He gave high praise to carrots, cabbages, strawberries and grapes, but was not impressed by the quality of celery, asparagus, oranges, pears and plums. Wine-making seemed to be beyond the capabilities of most farmers, whose product was mediocre. Governor General van Imhoff had brought out Johann Serrurier of Hanau to effect improvements, but the man was only conversant with Rhine wines and after marrying the rich widow Catharina Kretschmar, who died of smallpox in 1755, Serrurier turned to the retail wine trade. Mentzel took the astronomer to task for his strictures on the quality of Cape bread and the fondness of the burghers for salted and smoked meats and fish. These were doubtless not to the Frenchman's taste. From La Caille too we learn that it was customary to drink beer after wine at meals. Cape beer was poor and the imported product was preferred.

The French astronomer regarded the White inhabitants of the colony as lazy and said, although Mentzel denied it, that the Khoikhoi in their employ would

readily ally themselves with marauding San to steal from the resident White population. Of the slaves, La Caille noted that the need to give a monetary guarantee made manumission rare. Nor, he said, were the burghers interested in providing religious instruction for their slaves. Nevertheless it was the Frenchman's opinion that company slaves, who were taught the catechism, were not better for it than those of the burghers who generally had no contact with Christianity. He wondered whether education of any kind for them had a value in a society which depended on slavery. La Caille deprecated the viciousness of life in the slave lodge where prostitution was a remunerative profession for many female inmates. In his view, access to strong drink also led to slave depravity, both among the human chattels of the burghers and those of the company. He commented in particular on the slave women, playthings of Whites of all ages in their early youth, who openly solicited on the streets, but conveniently forgot that such encounters were a commonplace in the cities of Europe in the mid-18th century. La Caille had no novel solution to the problem of dissolute slaves, but considered that probably the only effective sanction was fear of a thrashing, the answer of the burghers to anti-social behaviour.

Finally, La Caille listed several major grievances of the burghers against company rule and although Mentzel substantially disagreed, most of the complaints had their validity. Cape inhabitants, the Frenchman stated, resented the ban on the sale of wheat to foreigners, wanted a share in coastal shipping and objected to high interest rates and the payment of heavy stamp duties. The Lutherans sought freedom of worship and almost all citizens advocated the repatriation of undesirable Asians, a question to which we shall return later.

La Caille had the opportunity of seeing the Cape scene at close quarters; ships' officers on the other hand, in port for relatively brief periods, rarely looked closely at local society. An exception, however, was Mathieu de Gennes de la Chancelière, first lieutenant on Herbert de la Portebarré's *Condé*, at the Cape in 1739. Gennes had much to say on eastern commerce in the context of other voyages and his observations on this occasion, whatever their shortcomings, show a man who liked to keep his eyes and ears open in novel surroundings. He it was who was sent ashore to announce the ship's arrival to the acting governor, Daniël van den Henghel, his deputy Swellengrebel and the temporary fiscal Needer. Like Barrington before him, Gennes was alive to the political stresses of the period, even if he did not quite grasp the processes involved. His interpretation of events is not therefore as sound as that of Barrington, whose account tallies very well with Mentzel's, who as a company official was better able to see things from the inside. The French visitor greatly exaggerated the power of the states general in company affairs, claiming that Cape governors were appointed by the state, which regarded the Dutch East India Company as a subordinate department, required to pay

the states general a ton of gold annually for the privilege of holding its southern African colony. This tribute, Gennes averred, was raised by the excessive duties levied on visiting foreign vessels. Hence the exactions of the fiscal Needer, supported by his predecessor in that post, the acting governor. To ensure that none slipped through the net, the fiscal employed his "Kaffirs" to enforce payment. Although Gennes saw Cape and company as minor departments of state, he claimed that the governor exercised absolute and tyrannical powers.

Gennes de la Chancelière, however, showed prescience in some matters. He rightly considered that the Dutch company was in decline. A Hollander told him that although great personal fortunes were made at Batavia and handsome profits by the company, the rich were deserting the eastern capital for Europe and Batavia seemed destined to decay like Portuguese Goa. The Cape too faced a serious problem. There were, Gennes said, grave fears of another shipping disaster on the scale of that in 1737. The local people were wholeheartedly behind a scheme to build a protective breakwater and were more than willing to help defray the cost, since the only alternative would be, wrote Gennes, to abandon the settlement. The breakwater plan, however, was in the Frenchman's view quite impracticable. In this he was entirely correct, although the inconveniences of the Table Bay anchorage did not lead to a Dutch withdrawal from the colony.

Gennes certainly made a good impression at the Cape. He paved the way for a sympathetic reception by offering the acting governor a basket of Champagne wines as a mark of the French company's appreciation of the excellent treatment of its ships. Daniël van den Henghel, we are informed, was touched by the courtesy and offered every help to the *Condé*. Cape governors, the first lieutenant added, were always highly flattered by the salutes of foreign vessels. Even Dutch East Indiamen, he said, usually followed the custom, but sometimes refrained from firing in order to conserve their powder.

From the pen of Gennes de la Chancelière we also gain a glimpse of the Khoisan reaction to an expanding White frontier. Although these indigenes came to the settlement from time to time to trade in ivory, those whom Gennes encountered had travelled from the distant "Mountains of the Moon" (the Cedarberg range) to complain to the governor that their people had been robbed and insulted by Dutch settlers, who had even killed some of them. In the disorders of 1738-1739 resistance to White intrusion was coupled with Khoisan depredations on isolated farms and government policy alternated between conciliation and retaliation. The French lieutenant saw the deputation camping out with wives and families on the glacis of the Castle and although he took a sober and objective look at the object of their mission, their strangeness impressed him forcibly. The members of this Kaffir tribe, as called them, sang and danced round the town, howling like wolves and

mumbling songs with strange tunes. The men played upon a reed flute and the women kept time with their heads.

Jean-Baptiste d'Après observed in 1751 that the arrival of foreign ships in the Cape anchorage was marked by extraordinary formality. Courtesy salutes were certainly expected, as Gennes de la Chancelière noted, before a ship's papers were presented to the governor. This task was often delegated to junior officers, as was the case in 1752 when Selle entered the roadstead in the *Villeflix*, sending the papers with the young sub-lieutenant René le Brun of Paimpol. Captains, however, were sometimes excused the omission of courtesy salves as occurred on 4 February 1744 when Butler sailed out for Pondicherry and China in the *Dauphin*. The Cape authorities knew that he was a very sick man. Failure to salute on arrival could, on the other hand, lead to a lukewarm reception. This problem arose in March 1754 when Jean-François-Marie de Surville of Port-Louis brought the *Renommée* into the roadstead on a voyage to China and was followed a few days later by Saint-Médard in a new *Dauphin*, bound for the same destination. Governor Tulbagh was indisposed, but his deputy Sergius Swellengrebel, cousin of the former governor, received the first French arrival. Surville refused to salute unless he could be assured that the Castle would reply to his nine shots with an equal number. He was also reluctant to show his pass, although he finally agreed to do so. The Cape authorities would not deviate from the standard practice of returning the customary nine shots with two fewer from the battery. Surville would not climb down and a guard was mounted to prevent contact between ship and shore. When the *Dauphin* sailed in, Surville told her captain what had taken place and Saint-Médard accordingly adopted the same attitude. The French ultimately had to give way, but it is significant that the two vessels sailed on 4 April without the usual courtesy salute on departure.

Surville was at the Cape in 1763 under different circumstances. He had joined the *Fortuné* at the Ile de France as captain, but the ship ran into a gale off the southern African coast on the homeward voyage and had put into Fish Bay in a sinking condition. The captain succeeded in getting off the crew, military personnel and cargo before the vessel broke up in a storm. The survivors travelled overland and on arrival at the Cape were repatriated in other French ships. Surville later became acting governor of Pondicherry and led an exploring expedition to the South Seas, reaching the shores of New Zealand's North Island in December 1769, some two months after the arrival further down the coast of the Englishman James Cook. Surville drowned in a boat accident off Peru on 5 April 1770 and was buried at Lima.

Some French shipping disasters between 1735 and 1755 have been touched on here and the company lost a number of other ships in these years, apart

from those captured or destroyed as a result of action in the Anglo-French war, to be discussed in a later chapter. Among the merchantmen wrecked were the *Marquis de Lassay* in April 1749, an Indiaman commanded by Denis Bécart of Saint-Malo, a one-armed veteran of the recent war, the *Espérance* under the captaincy of Buisson de la Vigne, lost off the Glénan Islands west of Lorient in March 1751 on her return from Bengal, and the *Paix*, which foundered in a squall off Bourbon in April 1755. Bécart's luck ran out on this occasion and he went down with his ship. The Indian Ocean claimed more victims, including the *Prince* in 1753. Bound for Pondicherry, she caught fire and most of her crew were lost.

A well-documented disaster occurred to the *Saint-Géran*. This ship, no stranger to the Cape which she had visited in January 1740 on a voyage to Pondicherry under the command of Porée de la Touche, sailed from Lorient on 24 March 1744 with much-needed supplies for the governor general, Mahé de la Bourdonnais, on the Ile de France. Captained by Gabriel Richard de la Marre she touched at the island of Gorée off the coast of Senegal where 30 slaves were taken aboard. By the time the ship reached the approaches to the Ile de France many of the crew were sick and an error of navigation drove her in perfect weather on to the rocks off the Ile d'Ambre on the north-east coast of the island colony. The *Saint-Géran* broke in half and of some 200 persons aboard, including fifteen passengers, only eight crew members were saved. The captain and all his senior officers were drowned, together with the passengers and the unfortunate slaves. One young lady aboard the vessel, Virginie de Mallet, was returning to her family after completing her education in France. Her fate, and the tragedy which has left its record in island topography, were to serve as the backdrop for Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's famous novel of 1787, *Paul et Virginie*. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre went to the Ile de France as an engineer officer in 1768 and spent two years there before returning to Europe by way of the Cape. His account of his experiences published in 1773 provides a well-considered description of the Dutch settlement in southern Africa in the later 18th century.

