



Source information re David Hunter, of Orangefield, of St Helena and the East India Company

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The earliest Captain Hunter mentions

The 1746 references quoted on the webpage certainly refer to **Captain** David Hunter, which may well indeed have been recognition for his role in the Volunteers at that time rather than a reference to the sea. As will be seen, he does seem to have served as an East India Company (EIC) Captain, while other later references simply refer to **Mr** David Hunter.

Many newspaper references to Captain Hunter turn out to be referring to a Benjamin and/or a Joseph Hunter. However, thanks to a PhD thesis from Trinity College Dublin, there are the following mentions of Captain David Hunter in the Cowan Papers at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. I have not had the opportunity as yet to inspect these references myself. Nor is it certain that these are confidently the Orangefield Hunter, though I believe they are.

Sir Robert Cowan, the East India Company's Governor of Bombay from 1729 to 1734, was related through the marriage of his sister, Mary Cowan, to Alexander Stewart, father of Robert Stewart, 1st Marquess of Londonderry. He died in 1737.

The Dutch had founded the United East Indies Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or VOC) in 1602. Its quick success encouraged other traders to form similar chartered companies – the English (later British) East India Company (EIC) and the French *Compagnies des Indes Orientales*. Such companies soon spanned the globe, trading in everything from slaves, sugar, spices (nutmeg, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, etc.), and cloths.

Edward Owen Teggin's 2020 doctoral thesis, *The East India Company career of Sir Robert Cowen in Bombay and the western Indian ocean, c.1719-35* (see here: <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/91544/TARA%20Upload%202.pdf>) has this interesting paragraph on the importance and the breadth of the roles of ship's Company captains:

It is interesting that Cowan's correspondence included many letters to Company factors on land, as well as ships' captains. Every Company ship had a supercargo who was responsible

for the sale and purchase of goods on the company's account, whereas the captain also fulfilled a key trading function as both master of the ship and manager of the vessel as a mobile trading emporium. ... This meant that the level of control which was exerted by Company captains often had the potential to be more definitive than the directors in London in given circumstances. ... As such, Cowan spent much effort cultivating relations with men such as James Macrae and David Hunter who were employed as captains at the time. This was sensible from a speculative point of view regarding their career prospects. James Macrae, for example, progressed from his post as a ships' captain to governor of Fort St. David on the Coromandel coast in 1724. ...

Teggin lists correspondence between Cowan and David Hunter, East India Company Captain, between 1721 and 1731 [actually 1734] and specifically:

Cowan to Captain David Hunter, Goa, 11 Jan. 1722, (PRONI, Cowan Papers, D654/B/1/1AA, f. 117v);
Cowan to Captain David Hunter, Surat, 28 Jun. 1722, (f. 160v);
Cowan to Captain David Hunter, Bombay, 03 Feb. 1734, (PRONI, Cowan Papers, D654/B/1/2D, ff. 115v-116). This includes Cowan's report to Hunter of a naval engagement at Surat.

Assuming this to be the Orangefield Hunter, in his latter years our David Hunter was more usually a VIP on ships captained by others. In line with Teggin's quoted paragraph above, Hunter did indeed progress in his career prospects.

In 1747 he was appointed Lieutenant or Deputy Governor of St Helena, a volcanic tropical island in the South Atlantic Ocean administered by the East India Company from 1659 (it became a British colony in 1834). The island was an important stopover for ships from Europe to Asia and back, for fresh supplies and water, until the opening of the Suez Canal. In March 1747 a new Governor, Charles Hutchinson, had also been appointed. Hunter's appointment as Deputy Governor led to the Hunter will(s) itemised in the next section.

The British Library, Asian and African Studies, has a series of EIC Letter Books. Under General Correspondence, Letter Book 27, ref. E/3/110 f 46v the following is catalogued:

Captain David Hunter, Lieutenant Governor of St Helena, 09 March 1748.

Note that he's referred to as Captain and Lieutenant Governor.

In 1751 David Hunter was chosen to lead the East India Company's campaign to establish a new base at Negrais in Burma (now Myanmar). The following letters refer to him as Deputy Governor – and without 'Captain'.

East India Company, General Correspondence, Letter Book 28, ref. E/3/111 ff 113-14
David Hunter, Deputy Governor of St Helena, appointed Chief at Negrais,
29 November 1751

East India Company, General Correspondence, Letter Book 28, ref. E/3/111 f 116
List of the packet of the *Exeter* for David Hunter, Deputy Governor of St Helena,
Nov 1751

Finding David Hunter's forbears has proved impossible to date. Did he purchase the Co Down lands around Orangefield or had he inherited them? Had he grown up in the north of Ireland or perhaps in Scotland? What was the name of his brother, the father of his nephew James Hunter of Oxford University. Who were David's parents? When did he marry – and where?

Some, though very few, answers emerge in the next section.

The will, the Orangefield lands and the genealogy

David Hunter's will provides some family information. His wife Rebecca had been previously married with three children; Hunter refers to 'my daughters Caroline and Amelia' (as distinct from Rebecca's three children), neither daughter having attained 21 years of age at the time of will writing – 20 February 1747. At that date, in the event of the family perishing on the sea voyage to St Helena, he leaves everything to his nephew James Hunter of St John's College, Oxford University.

In addition to Rebecca as an executor, the trustees and executors were named as 'my good friends' Ralph Knox [c1690-1783 London] and Samuel Craghead [1689 Glasgow-1762 London], of London, merchants and co-partners in one of London's many Irish counting houses [of 4 Crosby Square, Bishopsgate Street, London].

The will (detailed at England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858, PROB 11: Will Registers, 1750-1756, Piece 811: Pinfold, Quire Numbers 254-304 (1754) – p.792 of 833) is lengthy, not always easy to decipher, without punctuation and variable use of capital letters. It begins thus:

In the Name of God Amen I David Hunter of Orangefield in the County of Downe in the Kingdom of Ireland Esquire now residing in London being in good Health and of sound and disposing Mind Memory and Understanding do make and publish this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following that is to say Whereas by some Writing or Agreement made previous to my marriage with Rebecca my Wife I agreed to settle a Sum of One thousand Pounds a Piece upon her three Children by her former Husband in such manner as therein is mentioned as by the said Settlement or Agreement relation being thereunto had may more fully appear Now I do hereby ratify and confirm the said Settlement or Agreement and do direct and appoint that the same be [indecipherable word] performed according to the true meaning thereof and I will and direct that my debts and funeral expenses be only paid and satisfied and I give and devise All that my Capital Messuage and all those my Lands Tenements and Hereditaments at Orangefield aforesaid in the County of Downe or elsewhere in the said Kingdom of Ireland with their and every of their Rights Members and Appurtenances unto Ralph Knox and Samuel Craghead of London Merchants and Copartners ... that is to say Upon Trust ... shall as soon after my Decease as conveniently may do sell and dispose of the said capital Messuage and all other the Lands and Premises thereby devised to them to the best Purchaser or Purchasers either together or in Parcels and for the most Money and best Price ... [etc., for four lengthy pages].

The income was to be for the benefit of Rebecca and subsequently for their daughters Caroline and Amelia, subject to Rebecca's approval (e.g. not marrying before they're 21 without consent).

David Hunter added a codicil on 01 March 1747/8 because he 'was shortly going to the Island of St Helena with my wife and children'. He continued, 'in case of the loss of my wife and children in that voyage I have given all my estate both real and personal to my nephew James Hunter'. He also leaves – in case of the loss of lives – £1,000 each to his good friends Ralph Knox and Samuel Craghead.

The will, with its codicil, was proved at London on 27 November 1754 – David Hunter's signature being authenticated by Samuel Mercer and James Booth (both from the 4 Crosby Square chambers). David Hunter was described as being 'late of the Island of Negrais in the East Indias [sic] in the

service of the East India Company deceased'. Interestingly, EIC documents quoted Hunter's death as 24 December 1854!

Another somewhat shorter version, presumably to satisfy the legal requirements in the then Kingdom of Ireland, may be found at *Transcripts of Memorials of Deeds, Conveyances & Wills*, 1755-1756, Ireland, Vol 175; p. 455; Film No. 8088400; image 238; Memorial No. 117862.

My thanks to Jeff Homes in Cleveland, Ohio, for pointing me in that direction.

The microfilm copy is available at <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSN1-X3XC-H?i=133&cat=185720>

An even shorter version is available in the Irish Manuscripts Commission Registry of Deeds, Dublin, Abstracts of Wills, Vol. ii, 1746-85, edited by P. Beryl Eustace, Dublin Stationery Office, 1954, page 98.

HUNTER, DAVID, Orangefield, Co. Down, Esq. 20 Feb. 1747. Precis 1 p. 15 July 1755. Lands etc. of Orangefield, Co. Down, to be sold by Ralph Knox and Samuel Craghead, London, merchants, trustees; money arising from such sale to become part of residue of said testator's personal estate. Witnesses: Saml. Parmenter, then of Basinghall Street, now of Inner Temple, London, gent., Benjamin Chandler then of Basinghall Street aforesaid, gent., since deceased, John Clarke then of Inner Temple and now of Basinghall Street aforesaid, gent. Memorial witnessed by: William Lucas, Middle Temple, London, Esq., John Clarke. 176, 455, 117862 Ralph Knox (seal)

Following Hunter's will in the *Transcripts of Memorials*, the next Memorial, No. 117863 (thanks again to Jeff Homes) is a one year lease, dated 01 July 1755, between two of Hunter's executors, viz. Ralph Knox and Samuel Craghead of London, and the new occupant of Orangefield, Thomas Bateson of Belfast. It purports (along with some fascinating spellings of townlands)

to be a Lease for a year to vest the possession of and concerning all that the Corn Mill of Monlehogohy and the three acres of Land thereunto belonging together with the Grist and Moulture of the Town Lands of Castlereagh, Brannel, Ballymaconoghy, Cregogh, Lisnebrinny, Carnemuck, Monlehogohy, Lisnesheragh and Crosnecrinan and also that parcel of Land called the Quarter of Monlehogohy which said Lands and Mill were formerly in the possession of John Gelston and late of the said David Hunter and are situate lying and being in the manor of Castlereagh and County of Downe aforesaid with the appurtenances which said Ind[enture] of Lease was duly Executed by the said Ralph Knox and Samuel Craghead in the presence of ...

Those townlands cover an extensive area. Below are the current 'modern' spellings along with their Irish originals:

Multyhogy (from *Muilte Sheoigigh* meaning 'Joy's mills')
Castlereagh (from *Caisleán Riabhach* meaning 'grey castle') – site of Castle Clannaboy
Branial (from *Broinnngheal* meaning 'white-fronted place')
Ballymaconaghy (from *Baile Mhic Dhonnchaidh* meaning 'MacDonaghy's townland')
Cregagh (from *Creagaigh* meaning 'rocky place')
Lisnabreeny (from *Lios na Bruíne* meaning 'fort of the hostel or fairy dwelling')
Carnamuck (from *Ceathrú na Muc* meaning 'quarterland of the pigs')
Lisnasharragh (from *Lios na Searrach* meaning 'ringfort of the foals')
Crossnacreevy (from *Cros na Craoibhe* meaning 'cross of the branch or tree')

Preceding Hunter's will in the *Transcripts of Memorials*, the previous two Memorials are also relevant.

Memorial No. 117860 is the registering on 15 July 1755 of a letter of attorney from Hunter (late of Orangefield, now residing in London, but intending shortly to go and reside in the Island of St Helena) to Knox and Craghead, dated 20 February 1747 authorising them to sell and dispose of his lands, tenements, etc., 'lying and being at a place formerly called Molonohogy or Monlonohogy or some other name and now called Orangefield ... held under a Grant from the Right Honble the Lord Viscount Hilsborough [sic] or some of his Ancestors for three lives renewable forever ...

Memorial No. 117861, is the registering on 15 July 1755 of 'certain articles of agreement bearing date' 27 March 1752 between Rebecca Hunter, wife of David Hunter stiled [sic] 'of the Island of St Helena Esq.', Knox and Staghead and Samuel Smith on behalf of Thomas Bateson, 'for the compleat purchase of the Messuage or Tenement called Orangefield and of a certain Lands or Grounds ... at and for the price of £2,139 10s 8d ...'

See this website 'blog' with pictures of Orangefield House and how it changed over the years: <https://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2021/02/>

Sadly I have failed to uncover any information about Hunter's time in St Helena. Please do contact me if you can fill in this vital gap.

Meanwhile what of David Hunter's wife, his family and his forbears?

From his will it can be confirmed that his wife was Rebecca with three children from her previous marriage and two daughters with David Hunter – Caroline and Amelia. Also that a nephew is called James Hunter of St John's College, Oxford University.

A trawl of Ancestry.co.uk produced a likely contender – likely because of the coincidence of names and the involvement of a marriage at Fort St George, Madras, India, in 1723 to Charles Small.

Sadly I have been unable to find out anything about David Hunter himself. Nor indeed have I been able to verify the source of the following genealogical information which was added to Ancestry by 'briand148'. I am grateful to him for solving this part of the mystery.

It looks likely that David Hunter's wife was born Rebecca Newnam, c.1699 in the Parish of St Dionis, Backchurch, London. Her parents were Charles Newnam (1673-?) and Rebecca Bennett (1677-1732, she died in Lewisham, Kent). Their children, i.e. Rebecca's siblings, were of that same parish.

Rebecca, was the eldest child. She had a brother Ralph Newnam (1702-1702) who didn't survive for very long, and two sisters: Hannah (1705-1745) and Martha (1709-?).

Rebecca married Charles Small at Fort St George on 20 October 1723. They had two daughters and a son: Anne Small (1724-?), Charles Small (1725-?) and Martha Small (1734-1802)

Charles Small was an EIC sea captain who commanded the *Lyell*, a ship of 470 tons with 94 men and 30 guns. The British Library, Asian and African Studies, has a series of EIC Letter Books, with instructions to their captains – eleven specifically mentioning Captain Charles Small of the *Lyell*. The letters' dates range from 1721 to 1733. The Humphrey Morice Papers from the Bank of

England, Reel 4, Vol.7, item 542 also have a letter from Charles Small on board the *Lyell* near St Iago to Richard Mead telling of the death of a midshipman, 25 February 1730.

The Ancestry listing for Rebecca Small née Newnam lists two further daughters, without dates: Caroline Elizabeth Hunter and Amelia Hunter. There's no further information about the second marriage, though the coincidence of Caroline and Amelia seems likely that this must surely be David Hunter's family.

St Mary's Church, Putney, London has a marriage on 28 October 1737 between a David Hunter and a Rebekah Smalt (Rebekah being a common transcription of Rebecca and Smalt looks like an incorrect transcription or reading of Small). And so it is. The listings of marriages in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1737, Vol.7, has this on p.637:

27 [October]. Capt. *Hunter*, - to Mrs *Small*, Relict of Capt. *Small*, [with] £15,000.

The Ancestry listing gives the death of Rebecca Newnam/Small/Hunter in Southampton in 1763.

Note: Very confusingly, Ancestry also lists a marriage at St Benet Paul's Wharf, London, on 18 September 1718, between Charles Small of St Dionis, Backchurch, London, and Rebecca Newnam of the same parish. This Charles Small was apparently born in 1691 in Lewisham, Kent, and died there on 04 August 1736. This Rebecca Newnam was born in March 1691 and died at St Benet Paul's Wharf, London, on 07 October 1736. They had a daughter, Martha Jane Small (1734-1802), born in Lewisham. BUT, even more confusingly, Martha Jane married on 20 October 1753 at Fort St George, Madras, India, to John Pybus 1727-1789 with eight children, three of whom did not survive infancy.



Fort St. George, in Madras (Chennai), a 1754 coloured print by Jan Van Ryne (1712-1760), National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Letters to Fort St George mentioning Hunter

The pic below is of a plaque on the walls of the India High Commission in London. It's the Coat of Arms of the Madras Presidency depicting Fort St. George at Madras (now Chennai), two coconut palm trees, the sea, two English flags (the cross of Saint George) and, below the fort, an image of Saint George slaying the dragon. Credit: Tony Hisgett, © 2010



The following list is a guide to some of the place-names in the following letters:

Fort St George in Chennai (Madras) completed in 1644 for the EIC (East India Company), was the first English fortress in India.

Fort Marlborough, an EIC defensive fort built in Bengkulu City, Sumatra, between 1713 and 1719. It was said to be one of the strongest British forts in the eastern region, second only to Fort St. George.

Fort William in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, was built by the EIC in 1696.

Batavia on the north coast of Java was founded by the Dutch in 1619. When Indonesia achieved its independence in 1949 it was renamed Jakarta.

Negrais is situated on the southern coast of Burma at the mouth of the Bassein River.

In 1753 the East India Company had erected a factory on the island to form a settlement and in 1757 a treaty was obtained from King Alaungpaya, ceding the island to the British in perpetuity. In 1759 the settlement was attacked by the Burmese, its garrison either killed or taken prisoner, and the factory was subsequently abandoned.

These extracts, mentioning David Hunter, formerly of Orangefield, Co. Down, are from *Letters to Fort St. George, 1752-53*, Vol. 33, Madras Record Office, 1941.

N^o. 1.

**TO THE HONBLE THOMAS SAUNDERS ESQ^a.
PRESIDENT & GOVERNOUR & C^a. COUNCIL OF
FORT ST. GEORGE**

HONBLE SIR & SIRS

On the 8th. July last sailed from hence the Bombay Castle Captain Thomas Browne, by whom We addressed your Honour & c^a. under date of the 6th. of that Month, which We hope has safely reached your hands.