Only one ship of the French company was wrecked on the Cape coast in the years 1735-1755, the *Centaure*, commanded by Guillaume de la Butte-Frérôt of Lorient. She was homeward-bound from the Ile de France when she ran aground at Cape Agulhas in a calm sea on 19 January 1750. The *Centaure* was a large vessel, with a crew of 310, and carried more than 80 passengers, for the most part company employees, including many soldiers, their wives, children, servants and slaves. Two of the soldiers had been banished from the Ile de France; another, nicknamed "Cent Mille", had been condemned to serve in the galleys on his return to Europe. All those aboard were brought safely to shore, although the *Centaure's* cargo of pepper could not be saved. Twelve sailors made a five day journey to the Cape with news of the disaster and relief was immediately organized. Waggon and provisions were sent to help

the main party and all were brought to the settlement where they were accommodated privately, or in the company's hospital and on ships in the roadstead. The burgher Bestbier played a valuable part in arranging for the comfort of the survivors. The repatriation of so many men, women and children was a major undertaking, but there was a considerable volume of shipping in Table Bay at the time, including East Indiamen bound for the Thames and a returning British naval squadron. These ships, together with Dutch and French vessels, took most of the crew and passengers of the *Centaure* back to Europe. However, a surgeon major from the wrecked French ship, Julien Aubert, decided to sail on the Dutch East Indiaman *Geregtigheijd* to Ceylon with his wife, infant child and a slave girl. From there he planned to make his way to Pondicherry. By early May 1750 the last two French officers had left the settlement. The London East Indiaman *Chesterfield*, returning from Fort St David on the Coromandel coast under the command of Edwin Carter, assisted in the repatriation and was able to make good use of a sail-maker and a cooper from the *Centaure*.

The slaves aboard the *Saint-Géran* were not the only human cargoes carried away from the French settlement in Senegal to the Mascarenes. This was a regular route at this period, but ships on it seldom touched at the Cape. The *Favorite*, despatched with the co-operation of a Nantes shipowner Gabriel Michel, left Lorient in October 1744 on such a mission and took aboard an unwilling labour force for the Ile de France towards the end of the year. On 14 January 1745, however, soon after sailing from Gorée, the slaves rose up against their captors. The revolt was speedily quelled and the frigate rounded the Cape for the French island colony in the Indian Ocean without further incident.

One ship which did call at the Cape with a cargo of Senegalese slaves was the frigate *Cybèle*, which left Lorient in November 1755 under the captaincy of Jean-Henri Trévan. On 19 March 1756, while trying to beat into Table Bay, she went ashore above Bloubergstrand and soon became a total wreck. Another French vessel, the *Saint-Charles*, commanded by Captain Brulaine, was loading grain for the Ile de France at that time and took on board the *Cybèle*'s crew and slaves. The wreck and its provisions, including brandy, wine and grain, were sold on the spot. The *Cybèle*, doubtless the former transatlantic slaver of this name which was confiscated by the French company, brought news to the Cape of the violent earthquake of 1 November 1755 which devastated Lisbon and caused havoc as far afield as Madeira. The French were to play an active part in the direct slave-trade to the Cape later in the century.

The logs of French ships sometimes record the festivities marking local events. That of the *Triton* notes the wedding on 16 February 1744 of the first lieutenant of the Dutch company's warship the *Herstelder*, Christiaan

Everhard Philip van Jonkheijn, to Elizabeth Theresia Visser of the Cape. The *Triton* fired three congratulatory salvos, a tribute echoed by the *Phénix*, returning to Lorient from Pondicherry under the command of Gardin du Brossay. The bridegroom was the nephew of the *Herstelder's* captain and commodore of the Dutch return fleet, Dirk Wolter van Nimwegen. His ship, formerly the *Edam*, had been bought by the company from the Amsterdam admiralty in 1741.

The *Triton's* captain, Ignace Bart, was a descendant of the famous Dunkirk seaman Jean Bart who fought with distinction in northern waters during the War of the League of Augsburg. He had come to the Cape from the Ile de France on a special mission and the *Triton's* arrival in Table Bay was remarked on in the log of the London East Indiaman *Salisbury*, returning from Madras under Christopher Burrows. When the Frenchman entered Table Bay on 13 January 1744, the salute of fifteen guns ordered by Captain Bart was evidently considered over-enthusiastic by the Castle and the *Herstelder*. Neither deigned to reply. The *Triton* was bound for France, but Bart brought with him two letters of 7 December 1743 addressed to Swellengrebel by the French governor general, La Bourdonnais, who wished to purchase wine for the French colony and had given Bart permission to bring any supplies obtained back to the Ile de France before setting out again on his homeward voyage. La Bourdonnais sent as a present some ebony suitable for furniture manufacture, some coffee and a little Bourbon tobacco - samples, the governor general said, of all the available products of the islands. For La Bourdonnais made the real purpose of his correspondence clear in his second letter: the establishment of a regular trade between the islands and the Cape.

The immediate response was that Bart could buy from the burghers the wine La Bourdonnais requested, but that no official trade link could be entertained. Nevertheless some ebony was sent to the United Provinces on the *Goidschalxoord* in April 1744 to reinforce an argument that a trade in timber in exchange for grain and wine might well be initiated. It was decided in 1746 that Cape burghers could purchase wood if French ships should bring any more, but only for subsequent sale to the company at a fixed price. The ebony which Bart had given certain burghers in 1744 and which they had surrendered to the company would now be paid for.

This interesting development in limited private trade for Cape burghers had no immediate result. Colonists on the Ile de France and on Bourbon might also have been brought into the picture. However, although they had enjoyed trading rights since 1742, they owned no ships. Nor was commerce between the two companies fostered. Instead, the French authorities concentrated on broadening the basis of the agricultural economy of the Mascarenes. The Lyons merchant Pierre Poivre, later to join the administrative service in the islands, called at the Cape in January 1749 aboard the China ship the

Montaran, commanded by Jean Jolif du Colombier of Saint-Malo. Poivre collected slips of all kinds of useful plants which, as he says, Dutch ingenuity had brought from many quarters of the globe to flourish in their beautiful colony. These he transported to the Ile de France. Again, instructions were given in that year to a captain of another noted seafaring family, Louis Béard du Désert of Port-Louis, to buy seed-corn, vegetable seeds and slips of fruit trees which could easily be carried to the Ile de France from the Cape. He was exhorted to work surreptitiously and without compromising himself in his efforts to obtain what was required. How successful he was when the *Baleine*, bound for China, touched at the Cape in March 1750 is not recorded, but it is known that ignorance and neglect wiped out most of the slips which Poivre had earlier taken to the Ile de France. Better relations between the United Provinces and France after the close of our period led to open trade links between the Cape and the islands, and the appointment in 1757 of Louis-Adrien Percheron de Mouchy as a French commercial agent in the Dutch colony. He was later to become the first accredited foreign representative in the settlement.

La Caille sent many examples of Cape flora and fauna back to France and it is on record that when he finally left the colony he was exempted from current legislation regarding the export of private goods. He was, however, the soul of honesty and embarked with very little. This circumstance did not pass unnoticed at the Cape and the astronomer had to turn down a request made by a certain gentleman living there that he sell him his privilege and allow the other man to use his name. There is little doubt that many visiting Frenchmen took every opportunity of indulging in a little private trade at the Cape. They were certainly not alone in this, for making money at company expense was a normal practice among those of all European nations engaged in the East India trade. There was much smuggling of illegal goods into France. These were often unloaded at the Ile de Groix before the ships entered the Lorient roadstead and were then brought clandestinely into the port. Even some of the voyages were suspect. Why did poor Bécart, who drowned in 1755, visit Martinique in the West Indies on a return voyage of the *Dauphin* from the Indies in 1752? His excuse that his crew suffered badly from scurvy after leaving Ascension and that the rations were poor may not have been the whole story. Captains enjoyed a permitted allowance in private goods and were also given table-money for the proper entertainment of passengers. However, a captain who sold supplies at the Ile de France which were intended for passengers was suspended for three years in 1754 and in the same year Deschiens de Raucourt of the *Silhouette* was fined on his return from India for bad behaviour and for overcharging a lady travelling with him.

French East Indiamen would appear to have carried a larger number of passengers in the earlier 18th century than the ships of other nations on the route, many of them sailing between the homeland and the island

colonies of the Indian Ocean. There was also a considerable movement of company officials, military personnel and missionaries to and from the French settlements and China. The Jesuit priest Claude-François Loppin sailed on a voyage to the China mission aboard the *Duc de Chartres*, commanded by a captain held in high regard by the company, Louis Drias of a Port-Louis merchant family. The ship called at the Cape in March 1739 and Loppin and two fellow-travellers, doubtless Jean-Antoine Delacourt and Jacques d'Artigues, said Mass in secret during Holy Week without taking their French-speaking host into their confidence. Another Jesuit at the settlement in the period was Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot of Toulon, astronomer and sinologist, who arrived on 23 March 1750 on his voyage to China aboard the *Villeflix*, commanded by Le Fol de la Londe of Cherbourg. With Amiot were the Chinese priest Jean-Régis Lieou and a compatriot still in his novitiate, Philippe-Stanislas K'ang, who died on the voyage after leaving the Dutch colony. Both had been educated in Paris. It is probable that such priest-passengers and the chaplains carried on French vessels ministered on occasion in secret to Catholics in the colony.

A foreign passenger on the *Diane*, at the Cape in December 1755 on her return from Pondicherry, was David, Baron Vasserot, a former lieutenant of the Swiss troops in British service at Madras. He asked permission to remain at the settlement for some weeks in order to recuperate. Five Chinese bound for Lorient were also on board the French vessel. The *Diane* had sailed from Lorient in August 1754 under the command of Thomas Rapon de la Placelière and called at the Cape later that year on her outward voyage. Her captain died at sea in September 1755 and the first lieutenant Jacques Kerlero de Rosbo of Pont-Scorff succeeded him.

The most famous of the company officials of these years to set foot on Cape soil was the great French governor general of the Indies, Dupleix, returning from Pondicherry in ill-deserved disgrace. Dupleix reached the Cape on 2 March 1755 on Lobry's *Duc d'Orléans*, accompanied by his wife Jeanne Albert, daughter of the French surgeon Jacques-Théodore Albert and his Indo-Portuguese wife, Elisabeth-Rose de Castro. With the couple were other members of the family, a considerable retinue including Indian musicians and a vast quantity of valuables. Even a menagerie was included. Dupleix was received at the Cape with due pomp and circumstance before the *Duc d'Orléans* sailed out on the last leg of the voyage to Lorient on 1 April. Is it possible that Jeanne Albert met Hugo Lambrechts at the settlement? He was the first cousin of François-Corneille de Schonamille, who served with Dupleix in the Carnatic and married Jeanne's daughter by her first marriage, Jeanne-Suzanne-Ursule Vincens. Here was a link with the "Ostend Company" of old.

There were, as always, deserters from French ships at the Cape and others from the shore or from other vessels at anchor who took the opportunity of

stowing away on French East Indiamen. These last were frequently soldiers and sailors born in France who sought to leave the Dutch service and rejoin their countrymen. When Bart brought the *Triton* to Table Bay in 1744 a mate Linger deserted the ship and eight men smuggled themselves aboard and at length sailed with the Frenchman. They included Pierre-Jacques le Fèvre of Lille, Etienne Boutet from Berry, François Mirailié of Rennes and two men from La Rochelle, the cooper Augustin Gatineau, who died a month after leaving the anchorage, and Antoine Liard, known by his nickname "Saint-Sulpice de Paris". Sobriquets were in frequent use by men in the French service and names often reflected their owners' habits or characteristics. "Sweetness" and "Debauchery" are among those encountered.

Lars de Lescouët of the *Maréchal de Saxe* lost six men in 1752. They escaped in the ship's boat and hid ashore, but were soon recovered. He in turn found three of the Dutch company's men aboard after he had sailed, but they ran away again in the east. A similar pattern marked the arrival in Table Bay of the *Achille* in March 1753, bound for Bourbon and the Ile de France under the command of Lévesque de Beaubriand of Saint-Malo. Those deserting the vessel included some Italian sailors and a girl stowaway, Jeanne Barron of Nantes. Governor Tulbagh was informed and several French deserters already in custody at the Cape were placed on board, but the loss of good men delayed the ship's sailing. On the eve of departure two stowaways described in the log as "Blacks" were found on the ship and were sent ashore in the jolly-boat. When the same vessel called at the Cape in 1750 under Lobry's command on a voyage to China, a Portuguese shoemaker Francisco Urbano Flori was left behind. He applied for burgher papers in 1756. Four deserters from the *Dauphin* who had been apprehended in the settlement and held on Robben Island were transferred to the *Diane* in 1754. After the latter vessel had left the Cape homeward-bound early in 1756 a stowaway, Wilhelm Hansen of Aachen, was discovered on board. Kerlero de Rosbo had, however, lost a member of his crew, Abraham Messe, through desertion while he was at anchor in Table Bay.

Lévesque de Beaubriand brought the French company's ship the *Lys* into Table Bay in April 1755, outward-bound for the Indies. It was to be the captain's last voyage. He met his death at Achin on Sumatra in October of that year and his vessel returned to Lorient in 1757 under Dufay de la Branchère. While the *Lys* lay at anchor at the Cape a mate deserted and was, it appeared, given sanctuary in the house of a French-speaking burgher, the tailor Jacob Taillard of Tournai in the Austrian Netherlands. Taillard was aggressive, argumentative and evidently untrustworthy, and was called a "French" windbag to his face. His clashes with authority, of which this episode formed a part, led to his imprisonment on Robben Island after a flogging and his ultimate banishment from the colony. His descendants in South Africa are the Taljaards of today. Robben Island long remained both a

prison for criminals in the Dutch service and a place of detention for foreign deserters. Five Frenchmen who had jumped ship were transferred from the island to the mainland late in 1755.

Death, injury, violence and insubordination were problems which plagued all commanders, French captains included. Bart of the *Triton* took aboard the second gunner of Butler's *Dauphin* in 1744, in order to transport him in irons to the Ile de France; the bos'n and the chief gunner of the *Triton*'s own crew were clapped in irons for disobeying orders by sleeping ashore for several nights in the Cape settlement. Two soldiers on the *Condé* were dealt with severely early in 1735 for stealing from their messmates a few weeks before the ship reached Table Bay.

A sailor on the *Triton* was unfortunate enough to break a leg while the vessel lay in the Cape anchorage in 1744 and another, Lucien Rossel, was found in 1739 in a drunken state on the stoep of the burgher Jacobus Buijns's house in the settlement. He had been stabbed in the pit of the stomach and was rushed to the company hospital where despite the attention of Dutch and French surgeons he died. Rossel was a crew member of Lobry's *Philibert*. Charles Porlé de Montigny, a servant from the wrecked *Centaure*, was set upon and injured by three men late one night in 1750 between the slave lodge and the church. Deaths included those of a soldier on the *Duc de Parme* who suffered a sudden heart attack in January 1751 and of another of similar rank on the *Villeflix* who died at the Cape on 7 April 1752. This second man, Joseph Barity, was known from his origins as "Provençal". It was perhaps two men from the *Duc de Parme* who, with a companion, asked for food and drink at the house of the Dutch company's master bricklayer Jan de Winnaar late on the evening of 4 February 1751. They were first offered the meal as a gift, but were later confronted by their drunken host with a demand for payment. The scene was part of a larger domestic quarrel.

Relations between visiting Frenchmen and those ashore were generally cordial enough and there were many in the settlement apart from Bestbier who gained financially from those they entertained during a brief respite from the discomforts of long voyages. French officers from the *Baleine* lodged in 1750 at the house of a former burgher from Nimes in Languedoc, André Mellet, stepson of an earlier refugee at the Cape from that province, Gilles Sollier, who played a useful part in the financial and commercial transactions of his compatriots in the settlement. By 1750, however, Sollier was dead and Mellet was no longer resident at the Cape. The younger man, a baker by trade, had fallen foul of the authorities for receiving stolen company goods and had been compulsorily repatriated to the United Provinces on the *Suijderburg* in April 1748. Isaac de Villiers, son of the French settler Pierre de Villiers, had undertaken to look after Mellet's interests, including the care of a young family.

The French were also on good terms with the Dutch at the Cape at official level while France was at peace with Britain, although there were complaints about the high price of assistance rendered when the *Villeflix* called in 1752. These, however, were not a true reflection of relations in time of peace. Captain Chantelou of the *Lys* took vegetable seeds from the Cape to supply the Dutch at Nagappattinam when the ship sailed for Pondicherry in 1742; letters for the Dutch in Bengal were carried by Chévery of the *Hercule* in the same year and by Aubin du Plessis of the *Argonaute* in 1743. Some ten years later in contrast, when international tensions were building up and the Dutch position was uncertain, letters were sent to Europe from the Cape by French captains and supercargoes anxious to inform their masters of the current situation. These were despatched via the United Provinces, but not through official channels. The surgeon of a Dutch ship was used as a courier. It is at this period too that we learn of the export of Cape wine for French consumption. The director Charles-Robert Godeheu de Zaimont, who had the unenviable task of succeeding Dupleix as governor general in India, received some in France from a Dutch source; a supply was also taken aboard the *Duc d'Orléans* bringing Godeheu's predecessor home in 1755.

French callers in the years 1735-1755, excluding two vessels of war, numbered 56, just over 60% of them visiting the Cape in the years after the close of the War of the Austrian Succession. The same ship seldom anchored in Table Bay on both outward and homeward voyages, and indeed the great majority of French visitors arrived on voyages from Lorient, Brittany and to a lesser extent Normandy supplied most of the officers and crews of French East Indiamen and training was provided in the executive branches at Lorient and in Paris. Captains, as with the Dutch and to some degree the Danes, were not usually assigned to one ship for successive voyages, but commanded several vessels in the course of their careers. Officers, as was the case with those in the rival national monopolies, came largely from the bourgeoisie and country gentry, and many families prided themselves on a continuing tradition of service in the East India trade and were often closely related. This was the most flourishing period in the history of French commerce with the east in company days and the great sales of imports, transferred from Nantes to Lorient in 1733, brought purchasers from many regions. Those from Nantes took the lion's share, followed by merchants from Paris, Montpellier, Lyons and Geneva.

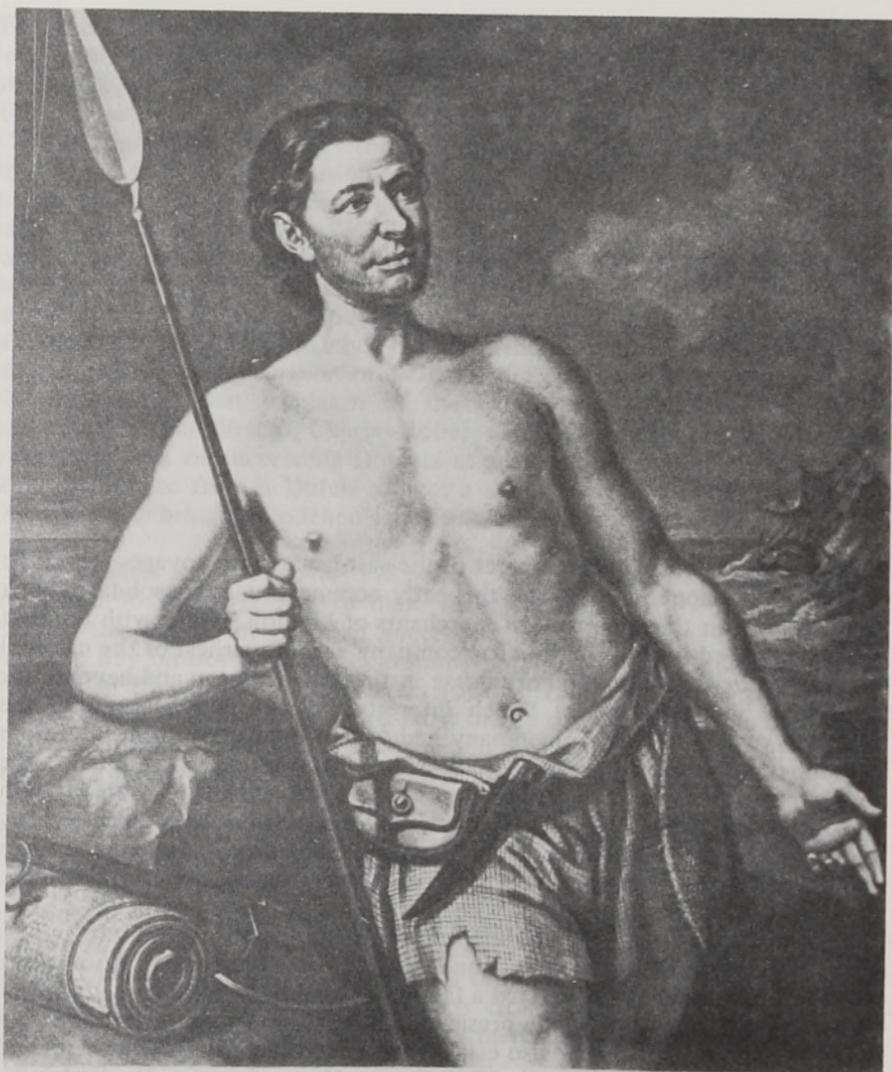
In the longer term, however, the future history of the Indian sub-continent and of the Cape colony lay with the British, rather than with the French. We turn our attention therefore to the commerce of the East India Company of London, whose vessels far outnumbered those of other foreigners in the years 1735-1755 at the Cape, ushering in an era of British dominance in the affairs of southern Africa and the lands to the east across the Indian Ocean.