The 18th. Ultimo anchored in Our Road a Snow, named the Johanna Maria from Batavia, having on Board David Hunter Esq^r., who delivered Us a Letter from the Honble Court of Directors, wherein they are pleas'd to acquaint us, of their having appointed that Gentleman to an Important station, and directing us to shew him all the Honours, in our Power, which hath been Accordingly done, the Honble Company have also directed Mr. Thomas Combes to Embark for Fort St. George which he now does together with Mr. Hunter on this Vessell bought purposely by him for that Purpose.

Her Cargo hath been delivered here on their Honours account for which proper receipts have been given Mr. Hunter & which consisting of Salt Chiefly proved a very seasonable Supply and advantageous to their Honours, particulars as follows Viz^t.

					Coyn.	Bams.	
Salt	..	..	..	..	24	500	
Cytjongs	..	..	..	..	..	2850	Bams.
Callavances	..	..	..	..	..	2610	Do.
Jack beans	..	..	..	..	..	3900	Do.

The above Vessell and Cargo Cost Mr. Hunter Rix Dollars 6730 as ? Copy of his account which comes herewith.

As there is a probability of Mr. Combes returning again soon to this place We have therefore kept open the Residency of Moco Moco committing it in the meantime to the Care of Mess^{rs}. Thomas Cole William Norris Alexander Forbes & Robert Swinton the former Person to Continue at Ippoe.

I desire this para be referred to the Cons held the 19th & 20th Ultimo. J. Beach.

Receiving advice that by the Imprudent Conduct of the Young Sultan of Moco Moco some difference had happened there We immediately Ordered thither Lieutenant Gabbet with a Reinforcement of 10 Men which had so good an Effect that every thing seems to be reconcil'd and the Old Sultan having



East Indiamen in a Gale c.1759 by Charles Brooking (1723-1759) from the collection of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Exhibited great Complaints against Mr. Joseph Gunn, We have thought proper to send for him up notwithstanding We are convinced his Highness is fully as much to blame.

Their Honours sloop Cuddalore being in such bad repair as to be incapable of performing the services requisite without being sheathed or doubled neither of which can be done here we have therefore put her under the Charge of Messrs. Hunter and Combes in Order to have her properly repaired and then returned here again which We hope will meet with Your Honour &c's. approbation as her longer Continuance on this Coast in the Condition she is would probably have been attended with some Disaster.

In Our last We mentioned to Your Honour &c's. our suspending Mr. [Robert] Dunckley for a more explicit account of which transaction We beg leave to refer you to Consultations of April 13th. and May the 4th. and 19th. in those of July 13th. and 14th. you will please to Observe Our Proceedings in Regard to Captain John Hood whose Insolent Behaviour and audacity obliged Us in support of our Own authority to come to a Resolution of Continuing him under arrest till the Departure of the first ship for England and then to send him home with an impartial Relation of the whole affair to the Honble Company.

On the 4th. August returned Sloop Mary from Batavia and brought Us a small supply of Cordage and Rice.

We are sorry to acquaint Your Honour &c's. that by late advices We are apprehensive of a decrease this season in the Pepper of Anack Soongey so that We cannot flatter Ourselves with the hopes of obtaining a Larger surplus than We mentioned by the Brilliant to expect that is about 100 Tons.

August the 29th. arrived Our annual Storeship the Exeter Captain William Furnell having touched in his way at St. Helena & Batavia, by her We received 20 Chests of Treasure and a Supply of Military together with a few stores.

We directly called in all the Interest Notes and Discharged them and the Remainder of the Money shall disburse with the utmost Frugality but apprehend it will barely suffice to Maintain Our years Expence.

The Honble Company have advised Us of [their] appointing Fort St. George the Presidency and directed [us] accordingly to which as well as all their other Orders due Respect shall be shewn.

Their Honours have been pleased to Order Us a Supply of stores on the Prince of Wales to be forwarded from St. George and enjoined Us to apply for the same, We therefore now Earnestly request Your Honour &c's. will comply therewith by the first opportunity We being in the Greatest necessity for want of them Articles not having received any of those sortments by the Storeship.

The Exeter is now just ready to sail for the Northern Ports to take in the Pepper there and are in hopes of Dispatching her with a full Loading before the Expiration of her Charterparty agreement.

Messrs. Samuel Ardley and William Norris Factors having the Honourable Companys Permission intend to Embrace the first Convenient Opportunity of Embarking for Madrass.

Being Greatly in want of an able Man for the Employ of Gunner We have procured one out of the Exeter well qualified for that Station, and entertained him on the usual Pay, and for whose Character We beg leave to refer you to David Hunter Esqr.

The following Persons having Requested to Deposit Money into their Honours Cash here and have Certificates for the same granted on the Presidency We have complied therewith and beg you will please to Honour the

said [Deposits] \$450 Mr. John Massey pay to Mr. Robt. Turing or Order P. 300.

§6000 Mr. Thomas Combes pay to himself or [. . .]

FORT MARLBRO
OCT^r. Y^r. 7, 1752.

We are
HONBLE SIR & SIRS
Your Most Obed^t. Hble. Servants
ROBERT HINDLEY.
JOHN MASSEY.
THOMAS COMBES.
JOHN BEACH.
ROBERT JACK.
WILLIAM SMITH.

POSTSCRIPT.

This being a Bye Vessell We have Judged proper to defer sending the Consultations till the Return of a ship Ordered hither by your Honour &c^a. but for your satisfaction have Inclosed abstract of those where Captain Hoods affair is mentioned also Copy of a late Letter from him and our Reply thereto.

FORT MARLBRO JUNE 24TH 1752.

ABSTRACT OF A CONSULTATION HELD THIS DAY.

Present.

ROB^t. HINDLEY ESQ^r. DEPUTY GOV^r.
JOHN MASSEY.
PERCIVAL SAY.
WILLIAM SMITH.

A complaint having been made by a Man lately discharged from the Military named Morris McNelly against Captⁿ. John Hood for that having applied to him for his Discharge his contracted time being Expired, one was accordingly drawn Out, but which when he heard read, he refused to sign because it was there Mentioned, he had received his full cloathing and pay to that date, whereas \$ 4100 much had been stopped from him, upon his Refusal, he says Captain Hood, Beat and forcibly caused him to sign the same against his Consent, and afterwards sent an Order, to bring him from his own habitation, and Confined him to the Cockhouse, where he was kept two days, without any Subsistence and not any body suffered to speak to him.

Captain Hood is now called up and Questioned why he Confined the Complainant, he says because he wanted to raise a Mutiny, being asked whether an officer could Confine a Man, who had received his Discharge, without Informing the Deputy Gov^r. especially in such an unprecedented manner, as had been done, by Ordering, that no Person Should go near him, by which means the poor fellow was in Confinem^t. two days without any subsistence upon hearing this Question, he haughtily and arrogantly replyed (at the same time turning himself round, in a very contemptuous manner, and placing his arms in a strutting Posture, as if going away, or giving defiance, saying " I tell You I am a Soldier " which We looking upon as derogating from Our Authority. and an affront to the whole Board, he seeming to Intimate a Sort of Challenge to Us. It is Unanimously agreed, that he be Orderd under Arrest at his own House. his Behaviour not only in this Instance. but ever since he has been here, having been very Turbulent & Insolent.

ORDER'D that McNelly be directed to give his Complaint in Writing.

RICHARD WYATT
Sec^r.

TO THE WORSHIPFUL ROBERT HINDLEY ESQ^r.
 DEPUTY GOVERNOUR & C^a. COUNCIL OF
 FORT MARLBRO.

WORSH^l. SIR & SIRS

As the Honourable the Court of Directors have been pleased to acquaint me that all my Expences are to be on their account from the time of my leaving St. Helena I beg leave to lay before you the state of them as they were, made necessary by my being Obliged to go to Batavia I Persuade myself You will have no objection to my being reimbursed here, I likewise beg leave to Lay before You the Invoice of a ship and her Cargoe which I purchased at Batavia for the Honble Companys Account the Cargo I have put into your Care to be disposed of for them. and the ship (being found convenient by Mr. Combes and me for the further Execution of the Honble Companys Commands) We shall take with us. but I do not make any Demands on you for the ship and Cargoe because the Honble Court of Directors not foreseeing the necessity I was under did not provide me with Orders for what I have done, and shall therefore Refer myself to them and to the President and Council of Fort St. George to whom I Request those accounts may be transmitted by the first Convenient Occasion.

I am
 GENTLEMEN
 Your most Obed^t. humble servant
 DAVID HUNTER.

FORT MARLBRO
 THE 25TH. SEPT^R. 1752.

AN ACCOUNT of Sundry Expences of David Hunter on account of the Honble the East India Company.