The London company: *Captains, Crews and Voyages*

English exploration of the resources of the east began with voyages round the Cape of Good Hope in 1591 and this early commerce was consolidated after January 1601 in the Company of Merchants of London trading with the East Indies, chartered by Elizabeth I. The company was the earliest of the national monopolies to challenge the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean and beyond, for the similar amalgamation of Dutch interests did not take place until the following year. The London company had to face opposition from the Dutch in Indonesia and from the Portuguese at Surat. A foothold was secured at the now ruined port of Bantam on Java and was retained until 1683, but war with the Dutch company in 1618-1619 drove the English from the Moluccas. They were more successful at Surat, where Portuguese hostility was overcome and a trading concession obtained in 1615 from the Mughal emperor, Jahangir.

Famine in Gujarat led to a decline in cotton exports through Surat, but an alternative source of supply was found on the Coromandel coast. It was there that the London company erected a factory at Madras in 1640 named Fort St George, raised to the status of a presidency in 1653 under the governorship of Aaron Baker. Factories were also established in 1640 at Balasore in Orissa and on the Hooghly in Bengal, and in 1668 Charles II transferred to the East India Company the crown colony of Bombay, obtained in 1662 through his marriage to the Portuguese princess Catarina de Bragança. The presidency of Bombay became the second jewel in the London company's diadem, particularly after 1686 when Surat was seen to be too vulnerable during the contemporary forceful assertion of English rights against the emperor, Aurangzib.

The London company was by this time steadily extending its fields of



John Dean

*First Mate of the Ship Sussex which remained on board the
Ship in the Bay of the EAST INDIA Company's Service*

John Dean of the *Sussex*, 1741. Mezzotint by John Faber, from an oil painting by Willem Verelst. Reproduced by permission of the Director of the India Office Library and Records, London

nfluence. The island of St Helena had been ceded to the East India Company by Charles II in 1673 as a regular port of call on the Atlantic sea route and in the next decade the fortified factory at Bengkulu on Sumatra guaranteed a profitable trade in pepper. The fort there took the name Fort Marlborough in 1714 in honour of the great military leader in the War of the Spanish Succession. Further extensions of commerce from the coffee port of Mokha on the Red Sea to the Far East testify to the vitality of the English company. Among its acquisitions were factories on the Malabar coast and territory at Fort St David near Cuddalore on the Coromandel coast, purchased in 1690 by the American-born governor of Madras, Elihu Yale, whose bequests later gave his name to Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. The foundations of secure company control in Bengal were laid by the resourceful factor Job Charnock, who raised the first Fort William in 1696 at what was destined to become the thriving commercial centre of Calcutta. A permanent fort was built in 1700 and a Bengal presidency inaugurated. The Madras, Bombay and Bengal presidencies were to become the main power bases of the London East India Company in the 18th century. It was, however, the tea trade with China, inaugurated in 1676 on a regular schedule of sailings and involving no colonial territorial holdings, which was at length to outstrip in the value of imports landed in the Thames the entire produce shipped home by the company on all other voyages.

English ships, like those of their foreign competitors, were no strangers to the Cape of Good Hope, even before Van Riebeeck's time. The Cape was used for the transmission of letters as the famous postal stones indicate; English seamen also gave names to local landmarks which long competed with others for acceptance: Penguin Island, for instance - the old name for Robben Island - James's Mount for Signal Hill and Charles's Mount for Devil's Peak. Other names, now half-forgotten, included Coney Island, Deadman's Bay and Chapman's Chance. Sir Thomas Roe, sailing to India on a diplomatic mission in 1615, landed some felons who had been spared the gallows to explore the Cape hinterland. This experiment in leniency was not, however, a success. Five years later Humphrey Fitzherbert, sailing for Bantam, and Andrew Shilling, in command of a fleet bound for Surat, took possession of the Cape in the name of James I of England and VI of Scotland, evidently with the approval of visiting Dutchmen. Among the signatories of the annexation document was the navigator William Baffin, whose earlier explorations in North America are commemorated in the name of Baffin Island in northern Canada. The subsequent history of South Africa would doubtless have taken a different turn if the Stuart monarch had accepted this territorial gift. He showed no interest in it, however.

The Company of Merchants of London trading with the East Indies early faced challenges to its monopoly. In 1617 the king granted letters patent to Sir James Cunningham for a Scottish East India Company, but the recipient

later assigned the patent to the London merchants. In England, grievances within the company and jealousies outside it conspired to break the monopoly. In December 1635 Charles I licensed a rival group led by Sir William Courteen and his associates to trade in the Far East. The Courteen group and the older company were hard pressed by the Civil War and its consequences, but although a Courteen offshoot, the Assada association headed by Lord Halifax, was compelled to amalgamate with the original East India Company in 1650, both private and company voyages continued and indeed from 1654 until 1657 the trade was thrown completely open. The first company seemed destined to go under when in 1656 a majority of its directors voted to sell out to private interests. However, the lord protector, Oliver Cromwell, acting on advice and fearful of Dutch success in eastern trade, granted a new charter in 1657 to the Company of Merchants of London which reinstated the monopoly and reconstituted the undertaking along modern joint stock lines.

Hostility to monopoly did not end there and interlopers in the trade were not entirely eradicated. The Scottish parliament in 1695 promoted the Company of Scotland trading to Africa and the Indies, a commercial venture which came to concentrate on the Caribbean, but which sent two vessels to the Indian Ocean and beyond. Both voyages ended in disaster and the loophole of Scottish legislation hostile to English interests was plugged by the Act of Union of 1707 abolishing the parliament in Edinburgh. In England, however, opponents of the old monopoly succeeded with legislation in 1698 which allowed the creation of an English Company trading to the East Indies in competition with the Company of Merchants of London. Prolonged negotiation led to their amalgamation in 1708 as the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies. Henceforth those who sought to challenge the national monopoly would generally seek opportunities abroad, although free trade interests tried again to challenge the company in parliament as late as 1730.

Before considering some Cape callers and their crews in the years 1735-1755 - and as with the French this chapter and the next are limited to observations on purely commercial voyages without reference to the Anglo-French struggle for power - a few words about the shipping interest will not be out of place. The early company had purchased or built its own ships, but from 1639 it became increasingly usual to hire so that by the early 18th century East Indiamen were all on charter and the company only maintained a very small fleet of its own as despatch vessels or for use in European waters.

Hence the rise of the shipping interest, a consortium of owners with close family connections, wielding great power in both parliament and the inner circle of company administration. Most owners had shares in a number of vessels, a practice which, together with insurance, minimized the risks. The

managing owner, better known as the ship's husband, held a position of particular influence and privilege to which many a commander aspired on his retirement from the sea. Husbands had the patronage of the ship and expected a say in the selection of the commander and subordinate officers, who were usually drawn from the middle and upper echelons of society. Commands were regularly bought, sold and bequeathed and those who held them did not move from ship to ship. Indeed, the practice grew of husbands providing a new ship for trusted commanders when their previous one had to be taken out of service or was written off. This was the system of hereditary bottoms which long prevailed in the East India Company.

Commanders were expected to give loyal service to the company and in return enjoyed privileges of private trade which could lead to fortunes far in excess of anything their very modest salaries of £10 (R20) a month might bring them. A mate would succeed to the captaincy of a ship if his commander died on a voyage, but his permanent appointment would depend on the decision of the owners and particularly the husband, and not on that of the company. Moreover he would be required to purchase the command. The shipping interest, from its officers afloat to the owners ashore, was an oligarchy until the last decade of the 18th century, but it worked effectively enough and enabled the East India Company to concentrate upon its commerce and administration. In so doing it had become as the middle years of the 18th century approached the most efficient of the national trading monopolies in eastern waters.

It is appropriate in view of the importance to the London company of the China trade to begin this survey with the arrival in Table Bay towards evening on 29 March 1735 of the East Indiamen *Harrison*, commanded by Samuel Martin, and *Grafton*, under the captaincy of Robert Hudson. Both ships were returning from Canton, although the *Grafton* had first sailed further up the Chinese coast to Amoy in a vain effort to obtain a cheaper cargo in a port where competition was not so fierce. The captains, chief officers and supercargoes were doubtless well pleased with the private trade they had been able to conduct. Hudson, we know, had purchased gold and goods to a considerable amount and would sell his merchandise in London through the company at a significant profit. Gold was bought with silver from Europe, the company providing the capital at a high rate of interest. Such miscellaneous articles as mathematical instruments, watches, snuff-boxes and silver plate were brought out for private sale and officers and supercargoes in the China trade returned with goods which indicate prevailing tastes in their homelands: tea in particular, blue and white chinaware, fans, walking canes, rosewood furniture, lacquered cabinets, prints and medicinal products among them.

The China trade was not without its difficulties. Negotiations were protracted

and subject to arbitrary and vexatious regulations on the part of the Chinese. Relations were often strained and insults came from both sides. There was also sometimes hostility among the Europeans competing for cargoes. Nevertheless profits were high and it is small wonder that for those with a private investment a "coast and China" voyage by way of India was much sought after. Almost as popular was the "coast and bay" voyage to the Madras presidency and Bengal. A good profit could be made, although fever was a hazard in the bay. Less favoured, both on health grounds and for possibilities of private trade, were sailings to Bombay, the Red Sea and Bengkulu.

There were naturally variations on these standard voyages. Banjarmasin on Borneo (Kalimantan) comes into the picture as an alternative source of pepper. Ralph Congreve's *Onslow* called there in 1746 on her voyage to China, but the Dutch who claimed suzerainty were hostile in the aftermath of an Indonesian revolt to which we shall return. Their attitude led to difficulties for the captain and the imprisonment by the local authorities of the two supercargoes aboard, William May and John Swynfen, both of whom died as a consequence of ill-treatment. The *Onslow* had called at the Cape in December 1745 earlier in the voyage.

A number of ships also visited Madagascar, sometimes to water and provision, but also often enough to buy slaves there for the London company's factories and settlements. The 30 gun *Harrington* was on such a voyage when she called at the Cape in April 1736 with Bombay and Bengal as her further destinations. Her commander Robert Jenkins knew the settlement well for as second mate of the ill-fated *Nightingale*, bound for Madras and Bengal under William Mackett, he was stranded there for more than a year after his ship had been wrecked in the great storm of 1722 in Table Bay. While he was there Jenkins recommended to the Cape authorities that they seek the services of John Lethbridge of Newton Abbot in Devonshire to help salvage sunken cargoes. Lethbridge had invented a "diving-engine", consisting of a tapered wooden cylinder, reinforced with iron hoops, into which air was pumped. Apertures for the diver's arms were provided and a small window of thick glass enabled him to see what he was doing. The English diver came out with a team of assistants in 1727 and had some success in recovering bullion with his strange machine. One of his helpers, Peter Richards, returned to the Cape in 1732 with two companions to continue the search and remained about a year.

Jenkins then entered the West Indian trade and in April 1731 his ship, the Glasgow brig *Rebecca*, was intercepted by Spanish coastguards. Jenkins was roughly handled and apparently suffered the indignity of a mutilated ear. This incident was recalled in 1738 when anti-Spanish feeling was growing in Britain and the captain was asked to testify before a parliamentary

committee. Public indignation was such that when hostilities with Spain began in the following year the conflict was known popularly as the War of Jenkins' Ear.

Robert Jenkins returned to the East India service in 1732 and was given the command of the *Harrington*, a new vessel launched in September of that year which made her maiden voyage to Bengkulu, returning in 1734. After his voyage to Madagascar and India in 1736-1737 he sailed again for India and China as commander of the *Harrington* in 1738, calling at the Cape in November of that year where, "being Determined not to Lumber the Ship", he decided not to take aboard too much of the Cape wine and arrack so popular in eastern settlements. He sailed on 22 November for the Malabar coast where he picked up the new governor of Bombay, Stephen Law, and took him to his headquarters. The *Harrington* at length reached Canton and on her return voyage fought a successful action against Maratha pirates off the west coast of India and escorted a convoy of East Indiamen home from St Helena. Irregularities in company affairs on that island brought Jenkins back as administrator in 1741. He rejoined the *Harrington* at St Helena in the following year and sailed to Bombay where in December 1742, at the age of 50, he died of amoebic dysentery, the dreaded "bloody flux" which carried off so many in tropical climes. His career is of more than passing interest in the history of the Cape and of the East India trade.

Jenkins was not the only man of note on London East Indiamen of our period. Some names stand out in the "Who's who" of British mariners at the Cape between 1735 and 1755. Augustus Townshend who brought the *Augusta* to the anchorage in 1743 on his return from a second voyage to China stood on a high rung of the social ladder. He was a son of Charles, Viscount Townshend, better known as "Turnip" Townshend for his agricultural reforms. The commander's mother was Viscount Townshend's second wife Dorothy, sister of the Whig premier Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford. Another of the statesman's nephews was Richard Walpole, commander of two ships named the *Houghton* and later member of parliament for Great Yarmouth.

Augustus Townshend sailed on the *Augusta* with his half-brother Roger Townshend on a third voyage to China in 1744, but died of dysentery at Batavia on the morning of 18 November 1745. He was only 28 years of age. The command passed to the chief mate Thomas Parker who brought the ship to a Cape anchorage on her return voyage in April 1747. The captain was not the only fatality in those last weeks of 1745. Six days after Townshend's death the third supercargo on the *Augusta*, John Steel, died after a lingering illness. Less than three weeks later the newly promoted chief mate Edmund Moreton also succumbed.

Sir Robert Walpole's son Horace, the distinguished man of letters and fourth

earl, had little time for Augustus Townshend. His main concern when he was informed of the commander's death was that the news might seriously affect the delicate health of Augustus's sister Mary. She recovered from the shock, however, and lived until 1776. Horace Walpole described his cousin as "a pert boy" in a letter to his friend Sir Horace Mann and mentioned the duel Augustus fought in London's Hyde Park on a Sunday morning in October 174 with the future paymaster to the forces, Thomas Winnington. The wife of Augustus's half-brother Charles Townshend, the third viscount, was Audrey, daughter of Edward Harrison, a former director of the East India Company and governor of Fort St George. Audrey was Winnington's mistress and the duel had been fought over some remarks passed by young Augustus about the relationship.

Francis d'Abbadie, who brought the *Neptune* into Table Bay in December 1741 on a voyage to Bengkulu and was later at the Cape as master of the *Portfield*, outward-bound for Bombay in January 1747, was of French Huguenot descent, as was the supercargo Frederick Pigou, long associated with the Canton trade. Two captains came from well-known and related families from Jersey in the Channel Islands: the commander of the *Scarborough*, Philip d'Auvergne, at the Cape on his return from China in March 1749, and his fellow-captain Carteret le Geyt, who took over the *Portfield* from Francis d'Abbadie and touched at the Cape on his return from Bengal in April 1754. Francis d'Abbadie had originally come out to Bombay in 1714 and was for many years involved in the country trade in which he had a considerable investment. Colonial governors also had a lively interest in this commerce between Asian ports and Captain d'Abbadie had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of William Phipps, governor of Bombay, who blighted the captain's chances. The Auvergne family of Jersey inherited in 1802 the dukedom of Bouillon in modern Belgium, but lost it again in 1815 after the close of the wars against Napoleon I.

Many men became part owners of East Indiamen, among them the Canton supercargo John Misenor who made more than one Cape visit and Benjamin Fisher who called there on several occasions between 1741 and 1747 in command of the *Porto Bello* East Indiaman. Others like Hudson of the *Grafton*, John Pelly of the *Prince of Wales*, a regular Cape caller, Charles Raymond who brought the *Wager* into Table Bay three times between 1738 and 1744 and Richard Crabb of the *Durrington*, a Cape caller in 1748 and 1750, joined the shipping interest as husbands. Pelly was also active in the world of marine insurance. There were some who used their knowledge of the eastern trade in the direct service of the London company at the highest level. John Purling of the *Sandwich*, at the Cape in February 1755 on a return voyage from Bombay, was in later life a director. William James, chief mate on John Samson's *Hardwicke* which anchored in Table Bay in 1748 and 1749 on both legs of a China voyage became commodore of the

East India Company's famed Bombay Marine and, with Robert Clive and Vice Admiral Charles Watson, contributed to the downfall of the Maratha pirates in 1756. He was subsequently chairman of the company's board of directors and a useful voice in parliament for the East India interest as member for West Looe in Cornwall. James received a baronetcy in 1778.

The families of other sea-captains of the age deserve recognition. George Steevens, the noted Shakespearean commentator of the later 18th century, was the son of an East India commander and company director of that name and nephew of Rear Admiral Charles Steevens. Of the same family was William Steevens, commander of the *Delawar* East Indiaman which touched at the Cape on a China run in 1748 and 1750. Gabriel Steward, evidently the son of the commander so named who brought the company's *East India* yacht to the Cape with despatches in 1741 and was later captain of the *Winchester* which anchored there in 1744, was himself a commander in the service and a member of parliament for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. The sons of the Scotsman Charles Boddam who was at the Cape in the *Walpole* on a China run in January 1739 also served the company well. The elder, Charles, was on the Madras council and later became a director in London; the younger, Rawson Hart Boddam, was governor of Bombay.

Continuity in the sea service and the shipping interest is illustrated in the activities of the Braunds, a Devonshire family which settled in Essex. William Braund was an East India Company director from 1745 until 1753, his brother Samuel was a leading husband and another brother Benjamin had commanded the *Duke of Cumberland*, an earlier Cape caller. Benjamin Braund, who died in India in 1738, was fined for smuggling in 1730. His son of the same name commanded the *Boscawen*, of which his uncle Samuel was husband. The *Boscawen* was at the Cape in 1751 and 1753. Another of Samuel Braund's ships, the *Edgecote*, built up from the old *Montagu*, was commanded by John Pearse, a relative of Braund's nephew and partner Nicholas Pearse. The *Edgecote* also figures in Cape records from 1748. And in this picture of family relationships it should be remembered that the grandfather of a rising young politician of the period, William Pitt, the future Earl of Chatham, was the famous Thomas "Diamond" Pitt, governor of Madras early in the century. There were other Pitts in the service of the East India Company, afloat and ashore.

Jenkins and Townshend were not the only commanders to sicken and die on the voyages of our period. Richard Sheppard of the China ship the *Winchester* died in the Far East in December 1737 and John Dove took charge of the vessel for the homeward voyage; Walter Wilson of the *Grantham*, also bound for China, died in mid-Atlantic in March 1750 and the chief mate John Oliver assumed the command. There were two command changes on the *Fort St George* which was at the Cape late in April 1748 on a voyage to

the Coromandel coast. William Bressey was captain then, but by the time the ship returned to Table Bay in January 1751 the command had been assumed by the third mate Robert Burdett. The voyage had been a protracted one, involving a passage from Fort St David to Madagascar and back before the vessel finally set sail for the Thames. Since leaving the Cape there had been a threatened mutiny aboard and many deaths, including those of Bressey and his successor, Captain Mortimore. The *Winchester's* captain, Gabriel Steward, died at Fort William on 6 August 1744 after the completion of a lengthy and adventurous voyage of well over a year. In the course of it Steward's ship was driven on to the coast of Brazil "with Abundance of Damage" necessitating a long delay for repairs at Pernambuco before the captain could weigh for the Cape, Madras and Bengal. It was an exciting start to a distinguished career for Robert Clive, coming out as a young writer to Fort St George. John Samson took over the command in Bengal and brought the ship back to Table Bay in April 1745, homeward-bound. He was perhaps more popular than his predecessor, a parsimonious man always ready to make money out of supplies for the captain's table.

Fever was particularly virulent on the Bengal station in 1745 and Raymond of the *Wager*, who lost his second and fourth mates, Joseph Bond and John Phillips, stated: "There was scarce such Mortality ever seen here before ... Not one in Twenty recovers that is Seiz'd with this Plague". The *Edgbaston*, with Mokha as her immediate destination, had called at the Cape in February 1744. She sailed on from the Red Sea to the Bay of Bengal, finally reaching Calcutta in the middle of the following year at the height of the fever season. Between July and November 1745 she lost her captain Stephen Cobham, the chief mate Thomas Parker and the third and fifth mates Francis Musgrove and George Whitwell. The command passed to the second mate John Hereford who was confirmed in his new post. Hereford was at the Cape again in 1748, but died on the Coromandel coast in May of the next year, giving the command of the *Edgbaston* to the chief mate Edward Tiddeman of a noted seafaring family. It was under Tiddeman's captaincy that the *Edgbaston* called at the Cape in March 1753 en route for China.

Richard Mickelfield of the *Colchester* died at sea between Batavia and Borneo in October 1743 and her former chief mate Colin Campbell brought her back to the Cape in October 1744. Another chief mate to obtain promotion in this manner was George Lindsay of the *Pelham*, an Indiaman which called at the Cape in both directions on a voyage to Bombay and back in 1745 and 1747. She sailed out under the command of William Wells who died at Bombay in May 1746. Lindsay was confirmed in his appointment before all hands by the company's secretary in the Indian port, Thomas Hodges. John Flower had succeeded Daniel Seal of the *Montagu* when that ship reached Table Bay from Bombay in February 1738 and the *Elizabeth*, at the Cape in April 1748 under the command of Ambrose Lawrence, returned to the roadstead from Fort St

avid in December 1750 with Edward Wills as commander. Lawrence died off the Malabar coast in May 1749 and was buried at sea, "for whom", the log states, "the Joyner made a Coffin out of His own Teak Plank". The third and fourth mates, John Ouchterlony and William Stone, died in the following September and of the original crew of 100, almost two-thirds failed to complete the round voyage.