To Payed Captain Fernell for the Passage of my self & servants to Batavia	\$ 400	—	—
To Liquors for the Voyage.. .. .	100	—	—
To my Expences at Batavia and necessarys for my voyage from thence to Fort Morlbro	100	—	—
To Mr. Gardens Acct. of Sundry Expences on account the Ship.	815	2	40
To 10 Europeans who assisted in the Voyage from Batavia to this Place	91	—	—
To Captain Furnell for flour Butter &c. at Batavia	47	—	—
To Liquors provided for the Voyage from hence Viz—			
20 Doz. Claret at 13 D ^o . 3 Doz.	260	—	—
20 D ^o . Lisbon at 7 D ^o	140	—	—
6 D ^o . of Mountain 7 D ^o	42	—	—
	<hr/>	442	—
		<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$ 1995	2	40

FORT MARLBRO Sept^r. 25th. 1752.

ERRORS EXCEPTED

DAVID HUNTER.

INVOICE of the Ship Johanna Maria and her Cargo Bought at Batavia for account the Honble the East India Company Viz^t.

The ship with her Rigging, Masts, Sails Anchors Cables &c^a.

Rix Doll^{rs}. 5500 — —

The Cargo Viz^t.

50 Coyans of salt at 10 R. D	DAVID HUNTER	..	..	..	..	500	—	—
6 Do. Dollars 45	..	..	..	..	..	270	—	—
6 Do. Callavances 40	..	..	..	..	..	240	—	—
5½ Do. Jarack 40	..	..	..	..	..	220	—	—

Rix Doll^{rs}. 6730 — —

FORT MARLBRO

Sept^r. 25 1752.

ERRORS EXCEPTED

DAVID HUNTER.

N^o. 2.

TO THE HONBLE THOMAS SAUNDERS ESQ^a.

PRESIDENT AND GOVERNOUR & C^a. COUNCIL

OF FORT ST. GEORGE.

HONBLE SIR & SIRS

Our last Letter to you went from hence by the Onslow under date of the 25th. March and We have since been favoured with Yours of 24 Oct^r. 1751. You acquaint us that the Charterparty Tonnage of the Britania for this Place was filled up by the President and Council of Fort William, and therefore could not send any thing by her, but that We might expect it by a Ship dispatched in January, which We hope will soon arrive.

We have received Sundry Goods by the Honourable Companys Ship Dragon, that arrived here the 23^d. December last, and now desire that You will send us for the service of this Island for the Ensuing Year in Arrack and Rice.

The annual List of the arival and Departure of ships, at & from this Island comes herewith Enclosed.

We are

HONBLE SIR & SIRS

Your most humble Servants

CHA^s. HUTCHINSON.

DAVID HUNTER.

JOHN CLARK.

ST. HELENA

[]th. APRIL 1752.

List of Ships Arrival and Departure to and from St. Helena from 1 April 1751 to the 10 April 1752 Viz^t.

Ships.	Command ^{rs} .	Arrival.	Departure.
A Dolph Sweed.	Frederick Petr. Peterson	1 st . April 1751	5 April 1751.
Stafford	.. .. Felix Baker	.. 11 Do. Do.	.. 24 Do. Do.
Machault	French .. Pallire Christy	.. 15 Do. Do.	.. 19 Do. Do.
Prince Edward	.. .. Robt. Haldane	.. 29 Do. Do.	.. ..
Crown Pr ^{ce} . of Denmark	Dane .. Hendrick Fester	.. 2 May d ^o.	.. ..
Severn	.. .. Richd. Dorril	.. ..	.. 9 May d ^o .
La Villeflix	French .. La Londe	.. ..	.. ..
Fyen	Dane .. Kneed Christ ^r . Ytrecht..	.. ..	.. ..
Maurepas	French .. Beauregard	.. 18 d ^o . do.	.. 28 d ^o . d ^o .
Walpole	.. .. Tho ^s . Fea	.. ..	.. ..
York	.. .. Edward Ward	.. ..	.. ..
La Reine	French .. Place Lieure	.. ..	.. 31 d ^o . d ^o .
Diana	French .. Raucour	.. 25 d ^o . d ^o .	.. 4 June d ^o .
Grantham	.. .. John Oliver	.. 6 June d ^o .	.. 18 d ^o . d ^o .
Bristol	French .. Sangonet	.. ..	.. 16 d ^o . d ^o .
Benjamin	.. .. Geoge Meard	.. ..	.. 18 d ^o . d ^o .
Norfolk	.. .. Nathl. Hancock	.. ..	.. 28 d ^o . d ^o .
La Paix	French .. Derumel	.. ..	.. 24 d ^o . d ^o .
Itchester	.. .. John Tedd	.. 18 d ^o . d ^o .	.. 29 d ^o . d ^o .
Warren	.. .. Alphonsus Glover	.. 24 d ^o . d ^o .	.. 10 July d ^o .
Swallow	.. .. John Bell	.. 26 Nov ^r . 1751	.. 3 Dec ^r . 1751
Dragon	.. .. Henry Kent	.. 23 Dec ^r . d ^o .	.. 7 Jan ^y . d ^o .
Britania	.. .. John Somner	.. ..	.. 26 Feb d ^o .
Rouille	French .. De Sundenens Ernault.	.. 2 ^d Feby. d ^o .	.. 24 d ^o . d ^o .
Caesar	.. .. Mathew Court	.. 23 Do. do.	.. 15 March d ^o .
Queen of Denmark	Dane. Jens Werner Acker- lay.	.. 28 d ^o . d ^o .	.. 10 Do. d ^o .
Lord Anson	.. .. Chas. Foulis	.. 1 March d ^o .	.. 13 d ^o . d ^o .
Vigilant	His .. Rosarior	.. ..	.. ..
Ruby	Majes- .. Knight	.. ..	.. ..
Tartar Pink	tys .. Brett	.. ..	.. 6 d ^o . d ^o .
Siren	ships. .. Mantle	.. ..	.. ..
Onslow	.. .. Thomas Hinde	.. 9 d ^o . d ^o .	.. 22 ^d . d ^o . d ^o .
True Briton	.. .. Henry Broadley	.. 11 d ^o . d ^o.	.. ..
Essex	.. .. Geo: Jackson	.. 17 d ^o . d ^o .	.. 29 d ^o . 1752.
Exeter	.. .. Willm. Fernell	.. 29 d ^o . 1752	.. ..
St. George	.. .. Robt. Robinson	.. 31 d ^o . d ^o.	.. ..
Duke of Parma	French. Dargue Dela Chatre	.. 1 Apr. d ^o .	.. 4 th . Apr. d ^o .
London	.. .. Richd. Allwright	.. 6 d ^o . d ^o.	.. ..
Kent	.. .. George Willson	.. 7 d ^o . d ^o.	.. ..
Anson	.. .. John Ramsey	.. 10 d ^o . d ^o.	.. ..

FRANCIS WRANGHAM,
Secy.

N^o. 3.

TO THE HONBLE THOMAS SAUNDERS ESQ^r.
PRESIDENT AND GOV^r. & C^t. COUNCIL OF
FORT ST. GEORGE.

HONBLE SIR & SIRS

Your Favours of the 15th. Ultimo & 6 Instant have been duely received The Bill of Exchange for Pag^s. (5000) Five thousand Drawn on Buckanjee Cashe-doss's House at Metchlepatam which Your Honour & c^a. Enclosed to me, I have sent thither for Payment and shall give the Presidency Credit for the same, in the Manner you direct.

The Weather being to all appearance settled I now dispatch the George Sloop with a Lading of 350 Bales Callicoes (all Cured) on account and Risque of the Honble Company amounting to Pagodas (23274 12 61) as ^{an} Invoice and Bill of Lading Enclosed, The remaining being 50 will wait on you in a few days by another Conveyance.

I am
HONBLE SIR & SIRS
Your most Obed^t. servant
FOSS WESTCOTT.

INGERAM
28th. DEC^r. 1752.

FORT MARLBROUGH
JAN^{ry}. THE 12th. 1753.

REASONS FOR DISSENTING FROM LAST CONSULTATION WITH RESPECT
TO A VACANCY IN COUNCIL ON M^r. COMBES'S ABSENCE.

Before We think there can be no Vacancy in Council By the Removal of any of its Members to a Distant Place unless that removal is expressly Declar'd by the HONBLE COMPANY'S to be his Entirely leaving the Settlement Which Appears to us to be Contrary to the tenor of this General letter by David Hunter Esq. wherein it is said that if Mr. Combes chuse to return hither his Absence should be no Prejudice to his Standing and that we think Implies that he is still to be deem'd on this Establishment and to receive Pay as 4th. in Council of this Place till the result of the secret Expedition is known.

Because Mr. Combes often declared before his Departure that he should come here again and was appointed Resident of Moco Moco he desir'd and agreed in Council to keep the Residency Open for him in Case of his return and three Company's Serv^{ts}. Order'd in Consequence thereof to take Charge of that Settlement till the Event was more fully Ascertain'd.

Because in all Cases of a Doubtful Nature and surly our Opponents will admitt this to be one we think it safer for us to be on this side of saving our HONBLE MASTERS money which tho' Inconsiderable in the Present Debate we judg'd it our Duty to do it till their Pleasures is known tho' we declare at the Same time We have no Objection to the Appointment of Mr. Marriott provided the Vacancy Could be Prov'd and as that has not been done to our Satisfaction and the Affair Uncertain We Imagine it a little too assuming in us to Define it and better to Wait the Decision of the HONOURABLE COMPANY.

Because further we are of Opinion that to make the Pretended Vacancy Valued Mr. Combes should have formally resign'd the Service as in Mr. Lenox's Case the Vacant Seat at the board Occasioned by his Absence not being fill'd up till the Presidency Gave Publick Notice to the Presidency that he done so, for this and the aforementioned reasons we conclude ourselves Justified in our Dissent.

JOHN MASSEY.
ROBERT JACK.

N^o. 182.

TO THE HONBLE THOMAS SAUNDERS ESQ^a.

PRESIDENT & GOVERNOUR & C^a. COUNCIL AT FORT ST. GEORGE.

HONOURABLE SIR & SIRS

Your Favour of the 4th. April I have received ye. 10 Ultimo Advising me of David Hunters Esq^r. being at the Negrais and your putting me under his Orders which I shall duely observe and likewise transmit him my Accounts and apply to him for what I may want I have advised him of my negotiations with the King of Pegue which are now brought to a happy Issue and only want Mr. Hunter to Sign and seal I presume he will acquaint you with our whole proceedings which I hope will Give you entire Satisfaction.

I am with great Respect

HONBLE SIR & SIRS

Your most Obedient Humble Servant

ROB^t. WESTGARTH.

SYREIAN
AUGUST 2ND. 1753.

The Tragedy of Negrais i (D.G.E. Hall, 1931)

The following extensive extracts (the original footnotes are not included here) are from D.G.E. Hall, 'The Tragedy of Negrais', *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Vol. XXI, Part III, 1931, pp.70-82.

Note: the original has here been split into paragraphs for ease of readability and Hunter's name has been emboldened for ease of reference.

The original may be consulted at:

<https://ia801502.us.archive.org/32/items/inā.ernet.dli.2015.70655/2015.70655.Journal-Of-The-Burma-Research-Society-Vol21.pdf>

Mention of 'Dalrymple' refers to Alexander Dalrymple (1737-1808), *Oriental Repertory* published in London in volumes between 1791 and 1797. See *The Tragedy of Negrais iii* below (page 27).

From the moment when the rumour of French designs upon Burma was first whispered at Madras, [Thomas Saunders, Governor of Madras] had been the moving spirit in the effort to checkmate them. But the early reports of Taylor and Westgarth had caused him to hesitate regarding the advisability of going on with the Negrais scheme ... In the meantime, however, the Directors of the East India Company at home had committed themselves to the new enterprise.

In December 1751 instructions had been despatched to Madras detailing the procedure to be adopted in settling Negrais, and announcing the appointment of **David Hunter**, late Deputy Governor of St. Helena, to take charge of it, and of Thomas Coombes of the Fort

Marlborough Council as second in command. Indeed, the hope was expressed that arrangements for the settlement of the island had already been put in hand. This despatch found Saunders more anxious to throw his whole weight into furthering Stringer Lawrence's operations against the French in the Carnatic, than spare much-needed troops and ships upon a venture, which he had come to regard as of very doubtful value. He made no haste, therefore, to act upon his instructions.

When, however, late in 1753 he received information from Taylor and Westgarth that on account of the strong francophile tendency of the Court of Pegu all hopes of negotiating the cession of Negrais were at an end, his doubts were resolved. Further delay, he felt, would be dangerous, and might "give time to our competitors to render the scheme abortive". So, early in April, **David Hunter** in the *Colchester*, accompanied by the sloops *Porto Bello*, *Cuddalore* and *Fortune* and the snow *Arcot*, left Madras with a considerable company of troops and workpeople bound for Negrais. His instructions were "to take possession of the island in his Brittanuick Majesty's name for the Company." On April 26th, the expedition anchored at its destination.

Thus opened the first act of the tragedy of Negrais. But the full irony of the situation remains to be shown. For on January 2nd, 1753 the Council of the *Compagnie Générale des Indes Orientales* despatched a letter to Dupleix summarily rejecting his grand scheme for French expansion in Burma. The factory concessions already made to the French by the Court of Pegu, they wrote, were sufficient for ordinary purposes of shipbuilding, and would involve no more than a guard of twenty or thirty soldiers. Beyond that he was straitly forbidden to go. His more ambitious scheme, they warned him, would be certain to provoke a further contest with the English; whereas the various nations should live at amity in Asia. And Dupleix, powerless in this case to disregard his orders cursed the commercial mind and abandoned the project.

[Hall's Chapter II] The Early History of the Settlement.

David Hunter's official instructions as head of the expedition to take possession of the island of Negrais display clearly the predominance of the political over the commercial motive in the enterprise. He was first of all to seize the place. Then he was to offer the Court of Pegu a treaty of alliance whereby, in return for the Company engaging to support the King with troops "against his enemies foreign and domestick, by sea or land", the latter was to cede the island, grant permission for the erection of a fortified factory at Syriam, and confirm the articles of trade that Robert Westgarth had already negotiated with the Uporaza [the heir apparent]. **Hunter** was also instructed to demand "suitable satisfaction" for the outrages perpetrated by the Armenian Coja Nicous against British subjects.

For the purpose of these negotiations he was furnished with an official letter and present from the President and Council of Fort St. George to the King of Pegu. Along with these he was also to forward to that King a letter from Muhammad Ali, the candidate supported by the Company for the nawabship of the Carnatic against Dupleix's tool, Chanda Sahib, wherein the writer assured the King that he might safely rely on the fidelity and friendship of the English by whom alone he (Muhammad Ali) had been preserved from the wicked attempts of his enemies.

While preparations were in progress for the despatch of the Negrais expedition, Captain Dugald McEacharn arrived at Madras from Tavoy bringing a proposal from the 'King' of that place for an alliance with the Company in return for which he promised a monopoly of

the trade of his port. ... The Madras Council ... contented itself with a non-committal statement of friendship, and at the same time regretted that its embarrassments in the Carnatic struggle prevented it from having any warlike stores to spare. A letter couched in these terms and addressed to the 'King' was entrusted to **David Hunter** with private instructions that if he had an opportunity to transmit it to its destination, he should give the Court of Pegu to understand that nothing prejudicial to its interests was intended.

The recruitment of men for the expedition to Negrais was particularly difficult. Taylor's experiences in that neighbourhood had given it a bad name. Thomas Coombes, who had been named by the Directors as second in command, excused himself on the plea of ill-health. In his place a young 'writer' in the Company's service at Madras, Henry Brooke, was selected by **Hunter** to proceed with him upon the unwelcome task. (Brooke was 25 years of age at the time. He had served at Madras since August 1751.) The requisite artificers and labourers for building the new station had to be impressed, a 'very despotick act', as Thomas Saunders expressed it in his instructions to Hunter, but one which was forced upon him by the exceptional circumstances. Hence they must be especially well treated, he warned **Hunter**, and, if country labour could be substituted, should be returned to Madras without delay.

On account of the Carnatic struggle Madras could not furnish the expedition with adequate stores of rice and gunpowder. An urgent request was therefore despatched to the 'gentlemen at Bengal' asking them to purvey direct to the new settlement supplementary supplies of those necessaries. Similarly troops for the garrison could ill be spared, and reinforcements, urgently needed by Stringer Lawrence for the defence of Tiruviti against Dupleix's lieutenant Maissin, had to be depleted in order that a guard of 34 Europeans and 72 'coffreys' might sail with the expedition. ['coffrey' = Arabic *Kāfir* — an infidel, unbeliever in Islam. The name applied by English to black Hindu peoples of South India].

On April 26th, 1753 **Hunter's** expedition arrived at the island and anchored off the spot previously indicated by Thomas Taylor as the best site for a settlement. It soon became evident that Taylor's very cursory survey of the locality was of little value. The chosen spot for the erection of a fortified post was entirely without a water supply. After two days' search one was discovered near the north-east point of the island. But the locality was covered with dense jungle, and it took a week of clearing operations before a camp could be pitched and the soldiery disembarked. Even then water had to be carried a quarter of a mile to the camp.

There followed a dreary succession of disasters. The expedition, as we have seen, started out from Madras with inadequate supplies of rice. It had been hoped that food could be procured in the Negrais neighbourhood. So, after the work of pitching the camp and disembarking the troops had been completed, **Hunter** resorted to the mad expedient of cutting down the food supplies of the coffreys and ordering them to fend for themselves by hunting. [D.G.E. Hall adds a footnote here to say that he has accepted the 1759 version of the affair by Dalrymple. **Hunter's** own report of the affair, he says, is specious: 'Our people had work'd so well that I thought proper that evening to give orders for a party of them to go a hunting the next day or otherwise to divert themselves as they lik'd.'