Mathew Bootle of the *London* died "of a Consumption" off the Canaries in May 1745 after a lingering illness and William Sedgwick took the ship on to the Cape, Madras and China. Another captain who died on a China voyage was Felix Baker of the *Stafford*. The ship returned via the Cape in April 1755 under the command of John Green. The *Onslow* lost two commanders. John Salchem died at Canton in August 1742 and Congreve brought the ship back to England in 1743, calling at the Cape in April of that year. He anchored again in the roadstead in December 1745 on another voyage to China, but died on 5 April 1748 after a long illness during which he became delirious. His death occurred just after the *Onslow* had rounded the Cape homeward-bound. The chief mate Thomas Hinde took over the command.

Another captain who died off the Cape of Good Hope was George Westcott of the *Scarborough*, who had called at Table Bay on his outward voyage to the Coromandel coast and Bengal in August 1745. Westcott suffered from gout and scurvy on the return voyage and died in the early evening of 29 June 1746. The command passed to Philip d'Auvergne. Gout was a not uncommon complaint among captains. William Wells of the *Bedford*, at the Cape on his return from Bengkulu and Bengal in 1742, suffered from it and so, it would seem, did Francis d'Abbadie when he captained the *Portfield*. Two other commanders were too sick at the Cape to attend to their duties: John Cooke of the *Haeslingfield* from Bombay in 1740, for whom the chief mate James Houghton acted, and Matthew Court of the *Caesar* East Indiaman, returning from Bengkulu in 1745.

Joseph Phillips brought the *King William* to a Cape anchorage in April 1742 after her voyage from Madras, where her former captain, James Sanders, died on the afternoon of 4 February. The funeral ceremony was held on the following evening. "Att ½ past 5 PM", reads the log, "Carried Captain Sanders's Corps to the burialplace attended by all the Council and Gentlemen of the place the Military firing 3 Volleys over his grave after which ye Fort fired 20 half minute guns and we 44 which I take to be near his Age every Ship in ye road in their turns firing ye same".

Death also marked the arrival of London East Indiamen at the Cape anchorage. Leonard Maddox brought the *Wilmington* into Table Bay from Madras in December 1740, but fell sick while the ship lay at anchor and died on 15 February of the following year. Mickelfield of the *Colchester* was

present to pay his last respects and the two vessels sailed for home together on 17 April 1741, "to which Place", as the *Colchester's* log records, "pray God send us Safe". John Tedd took over the command of the *Wilmington*. Another captain to die at the Cape was Christopher Howes of the *Somerset*, returning from a voyage to Bombay and Surat with a call on the Malabar coast. Howes died of dysentery on the evening of 18 March 1743 and the funeral is thus recorded in the ship's log by the second mate Thomas Tolson, who in time would succeed to the captaincy and would visit the Cape in that capacity in 1747 and 1748. On 20 March Tolson wrote: "att 5:P:M: Interr'd the Body of Capt. Christr. Howes att which Time we fired 40 half Minute Guns Do. Each English ship in the Bay Fired 10 Guns then Hoisted our Colours close up upon wch. each Ship Saluted Capt. Henry Kent wth. 7 Guns we Return'd 15". Howes was clearly buried ashore and the custom of firing salvoes to indicate the age of the deceased and of lowering flags to half-mast was, as always, punctiliously observed. The new commander, Kent, was to lose another senior man before the *Somerset* reached the Thames. The third mate John Willson died at sea in June. The other ships in the roadstead mentioned by Tolson were Fisher's *Porto Bello*, the *Tigris*, commanded by John Petre, the *Benjamin*, under the captaincy of Benjamin Way, and the *Admiral Vernon*, commanded by Benjamin Webster. All were returning from Indian ports.

One of the most distinguished servants of the London company to die at the Cape was the returning governor of Bombay, William Wake, who conducted a personally lucrative country trade during his term of office in collaboration with the future Dutch governor general in Batavia, Jacob Mossel. Wake reached Table Bay in poor health aboard Braund's *Boscawen* on 27 January 1751 and was accommodated in the home of the secretary to the council of justice, Tiemmendorf, where he died on 5 February. Wake was buried in the Dutch Reformed church and the funeral was a state occasion, attended by his widow, the outgoing Cape governor, Swellengrebel, his nominated successor Tulbagh, the Danish captain Svend Fenger and many other leading figures, British and Dutch. The Stockholm-born Jochem Outjes of the Dutch company's *Liefde*, preparing to sail for Europe with Swellengrebel, held Wake's escutcheon and the coffin was carried by the boat's crew of the *Boscawen*, whose first surgeon read the burial service according to the rites of the Church of England. Braund was a mourner, as was Wills of the *Elizabeth*, in from Fort St David. Burdett of the *Fort St George* entered Table Bay from the same port on the evening of 27 January, bringing with him Stringer Lawrence, commander of the London company's military forces in India, and two former governors of the Madras presidency, Nicholas Morse of Fort St George, a descendant of Oliver Cromwell, and a lesser light in the company hierarchy, Charles Floyer of Fort St David, dismissed the service. All three passengers attended the funeral.

A complete list of those who succumbed to sickness on the voyages of the

London company's ships in these years would fill many pages and ordinary crew members would be greatly in the majority. An unscheduled call at the Cape was often defended by captains because of the prevalence of sickness aboard. The voyage of Joseph Collier's *Severn* provides a typical illustration. He decided on his outward run to the Indies in 1746 not to put to Table Bay as he had few men seriously ill and moreover feared the storms which caused so much havoc in the roadstead. He was in any event late in the season. Nevertheless he was soon compelled to seek land. Sickness aboard increased when he reached the Indian Ocean and he decided to anchor at the Comoro Islands. On his return voyage from Fort St David in December of the following year he noted in the log after entering Table Bay: "The reason of my Putting in here was on Account of my People's being very bad with Scurvy, two of which died some time before and many others incapable (*sic*) of Duty". Way of the *Benjamin* bound for Madras and Bengkulu in 1744 noted an increase in sickness on the Cape approaches, when the crew suffered "wth. pains in their breasts and swellings of their knees and (I) very much fear our number of sick will daily increase if we don't soon get into a Port". Although Cape calls were often enough justified the company looked with great suspicion on stops there, especially on homeward runs. They were not in the best interests of the economy of St Helena and the directors had good reason to believe that commanders "make one's retence or other for putting in, when the reason is for the benefit of *Private Trade*".

The deficiency disease scurvy was the one most frequently mentioned in ships' logs, although there are also references to dropsy and unspecified fevers among casualties at the Cape. It was a fever which caused the death of a soldier Edward Lambert on William Robson's *Kent*, at the Cape in September 1745 on a voyage to Bengal. Scurvy cases responded quickly to hospital care on land and the less seriously affected, as on the *Severn* in 1747, were allowed a day ashore to speed recovery. Extra rations were also taken aboard at the Cape for the sick and William Weston of the *Exeter*, outward-bound for Bombay and China in 1746, purchased 30 sheep there expressly for this purpose.

Collier of the *Severn* was unfortunate enough to lose his surgeon James Baxter at the Cape on a voyage from Borneo in October 1743 and Wells of the *Pelham* was deprived there of the services of his servant Thomas Marsh when outward-bound in October 1745. On the day prior to the departure of William Hutchinson's *Godolphin* for Bengkulu in December 1753 the midshipman Shales King died on board and Samuel Sandell, third mate of the *Beaufort*, returning from Bengal under the command of Thomas Stevens, died at the Cape in April 1742 "of an Inflam(m)ation in his Bowels". These men were buried ashore and the *Beaufort's* log records that the funeral expenses amounted to 14 rixdollars (R5,60). The standard charge was higher for

visitors than for residents and perhaps for this reason funerals were sometimes conducted at sea, even when a vessel was in port. When a soldier Thomas Meager died at the Cape on the last day of December 1746 aboard Thomas Browne's *Bombay Castle* bound for the Coromandel coast the log for the following day notes: At 3 AM Carry'd the Body of the Deceased a good way out and committed it to ye Deep". Similarly, after the death of a midshipman George Stow at the Cape on 30 March 1745, Joseph Phillips of the Bombay-bound *King William* conducted the funeral service at sea off Green Point.

Not all deaths were the consequence of prolonged sickness. Accidents and drownings took their toll. Although the incident did not occur at the Cape, but in the Canton River, one of the worst accidents recorded in the logs of this period was the injury sustained in December 1755 by William Numan, cooper's mate aboard Browne's *Bombay Castle* which had touched at the Cape earlier in the year. Numan's hand was severed by the discharge of a gun and despite the prompt attention of the surgeon who amputated the arm below the shoulder the unfortunate victim died within a few days.

There were a number of drownings in Table Bay. In March 1753 two soldiers who were indulging in some horse-play on the upper deck of the *Boscawen* fell overboard. One was rescued, though not without difficulty, but the other could not be saved. The body was recovered and the ship's accounts include the item "Digging a Grave for a Soldier - 3 rixdollars (R1,20)". When the *Prince of Wales* was at the Cape in 1744 on her return from Madras under Pelly's command a seaman Robert Johnson disappeared. The captain feared that he had drowned since, as he put it, "I hear he got drunk being it was St Patrick's Day". Pelly was evidently not at home with the festivals of the saints. The accident in fact occurred on St Andrew's Day. Thomas Jones, a soldier on the *Salisbury* bound for Madras, committed suicide in January 1744. He suddenly jumped overboard at five o'clock one morning while all hands on deck were attending to their duties. Although his action was spotted he went straight down and Captain Burrows "supposed he had a weight about him".

There were several lucky escapes. Alexander Hincks, third mate on Robson's *Kent* sailing to Bengal in 1741, fell overboard in Table Bay, but was picked up by the jolly-boat. Equally fortunate was the sailor Anthony Durand on Bootle's *London*, known familiarly as Anthony Jackall. When the ship sailed from the Cape anchorage on 4 May 1742 to continue the homeward voyage from Bengkulu Durand was in the pinnace which was being towed out of the bay. The sea grew rough and he asked to be taken aboard, but was told to wait until daybreak. Soon afterwards the towrope parted and he found himself alone. Durand managed to hoist a simple sail, but another day and night passed before he was able to reach land and make his way to the home

f the burgher Evert Colijn. Charles Birkhead of the *Queen Caroline* took him aboard when he called at the Cape from Bombay a few days later.