A serious mutiny ensued. The infuriated coffreys seized firearms and ammunition and attacked the Europeans, who were for a time forced to take refuge on the ships. But the mutineers were unable to make effective use of their arms, and a successful counter-attack by the Europeans cleared the camp. The rebels, however, got away into the jungle with a good deal of plunder, and although most of the latter was ultimately recovered, only ten of

the mutineers were captured. The remainder either fled to the mainland or were drowned in attempting to swim the channel.

The loss of so many labourers seriously hindered the work of building the accommodation urgently needed on shore. To make matters worse the wet monsoon broke with great violence soon after the arrival of the expedition. The settlement was regularly flooded at high tide, and a decimating sickness broke out, almost completely suspending operations. Provisions ran so short that when at the end of September **Hunter** despatched his first report to Madras, he represented that his small company was only kept alive by the turtle, which could be caught in abundance on Diamond Island. The 'multitude of tigers', he said, rendered it practically impossible to hunt with success the deer and buffaloes, with which Haing gyi [Negrais] was well stocked. As for trading prospects, these, he thought, were hopeless, since the proximity of the sea rendered it dangerous for country craft, built only for riverine use, to traffic with the island.

It was a melancholy report written by a sick man, who begged to be allowed to return to Madras before the beginning of the next wet monsoon, as he feared he might not survive a further spell of it in so unhealthy a locality. He had sent Henry Brooke to conduct the negotiations with the Court of Pegu. What were the chances of success in that direction, he could not say. Brooke was detained at Syriam by sickness. There was, however, one hopeful sign: on September 9th Thomas Taylor had arrived from Pegu with a royal order to the Governor of Bassein granting permission for the Company to establish a factory there and **Hunter** had accordingly despatched Taylor thither with all speed 'to reside there in the best manner he could for the present'.

The Madras Council on receipt of this despatch hastened to send across a small supply of provisions, and such reinforcements as they could spare — a meagre thirty men. At the same time, they wrote off urgently to Calcutta to forward a cargo of salted meat, rice and other cereals to the harassed settlement. But to **Hunter**'s request to be allowed to return to the Coast to recuperate his health they returned a courteous but firm refusal. He was reminded that the Board of Directors had specially appointed him to command the expedition. This had been done over the heads of the Madras Council which had been given no further powers in the matter than those of affording him 'all the assistance we are able'.

Having provided him with a second-in-command in the person of Henry Brooke, they had, they opined, discharged their full responsibility in respect of the management of the expedition. As the success of the new venture was 'of the utmost consequence', his absence at so early a stage might gravely prejudice it. Instead, they offered him the helpful suggestion that he might take up his residence at Syriam during the monsoon period, and direct operations from that more salubrious spot.

The next letter they received from Negrais came from Henry Brooke. He announced that on December 24th '**David Hunter** Esq., departed this life of a fever which continued eight days.'

The attitude of the Madras Council towards **Hunter** in this business is somewhat intriguing. A mere superficial glance at conditions in South India at the time will be sufficient to show that Madras could spare little help for what it had come to regard as an undertaking of doubtful value. It is possible, also, that Governor Thomas Saunders was piqued at having been granted by the Directors so little discretion in the matter of the Negrais expedition. But the true explanation probably lies in the personality of **Hunter** himself.

Of overweening ambition, he was cold, haughty and difficult to work with. According to Dalrymple he had no real interest in the Negrais scheme, but regarded his appointment there as a stepping-stone to the presidential chair at Madras. Moreover he had influential connexions at home: he was related by marriage to Alderman Baker* of the City of London, who had been Chairman of the East India Company in 1752. Such a man, able to pull strings at home, would not be welcomed back to Madras from the malarial swamp to which for the time being he had been relegated.

* Note: According to Dalrymple the Alderman was 'disqualified' at about the time when **Hunter** was proceeding to Negrais, and thus put an end to the latter's hopes.

Hunter's death brought a most unwelcome problem before the Madras Council. A successor had to be appointed. Members of the Council, in deadly fear of being called upon to take up the unpopular post, waxed eloquent in their efforts to prove that a man of council rank was not required. All except Thomas Saunders were of opinion that the appointment should be given to a man 'skilled in fortification and maritime affairs'. Thomas Saunders alone plumped for a man of council rank: and on the score of the precarious condition of affairs at Negrais he overruled the objections of the rest of the Council. It is interesting in passing to note that what is reported of this discussion shows clearly that commercial considerations were entirely in the background.

But it was one thing to appoint a man, and another thing to persuade him to accept the post. After much difficulty Charles Hopkins, Chief at Devecotah was selected. He put forward the plea of ill-health, and escaped. Two others, Percival and Smith, similarly evaded the much-dreaded task. Finally the Council decided that its only possible course was to leave Henry Brooke in chief command of the station, and appoint Thomas Taylor to the position of second-in-command. The latter was at the time titular Resident at Syriam. Westgarth, having disregarded repeated warnings regarding his extravagance and exorbitant charges for repairs to ships, had early in 1754 been ordered to Madras to explain his conduct. A committee appointed to scrutinize his accounts had pronounced them 'irregular, perplex'd and contradictory, which must proceed from ignorance or something worse'.

In Taylor's place at Syriam it was decided to appoint a shipwright named Henry Stringfellow, who was already in business there privately. But it was laid down that he was to receive no allowances, 'as the station is only nominal and merely to keep up our pretensions to a factory there'. This last point is interesting. Since Westgarth had formally taken possession of the old factory site and enclosed it with a bamboo fence, nothing had been done towards reopening the factory. There is, in fact, ample evidence to show that the Madras Council never intended to reopen it.

Thus although **Hunter**, on setting out upon his ill-starred venture, received official instructions to ask for 'a factory and fortification at Syriam', he was also told to explain to the Court of Pegu that he was establishing a settlement at Negrais as 'a place of more safety', and because 'the risque of Pegu river renders it hazardous for ships of large burthen.' And in a personal letter accompanying the instructions Thomas Saunders wrote for his guidance: 'If you succeed in this affair, I imagine there will not be a necessity of a fortification at Syriam, as all trade and business can, I am informed, be much better carried on from the Negrais'. The factory was never reopened. Stringfellow carried on in his capacity of Resident without allowance until Alaungpava's capture and destruction of Syriam in 1756. That is to say, he was a private shipwright recognised by the Company as its agent for the execution of repairs to its ships at Syriam.

Notwithstanding Thomas Taylor's early description of Negrais as a place 'as valuable as any the King of Pegu has', and one which produced wax, ivory, wood oil, resin, teak and some iron, it was not long before the Madras Council came to realise that not only could no commercial advantages be expected from the new settlement, but its upkeep was an almost intolerable burden. Its toll upon health and even life was nothing short of disastrous. In spite of all efforts to check their devastations, malaria and 'bloody flux' so decimated the working numbers of Europeans and Indians alike as to render the task of carrying on the ordinary work of the settlement practically hopeless.

Thus, although **David Hunter** reached the island on April 26th, 1753, he was still living on board ship on September 20th, when he despatched his first report to Madras. 'We have begun to build some houses for our accommodation,' he wrote, 'and I hope soon to take up my quarters ashore ... This month past we have not been able to do anything, all our artificers and lascars being sick.' And at the end of the same letter; 'Mr. Maul, our surgeon, being very much indispos'd, I have permitted him to return to the Coast for the benefit of his health. This happens extremely unfortunate, as I have scarcely a man about me, either officer or private, but what are sick.'

At first it was hoped that the thorough clearance of the factory site would render it healthier. But this proved illusory. In January 1754 Henry Brooke wrote despondently to the Madras Council: 'We have also had such an universal sickness for some months past raging amongst us, that of the [military] not half have been able to do duty, of 40 lascars [not] 20 in the best days could be muster'd to the works. The 40 Bengal lascars and coolies also, tho' they arriv'd here in November last have fallen sick in proportion, and the Mallabars to a man have been render'd useless.' In the same month Charles Knapton, the engineer sent to supervise the construction of fortifications, wrote that the works designed by **Hunter** would require 500 men working full time for at least six or seven months, but that was impossible, since during the monsoon months there were not five 'well men' on the island.

By that time it was generally agreed that the main cause of the trouble lay in the fact that at every spring tide the whole site was flooded, and with the ebb the shore was 'covered with ooze and small fry, which putrifying must viciate the air.' Such a spot could never develop into a centre of commerce. Worse still, it was overlooked by a hill at the back and was therefore not easily defensible. There was, Brooke reported, a better site at the north-east point of the island, 'wholesome' and with what he was assured by the seamen was a safe and convenient harbour. It could be well defended by placing a battery on the northwest point. He recommended therefore that this new site should be tried.

The Madras Council accepted the recommendation, and in October 1754 authorised the removal of the settlement to the proposed site. Brooke, however, was warned not to construct any 'expensive or capital' works; but to put up merely what was necessary for immediate defence against a 'country enemy'. Until further experience should indicate how the new site was likely to turn out, as little money as possible was to be spent upon it. Meanwhile the whole question was referred home to the Board of Directors.

But the removal of the settlement to a better site afforded no solution to the commercial problem. And although political rather than commercial considerations had been the main cause of the establishment of the settlement, it had been hoped that enough trade would develop there to cover at least the cost of maintenance. This hope also proved illusory.

David Hunter was not long on the island before he realized that if trade was to develop, it could only be through the establishment of a factory at Bassein. Hence, when the Court of

Pegu urged this step as a means of drawing the English away from Negrais, he sent Thomas Taylor to open up trading operations at Bassein. Shortly afterwards he wrote to Madras: 'If ever we shall be so fortunate as to have our affairs settled with the Pegu Government, I think that place Persaim must be the head settlement. It lies in the centre of trade and is able to subject any number of men, whereas the Negrais has neither of these advantages.'

On **Hunter's** death Henry Brooke pressed the same view upon the Madras Council. In January 1754 he wrote of the Negrais settlement: 'I cannot think it will be for many years, if ever, a place of profit to the Hon'ble Company. The country for 80 or 100 miles about is compos'd of islands almost entirely destitute of inhabitants, and cover'd with woods. A fine harbour, plenty of wood and good water, but scarce in the dry season, are the only advantages it can boast of. It is in itself incapable of maintaining a number of inhabitants, and must therefore be dependant on other places for the necessaries of life. And the great river leading to Persaim and Ava, from whence all provisions and merchandise must come, lies open to the sea above us, and is at most times, but particularly in the south-west monsoons, extremely dangerous for the country boats to approach us.'

These inconveniences will ever make provisions scarce. Persaim, which lies about 80 miles from hence, has none of these inconveniencies. It has, by all accounts, the advantage of a fine air, a good rice country about it, a river safe and navigable for the largest ships, and is capable of maintaining any number of inhabitants. I am therefore of opinion, if ever the Hon'ble Company may reap a profit from the trade of this country, they must make Persaim the head settlement.'

The Madras Council was not at first in a hurry to act upon these proposals. To **Hunter** they returned an inconclusive answer, though at the same time suggesting that he might enquire whether Bassein was a suitable place to which trade might be transferred from Syriam. But, as time went on, and prospects at Negrais failed to improve, the idea began to chrysalise of opening up a big trading centre at Bassein ...

... **Hunter** in his first letter from Negrais warned the Madras Council to place no confidence whatever in the rebel government. 'The reputation of our forces,' he wrote, 'seem'd at first to fling them into some consternation, and their fears, I believe, induc'd them to flatter Mr. Westgarth with fair promises. But notwithstanding all we have done, and the concessions they have made, I am yet far from depending on their sincerity. The trouble they are at present involv'd in with the former lords of the country about Ava takes up most of their attention, and not without reason, if I am rightly informed. The family, who lately possess'd the government, have a strong party and gain ground daily; and I think it is very probable they may in a short time recover their kingdom again. The present King of Pegu was formerly a silversmith at Syriam, and his brother, the Upparajah, was a writer in the Alfantiga. I am told the people in general talk contemptuously of them, so far as they dare under the yoke of an absolute tyrant. It seems a mob rais'd him to the dignity, and it is not unlikely the same fluctuating spirit may soon pull him down again. If this should happen, our presents and our sollicitation has [sic] hitherto been to very little purpose.'

As soon as possible after the founding of the Negrais settlement **Hunter** deputed Henry Brooke to Syriam with the royal present and the official letters from the Madras Council to the King of Pegu. Brooke took with him a signed and ratified copy of the articles of trade previously negotiated by Robert Westgarth with the Uporaza. He was instructed, to carry out his business in concert with Westgarth. The Court of Pegu, however, refused to have anything to do with Brooke. It would not negotiate with a subordinate.

Instead, Westgarth was despatched to Negrais with a royal order for **Hunter** himself to appear at Court. When this invitation was politely refused, the Pegu authorities began a campaign of systematic obstruction to English shipbuilding and repairing operations at Syriam. When Westgarth appealed to the Government, publicly it granted all his requests for workmen and supplies; privately it instructed its local officials to refuse them. Native labour was terrorised into boycotting the English, and the Company's own lascars even were enticed away.

On January 11th, 1754, with affairs at this pass, and **Hunter** dead, Henry Brooke wrote despondently from Negrais: 'The King and Rajah, as well as Peguers in general, [are] extremely jealous of foreigners, since the time of the Portuguese, who defended their fort at Syriam for many years against their whole nation. It will not therefore be an easy matter to prevail on them to ratify the Articles agreeable to Mr. **Hunter**'s plan.'

'The King of [Pegu is] only trifling and drawing us,' wrote Westgarth at the same time from Syriam, 'for I plainly perceive they have no inclination to com[ply] with our demands any further than what fear induces them to.' A little later he reported that the chief objections raised by the Court of Pegu to the Articles were to the clauses granting to the Company most-favoured-nation treatment and the right to import goods duty free. Brooke therefore was authorized to reply — in writing, not in person — that these privileges constituted 'no more than what is granted to us on this Coast by the Mogull, who is sensible that by this indulgence we have been induced to carry on a very extensive trade. He was also to emphasize the fact that the Company offered the King reciprocal trading advantages in all its settlements. This, we may remark, was far from being a quid pro quo, since the amount of trade carried on by natives of Burma at the Company's stations in India was negligible. ...

The Tragedy of Negrais ii (Madras Despatches 1751-1754)

The following extracts are from Henry Dodwell, *Calendar of the Madras Despatches, 1744-1755*, Madras Government Press, 1920.

Once again David Hunter's name has been emboldened for ease of reference.

- Despatch from the Company to Thomas Saunders, etc., Committee. East India House. December 6, 1751. [*Letter Book, Vol. 28, pp. 260-261. (India Office transcript.)*]

Hope that arrangements have been made for establishing a settlement on the Negrais. **David Hunter**, late Deputy Governor of St. Helena, is appointed Chief of this new settlement and sails to Fort Marlborough on the *Exeter*, whence he will proceed to take charge, should a settlement have actually been made. Thomas Combes of the Council at Fort Marlborough, is to be Second in the Negrais, with succession to **Hunter**. Cannot fix their salaries until the Company knows how the measure has progressed. Meanwhile they are to be maintained at the Company's expense and all due respect paid to him. If necessary a vessel should be sent to carry them from Fort Marlborough to the Negrais. In case of any accident befalling the *Durrington* on which Cockel and Lawrence sail, Saunders is to form a Committee with one or two of his Council and Robins to carry out the orders regarding the Negrais. Measures should be taken to secure the Company's former possessions and privileges in Pegu, as the Negrais settlement will facilitate trade with that country.

- Abstract of Despatch from Thomas Saunders, etc., to the Company. Fort St. George. April 19, 1753. received April 6, 1754. [*Coast and Bay Abstracts, Letters Received, Vol. 5, pp. 402-403. (India Office transcript.)*]

The *Godolphin* takes 922 bales, redwood and 1,200 bags of saltpetre at half-freight, and proceeds to Sumatra to complete her tonnage with pepper. The *Chesterfield* sailed on February 25. The *Prince George* took salt, rice, 27 topasses and 21 coffree women to Sumatra, and will return with timber and planks from Batavia for the works. On April 5, **Hunter** proceeded on his expedition with the *Colchester*, *Arcot* snow, *Porto Bello* and *Fortune* sloops, and was to meet the *Cuddalore* at Vizagapatam. Thomas Winter succeeded to the command of the *Delawar*, vice Captain Dominicus who died at Galle. Payment of her repairs to the Dutch at Negapatam. Advance to ships' Captains. Sumatra affairs. Have sent on the *Don Carlos*, 25,000 Pags. for Vizagapatam, and 400 candies of redwood to Bengal. Broadcloth sold last October. The discount of 9 per cent expiring the 20th instant, prolonged it to the last of this month, as the major part had been cleared in this interval, and the remains likely to be so. Another inducement was the small stock of money for the great demands and necessary expenses.' Short delivery of rice and jute rope from Bengal asserted to have been due to thefts on the boats at Calcutta before loading. These allegations 'seem probable from the several instances of the like deficiencies in many vessels from Bengal this season.' The *Godolphin*'s invoice amounts to 70,082 Pags.; diamonds registered, 9,616 Pags. The cash balance is 32,052 current Pags. and 5 Madras Pags. Certificates granted for 722 Pags. on account of the estate of Major William Kinneer.