Losses through shipwreck among the London company's vessels were not heavy in these years, although there were a number of disasters on the high seas. The *Princess Louisa*, sailing with the *Winchester* which took Clive to Madras, ran aground in the Cape Verde Islands in April 1743 with great loss of life; seven years later the *Duke of Cumberland* bound for China was wrecked off Cape Verde itself. The *Grantham* which accompanied her was able to claw off the breakers and stood by to help, only to see the stranded crew taken prisoner by the Senegalese. A ransom was at length arranged at the French settlement of Gorée to secure their release, but the *Duke of Cumberland's* cargo was lost. Benjamin Robins, mathematician and fellow of the Royal Society, was travelling on the *Grantham* to inspect the Madras fortifications and in those days of Anglo-French rivalry it was deemed expedient to pass him off as a supercargo. Robins was to die of fever in the residency in August 1751. John Nanfan's *Lincoln*, at the Cape in 1748, was wrecked a year later on the Coromandel coast in a cyclone. She went ashore with another Indiaman from London, the *Winchelsea*, commanded by Christopher Baron, and the stores of both ships were sold "by Public outcry", as the *Lincoln's* log puts it. The *Houghton*, commanded by Walpole, the premier's nephew, came to a sad end almost within sight of home. She was wrecked off Margate on the Kentish coast on her return from Canton in 1752, but Walpole survived to be given the command of a replacement vessel of the same name.

Disasters also occurred in southern African waters. In March 1738 the return ship *Sussex* was hit by a severe storm towards the Cape of Good Hope. Her captain, Francis Gostlin, transferred with most of his crew to another Indiaman, John Dove's *Winchester*, but a seaman John Dean determined to remain with the stricken vessel and a handful of his companions joined him. They succeeded in reaching Madagascar, but after many vicissitudes, including the loss of the *Sussex*, only Dean remained of the salvage party. He was rescued in July 1739 by Thomas Langworth of the *Prince William* and was taken to Bombay where he transferred to the homeward-bound *Haeslingfield*, touching at Madagascar and the Cape in 1740. After Dean reached London he was immortalized in a portrait by Verelst, awarded a life pension for his efforts to save the *Sussex* and rose to the position of foreman of the company's drug warehouse. An action was brought against Gostlin for abandoning a still navigable ship.

Among the shipwrecks on the southern African coast in these years one of the greatest tragedies was the loss of the London company's *Doddington* in the early hours of the morning of 17 July 1755. The vessel sailed from the Downs on a voyage to Madras on 22 April of that year under the command of James

Samson. The passengers aboard included a detachment of the Royal Regiment of Artillery and the cargo consisted of pieces of ordnance, gold belonging to Clive of India, silver bullion and other merchandise. After rounding the Cape the *Doddington* encountered stormy weather. Visibility was poor and a navigational error drove her on to Bird Island in Algoa Bay where she broke up within twenty minutes. Of the 270 people aboard her, only 23 were saved, among them the chief mate Evan Jones, the second mate John Collett, the third and fifth mates William Webb and Small Powell, and a midshipman John Yates. Collett's wife perished in the wreck and was buried on the island with others who had drowned.

The *Doddington's* jolly-boat was recovered and three men were sent to the mainland in it to seek provisions. One, however, the quartermaster Neil Bothwell, drowned and his companions were robbed by local herdsman. A farmer Petrus Hendrik Ferreira, who lived near the mouth of the Sundays River and had noticed fires on Bird Island, met a group of Khoikhoi and bought from them a pistol and other goods they had doubtless obtained from the men who had come ashore. Although the matter was followed up no direct evidence came to light that there were shipwrecked sailors on the island and a rescue was not therefore attempted.

Meanwhile those stranded on Bird Island worked for many months, not always harmoniously, to build a sloop in order to effect their escape. They christened the vessel the *Happy Deliverance* and the survivors, now reduced to 22, sailed in her on 18 February 1756 and at length reached Delagoa Bay. There they found the *Rose* galley from Bombay, captained by Edward Chandler, to whom they sold the sloop, although it was later seized at Bombay for the owners of the *Doddington*. Chandler took survivors to Madagascar, but several died on the voyage, including the second mate Collett. At Madagascar, Norton Hutchinson of the *Caernarvon* East Indiaman embarked fifteen of the sixteen men now remaining and carried them to Madras, Powell, the fifth mate, preferring to sail to Bombay in the *Happy Deliverance*. Hutchinson must have heard of the loss of the *Doddington* with much sadness, for he was her previous commander and had called at the Cape on a return voyage from Mokha and Bombay aboard her in March 1754.

The account of the wreck of the *Doddington* and information on the voyage of 1749 of the *Boscawen* through the Mozambique Channel recall the loss of another London East Indiaman, the *Dolphin*, outward-bound in 1748 on a coast and bay voyage. She had evidently gone missing in southern latitudes. The men of the *Boscawen* thought that the ship might have been wrecked on the Baixas da Índia between Madagascar and the mainland; the *Doddington's* chief mate Jones was convinced by signs of previous occupancy that the *Dolphin* had been lost on one of the islets of the Bird Island group. The vessel, which had visited the Cape homeward-bound from the Coromandel

ast in 1746 under Charles Pigot's command, was never located. It is interesting to note that when news of the *Doddington* tragedy reached London the veteran diver Lethbridge of Cape fame offered his services to cover the bullion aboard her. The offer was turned down, however, and a little more than two years later Lethbridge died. A successful salvage operation would have to await modern times.

lost London East Indiamen carried some passengers, the majority of them military and civilian personnel attached to the various colonial stations, their wives and families. Many men, like Floyer, Lawrence, Morse and Wake, were of high rank; others were of less exalted position, among them the unfortunate James Measures, a deserter from the 3rd Regiment of Guards who was shipped to India on the *Doddington* "by his Majesty's Command" and went down with so many others off Bird Island.

In April 1744 Thomas Hindman carried the former governor of Madras, Richard Benyon, to the Cape in the *Duke* on his return to Britain, the Essex mansion of a prosperous shipowner and a company directorship. He was taken on shore by the yawl of the *Salisbury* East Indiaman and was given the customary salute befitting his rank as he left the *Duke*. Benyon had established extensive private trading interests in India and had worked in close partnership with his Danish opposite number at Tranquebar, Poul Krisk Panck. Three years later the *Somerset* brought the retiring governor of Bombay, Stephen Law, to the anchorage. Law, who was accompanied by his wife and children, had also been an active private trader whose defence of the corrupt chief of the Dutch establishment at Surat, Pieter Laurens Phoosen, illustrates the honour among thieves which bound those in high places in the east, without reference to nationality.

Thomas Stonestreet and George Percival, late councillors in the Bombay presidency, returned home via the Cape aboard the *Haeslingfield* in 1740 and Lindsay's *Pelham*, which called at the Table Bay roadstead in October 1748 on a voyage to Fort St David and Canton, had as passengers an army major James Mosman, the medical officer at Vishakhapatnam, Dr James Munro, and the merchant William Fazakerley, in addition to the supercargoes for China, George Mandivel and John Goodyear. She also had aboard several Lascars, then increasingly used to man ships on return voyages and taken back to the east as passengers. In the previous year the *Pelham*, returning from Bombay, brought another medical doctor, John Nelson, to the Cape with his Black servant Caesar. Nelson, anxious to speed his journey, transferred there to the Dutch return ship *Eendragt* from Mokha. The *Doddington*, sailing to Bombay in 1748 under Benjamin Mason, carried an artillery specialist William Atkinson and the *Ilchester*, bound for Madras and China in 1754 with John Tedd as commander, had embarked a Captain George Beaver, his wife and two children.

The *Eendragt* to which Nelson and his servant transferred was bringing five men back to the United Provinces as prisoners; London East Indiamen also carried men who had fallen foul of the authorities. William Hutchinson's *Godolphin*, at the Cape in November 1753, brought two Black girls and an Asian youth from Bengkulu, but also took aboard there six White prisoners and a Malay. They had been deported by the governor, Robert Hindley, who sent six of the seven to Britain for attempting to abscond in a company sloop and the seventh to St Helena on a rape charge.

Women passengers travelling alone were not infrequent. The *Pelham*, outward-bound in 1745, brought out a Miss Elizabeth Black and on Le Geyt's return ship the *Portfield*, at the Cape in April 1754, was Lady Ann Russell, widow of the former chief at Kasimbazar in Bengal, Sir Francis Russell. Among the passengers on the *Caesar*, which sailed on a coast and bay voyage in 1740, was a well-connected young lady, Elizabeth Mansell, who embarked for Madras. The ship called at Portsmouth where the commander, Robert Cummings, said farewell to his wife. When that lady saw Miss Mansell she was greatly agitated and through her tears made her husband promise to behave himself on the voyage. If she had any reason to think that he might not, her worst fears were realized.

Elizabeth shared more than the captain's table and the affair must have been in full swing when the *Caesar* called at the Cape settlement in October 1740. Cummings doubtless saw things in a different light as the ship approached Madras, where Miss Mansell had powerful connections and news of the liaison would certainly filter back to England. Elizabeth sought redress for the cooling affections of the captain by bringing a charge of rape against him. Her planned revenge backfired, however, and it transpired in the court case that Cummings had not been the only object of her affections on the ship and that her general behaviour left much to be desired. Robert Cummings was acquitted, but was treated to a serious lecture on the iniquity of taking away the character of a defenceless young woman. His protestation that the young woman in question did not have one to start with was swiftly silenced. Elizabeth Mansell returned to England on Pelly's *Prince of Wales*, calling at the Cape again in January 1742. Pelly was no doubt made of sterner stuff than Cummings and the lady's behaviour more discreet. The events of the outward voyage do not seem to have been repeated.

The Cape of Good Hope provided ships with welcome facilities, but a stop there had other advantages. Before turning to the direct contact between British ships and the authorities and settlers ashore we may fittingly conclude this chapter by taking a look at vessels of the London company's fleet as they lay at anchor in the roadstead on voyages to the east and on others returning to the Thames estuary, for despite company objections Table Bay remained a popular port of call, even on the return voyages which could easily make

use of St Helena. It was not only a question of succour for the sick or the openings for private trade; Cape water was purer than that obtainable on St Helena. For outward-bound vessels there was the special advantage of gaining the latest intelligence of conditions in the east and of finding a greater volume of shipping bound for Europe there which could be used to take letters back to Britain.

A Cape stop was not always an interval of relaxation for crews, who spent a good deal of their time in port keeping everything aboard shipshape. The vessels hired by the London company had a relatively short life as East Indiamen before they were broken up, reconstructed or, like the *Shaftesbury* which Matthew Bookey brought into Table Bay in March 1739 on a voyage to Madras, were sold for other commercial purposes. The *Shaftesbury*, renamed the *Roy de Gabingue*, ultimately sailed out of Nantes in the French transatlantic slave-trade. East Indiamen were designed to undertake four voyages of twelve to eighteen months' duration during an effective period of service of about twelve years. A number made fewer voyages, some being lost at sea or too badly damaged to be fit for further work; a mere handful, among them the *Hardwicke* which visited the Cape in 1743 under John Hallett and again in 1748 and 1749 with John Samson as commander, made five voyages and thus added a few years to their useful life. The overhaul of ships in ports of call was therefore of no small importance, even on voyages which had not subjected them to serious stress. The sails, rigging and other equipment required regular attention in the interests of safety; nor could the hull be neglected. In days of peace this work was carried out as expeditiously as possible, as on Ralph Farr Winter's *Nottingham* which spent two weeks in Table Bay in late January and early February 1738 on her run from Madras to the Thames, or aboard the *Wager*, returning from China under Josiah Hindman in April 1749, which only lay for ten days in the Cape roadstead. During the years of Anglo-Spanish and Anglo-French warfare at sea from 1739, however, ships often spent much longer in port. Pigot's *Dolphin*, for example, was at the Cape from early January until late March 1746 before sailing for home. Others remained in Table Bay for more than three months in the following year.

Most logs give details of the work carried out in port. Sails had to be dried, unbent and mended, broken shrouds and rigging spliced, and spare sails brought out for airing. On John Blake's *Lincoln*, bound for Madras in 1745, these were spread out in the great cabin immediately beneath the round-house abaft the quarter-deck. Passengers used the great cabin, which was not always entirely waterproof in heavy seas. When Francis Cheyne brought the *Protector* to the Cape on a voyage to the Malabar coast in April 1752 the seams of the cabin had to be caulked. The crew had specific duties. On the *Hardwicke* in 1748 the bos'n's gang blacked the mastheads and those under the gunner had the task of painting the ports. Others were employed on such miscellaneous

jobs as the "making of Points and Gasqueths", as the log of Way's *Benjamin* states in October 1744. The sick were put on such light duties as picking oakum for caulking, as we learn from the log of the *Royal George*, at the Cape in 1745 on a coast and bay voyage under the command of Thomas Feild, after a delayed start and a refit at Spithead following a collision.

Caulking, painting, tarring the rigging, overhauling the butts, blacking the yards and wale, and coating the masts with tallow, oil and turpentine were among the many tasks undertaken, in addition to bringing chests and hammocks on deck in order to clean out the living quarters and restowing cargo and provisions both to trim the ship and to make room for fresh supplies. Considerable attention was given to the hull above and below the water-line. For much of this work the vessel had to be heeled or careened and a stage constructed by the carpenters to enable the gangs of sailors to carry out the necessary operations. Hard scrubbing removed most of the barnacles and marine vegetation, and the woodwork was then usually payed with pitch, tallow and white lead to the water-line and below it with pitch and brimstone. Some commanders had special preferences. Fisher of the *Porto Bello* used tallow on the bottom of his ship in 1741 and Charles Hudson of the *Prince of Orange* from Bengal in 1742 payed the bends or sides of his ship with tar and turpentine "which", the log records, "makes a very good Coat". The company's despatch vessel, the *Swift* snow commanded by John Bell, was heeled when she came into Table Bay from St Helena in April 1747. The bottom was scrubbed and the upper bends payed with pitch and below the water-line with lime. It was labour in vain, however, for "rain coming on wash'd most of it off". The *Lincoln* was heeled in Table Bay in 1745, but a heavy swell compelled the captain to right her in order to save her from capsizing.

Ships often entered the roadstead in a poor state after a battering from seas off the Cape. The *Hardwicke's* arrival in early April 1748 is a case in point. A fresh south-easter carried away her fore-topmast, already in a damaged condition. Its fall broke the fore main-topgallant masts and injured the cross-trees. The *Hardwicke* had to heave to and fit a temporary rough-hewed mast. Here was work enough for the crew when she at length made port.

Other ships in the roadstead often helped out with stores, equipment and manpower. Green of the *Stafford* received supplies from John McNemara of the *Rhoda* on his return from China in 1755 and Francis d'Abbadie of the *Neptune* borrowed a smith from Cobham of the homeward-bound *Edgbaston* in 1742 to assist with the fitting of a new anchor. Cobham was able to supply the *Prince of Orange* with an anchor stock soon afterwards. When Wells brought the *Pelham* into Table Bay in early September 1745 he had so many sick aboard that he had to be assisted to an anchorage by other London ships then in port. Blake of the *Lincoln* lent him sixteen men for the

purpose. The *Pelham's* onward voyage to the east was unexpectedly delayed. She sailed on 7 October, but was back in Table Bay a week later after springing her foremast in a gale.

There was therefore plenty to do to keep all hands busy in harbour and any number of "other Needful Jobbs", as McNemara of the outward-bound *Rhoda* put it in 1748, which have not been detailed here. If there was no other work of importance in view captains could always order small-arms practice, as did Sedgwick of the *London* early in 1746. Despite the long working hours, however, some crew members found occasion for mischief and worse than mischief, whether at the Cape or elsewhere. We shall discuss desertion at the settlement in the next chapter, but there were other problems to harass commanders. How, for example, did Collier of the *Severn* cope with the two soldiers on his ship, John Moore and William Peacock, who elected to turn Moslem when they were at Mokha in August 1746? Wills of the *Elizabeth*, anxious to avoid friction ashore when the poor condition of his ship decided him to put into Delagoa Bay in 1750, was clearly irritated when a midshipman was attacked by a local villager armed with a lance. The severe cut the man received over an eye was the result of his own cupidity. He had attempted to walk off with purchases made without paying a fair price for them. Even senior men could incur a captain's displeasure. The supercargo Richard Wood on the *Portfield* in April 1747 went ashore at the Cape on the eve of the ship's departure for a long return voyage by way of Todos-os-Santos Bay in Brazil and the Portuguese capital, Lisbon. This Wood did, as Francis d'Abbadie noted in the log, "notwithstanding the representations I made to him that it was very Improper at this critical conjonction (*sic*); laying unmoor'd and hove short in Expectation of a Shift of wind". The supercargo at length came back after warning shots had been fired and the pinnace sent to fetch him had returned without him. The captain protested vehemently at the unnecessary delay Wood's action had caused him.

These were not punishable offences, but there were plenty of those and the *Prince of Wales* seems to have had more than her fair share of them at the Cape. In January 1742, outward-bound for Mokha and Fort St George, a seaman Robert Simpson not only absented himself from boat duty, but insulted the captain and his officers. Captain Pelly was called aboard from shore leave to deal with the case and sentenced the man to 39 lashes with the cat. This was a punishment frequently handed out for insubordination. 39 strokes was the old piratical Moses's Law, with reference to Deuteronomy 25 : 3.

Again, on the return of the *Prince of Wales* from Madras in January 1745, Pelly's shore leave was interrupted when he was called on board to preside over the case of William Bramwell, accused of stealing a ducatoon and a silver clasp, the property of a certain John Gooding. Bramwell was found guilty and

sentenced to 33 lashes with what the log describes as "a Catt of Ninetales". The cat, it may be observed, was not invariably made up of that number of thongs. This was a heavy punishment for such an offence. Cheyne of the *Protector* was more lenient over theft in 1752 and only sentenced the seaman Lawrence Welch to twelve lashes.

A further incident occurred aboard a new *Prince of Wales* which Captain Peck brought to the Cape in April 1752 on a voyage to China. Michael Davidson and George Bingham each received two dozen lashes up the gangway and Peter Dixon twelve lashes for leaving the boat "and behaving in a mutinous manner, and threatenng to murther the third mate and Boatswain". Peck had more trouble at the Cape on another China voyage three years later. On the day of Dupleix's departure from Table Bay for Europe some seamen swam across from the *Prince of Wales* to the *Bombay Castle*. On their return one of them, Thomas Harrison, was insolent and unco-operative. For this he was put in irons. He was soon joined by a messmate, William Davis, who was caught whispering with the prisoner Harrison when he brought his food. Davis was ordered forward, but refused and was also clapped in irons. A third sailor, John Stiff, received two dozen lashes at the gangway soon afterwards and was sent to join the other two. All three were released, however, before the *Prince of Wales* sailed.

Norton Hutchinson of the company's despatch yacht the *Swallow* had a drunken and abusive second mate to contend with on his voyage from Britain to the Cape in 1747. Not only did Edward Roach threaten to knock out the brains of the fourth mate George Kent, but he had the temerity to speak ill of the company which employed him. Roach, it is recorded, "had been Drunk almost ever since our coming in" at the Cape. Violence erupted aboard George Jackson's China ship the *Essex* in Table Bay on 29 April 1751. The log records that "in the Evening at 8 of the Clock James Irwin Soldier cut off the Left ear of one of the Lascars for which (I) confined him in Irons". In the following year Benjamin Fisher of the *Drake*, also bound for China, had to put Mr Midshipman Jones in irons for disobedience and for proposing to assault an officer while the ship lay in the Cape roadstead.

One way of getting rid of a troublesome seaman was to transfer him to another vessel. This was the method adopted at the Cape by Nathaniel Hancock of the *Norfolk*, bound for the Coromandel coast, Bengkulu and China in April 1747. The sailor James Redmond was discharged to the *Pelham* for using threatening language to the captain and the supercargo John Forth. Lindsay of the *Pelham* also had some insubordinate crew members on his return voyage from Bombay at that time. Among them were John Collet and Thomas Verney, who each received twelve lashes for general neglect of duty. Verney jumped ship at Lisbon in October 1747 and Collet found himself later an unwilling recruit to a much tougher service, the Royal Navy.

Transfers were also made to help captains in need. Lindsay was able to spare his fifth mate William Grearson when Walter Hooke, master of the company's sloop *Porto Bello* - not the London East Indiaman of that name - was at the Cape in 1747. This was a promotion for Grearson since Hooke wanted someone capable of acting as chief mate. The voyage of the *Porto Bello* sloop had a special significance to which we shall return in a later chapter. She had sailed from Nagappattinam early in November 1746 and was bound like the *Pelham* for the Thames.

These pages have concentrated on a general view of the London company's shipping in the years 1735-1755. We look more closely now at contacts between British visitors to the Cape and their Dutch hosts at all levels.