- Abstract of Despatch from Thomas Saunders, etc., to the Company. Fort St. George. October 29, 1753. received May 7, 1754. [*Coast and Bay Abstracts, Letters Received, Vol. 5, pp. 409—418. (India Office transcript.)*]

Relevant excerpt from a very lengthy despatch:

Requested Bengal to send a ship to the Negrais to relieve the *Colchester*, as **Hunter** considers that a Europe ship should always be with them. 'An organ, it is desired, may be permitted to be sent them and passage granted to an organist.' 'Permission money. — They desire directions whether it is to be demanded for children going to Europe for education. Passengers on this ship are Captains De Gingins and Clarke, Mrs. Cassamajor and four children.'

- Separate Despatch from Thomas Saunders, etc., to the Company. Fort St. George. October 29, 1753. [*Public Despatches to England, Vol. 19, pp. 52-65. (Copy 13½ pp.) Damaged in places. Also Coast and Bay Abstracts, Letters Received, Vol. 5, pp. 419-422. (India Office transcript.)*]

Have reserved political and military affairs for separate treatment. Have just received news, dated September 20, of the expedition to the Negrais: **Hunter** arrived there April 26, and at once landed some of his forces. After 2 or 3 days he found good water in the south-east of the island, and cleared the ground there for his settlement. But his coffrees mutinied, seized arms and ammunition, and took to the woods; 10 have since been captured, and most of the others are believed to have been starved or drowned in an attempt to escape to Pegu. **Hunter** believes the King of Pegu's promises to be dictated solely by his fear of the Burmese Prince, who has a strong army and is thought likely to recover the kingdom; nor has the King of Pegu much influence with his own people. **Hunter** desires that a Residency should be established at

Persaine, as the principal settlement. He desires a supply of men, etc., and permission to leave the Negrais during the sickly season, as his health is bad. He has sent some timber he thinks fit for gun-carriages. The coffee mutiny 'which we were greatly apprehensive of' will have hindered the progress of the buildings; and the labourers must be replaced. **Hunter**'s diary is too long to be copied in time to be sent by this ship. The King of Pegu was at first hostile; the settlement will doubtless prejudice the port of Syrian; and as the King cannot be trusted, the place should be fortified and garrisoned without delay. Then neither the Burmese nor the Peguans will be able to dislodge us; but an open rupture should be avoided, and our conduct should be such as to show that we intend no evil to the kingdom. The climate of the Negrais is reported unhealthy, especially in the monsoon; but as the people aboard ships lying a short way off shore had neither fevers nor fluxes, it is thought that the island may be healthy when cleared of jungle. There is good water; and plenty of turtle may be had on Diamond island, a short way off. As there is no one suitable to replace **Hunter**, he will be advised to live at Persaine or Syrian during the monsoon. Shall leave **Hunter** to decide whether or not to make Persaine the head-quarters. Will cultivate trade to the utmost; but no immediate benefit can be expected. **Hunter** has not yet been able to ascertain whether the place is suited to repair and careen large vessels. Have desired Fort William to send a ship to replace the *Colchester*, with lascars and work-people, rice and provisions. Shall send 30 soldiers thither, and 2 palankins as a present for the King. ...

- Despatch from the Company to Thomas Saunders, etc. East India House. January 23, 1754. [*Public Despatches from England, Vol. 57, pp. 59-86 (Original 28 pp.)*]

Cite despatch of November 28 and December 19, 1753. The Coast and China ships sailed from England in December 1753. Bengal ships are to touch at Madras to land despatches and to exchange treasure for coin of which a quantity should be provided. Bengal should be urged to despatch their home bound ships early as delay in their arrival in England hinders shipping for the current season. The charterparty rule that Bengal ships are not to be despatched home between March 11 and November 21, need not be rigidly observed. Regret to hear the misfortune that has befallen the *Colchester*, *Delawar*, and *Brilliant*. The *Yorkshire Grey* purchased for the Sumatra service is to be disposed of if the *Brilliant* is heard of again. No ships are to be purchased except under absolute necessity. The surgeon, carpenter and gunner of the *Bombay Castle* should be allowed to remain in India only if they will be of particular service in the Company's affairs. Are much disappointed that the *Delawar* only brought 216 instead of 600 slaves from Madagascar. If commanders so desire, the Coast and Bay ships may each be laden with 150 tons of saltpetre, provided room is found for all bale goods.

Have already sent 198 chests of bullion (£195,676-16-0) and 3 chests of gold (£31,576-19-8). Consign by the *Denham*, *York*, *Norfolk* and *Anson* 6 chests of gold (£76,000) together with silver for Bengal. An estimate to be made of what money will be needed for the Coast investment, for the payment of any debt, and for the discharge of expenses, until the arrival of the next season's ships, and no more bullion than what is absolutely necessary for these purposes is to be retained. Articles indented for must be precisely described or they cannot be sent. Have sent 1,230 bales according to the Company's scheme of exporting as much woollen goods as can be sold. If Madras is overstocked some may perhaps be sent to Bombay. Send as much lead and iron as ships can carry, as they sell for a good profit. Direct that the system of selling all goods by public outcry be maintained. The names of the consignee, and consignor will in future be included in manifests of coral, silver, etc.

On some articles of the Madras investment, there is a considerable loss, and the profit on the whole is too small to cover the expenses of the Presidency. The last investment was as large as

could be expected but was poor in quality and high in price. The quantity, quality and prices of the Northern investment must be attended to by the Northern settlements who are to be supplied with ample funds. The method of providing the investment is so private as to admit of unfair practices. In future a month's notice is to be given for merchants to send in written tenders, the best of which are to be accepted.

As the scheme for an English settlement on the Negrais is no longer a secret, it may be dealt with in the general letters. Note that Taylor, Westgarth, **Hunter** and Henry Brooke have been sent thither with vessels, etc., and that the French will try to render the project abortive. Should this prove a failure, the offer of a settlement at Tenasserim should be accepted if possible so as to prevent the Dutch and French gaining a hold there. The quarrel between the Nawab of Arcot and the King of Mysore is the more unfortunate as it has caused a great increase in the English advances to the Nawab. Urge the necessity of securing as speedy a reimbursement as possible.

Madras and Fort St. David fortifications must be completed and the Black Town defences specially strengthened, so as to induce rich country people to settle there for safety. The inhabitants of Fort St. George ought to contribute to the cost. ...

- Despatch from Thomas Saunders, etc., to the Company. Fort St. George. February 7, 1754. [*Public Despatches to England, Vol. 21, pp. 18-22 (Copy 5 pp.)*]

This goes by the *Dragon*. Cite general despatch [of October 29, 1753] by the *Delawar*. Shipping news. The French are despatching 1 and the Danes 2 ships for Europe. Could not sell the broadcloth by public outcry but will try again next month.

David Hunter died at the Negrais on December [24], 1753 and Henry Brooke takes his place. The Negrais is extremely unhealthy except on ship-board in the harbour. Many of the work people are dead and only half the soldiers are fit for duty. Provisions are scarce and have to be sent from Madras or Bengal, and the works are backward. The Treaty with the Pegu King is incomplete. He has sent his Minister Coja Necoos but is not reconciled to this settlement and hopes that the difficulties will compel the English to give it up. Its harbour is reported to be unapproachable except at particular seasons. The place is not as favourable to trade as was first represented. Have therefore instructed Brooke merely to hold it, but meanwhile to procure from the King an exclusive right to Persaine, a place eminently suited for a settlement. Major Lawrence's health has been broken down by continuous service for 2 years. Have written to Bengal to relieve him. Though the Emperor has defeated the Vizier, the troubles have not ended. The French have rejoined Salabat Jang and the Nana is at Poona. Salabat Jang is said to be coming southwards, but he is distressed for money and is afraid of rebellion. In consequence of the arrears due to the French, he has granted them the countries of Rajahmundry and Chicacole which they will probably usurp as their own. Nawab Jaffar Ali Khan is defying their authority and the French have to force him to obedience if they are to be benefitted by the grant. The Nawab's army was cantoned for the winter on the Tanjore frontier. The French attacked Trichinopoly but were repulsed with a loss of 400 Europeans. The Marathas attempted to plunder the Tanjore country, but they have been forced to retire. The Nawab's troops are near Trichinopoly covering convoys of provisions. The French are at Srirangam, Hear that Balaji Rao is coming here and is said to have offered, if he does not come in person, to send the Nawab 20,000 horse; but all this is very uncertain. ...

- Separate [?] Despatch from Thomas Saunders, etc., to the Company, Fort St. George. March 9, 1754. [*Public Despatches to England, Vol. 19, pp. 66—69 (Copy 3½ pp.)*]

Regarding the Negrais, the situation of the place is not so favourable as was represented to the Company; it is so unhealthy that even the Peguans cannot remain there for long together, and everyone is afraid of going there. Percival, Hopkins and Smith all declare that their health is too bad to allow them to succeed **Hunter**; and Council considers that there is no need for one of Council to reside there. Have recalled Westgarth from Syrian; his accounts appear very irregular. Have appointed Thomas Taylor to succeed him.

The Moghal is said to have made peace with his Vizier. The French have succeeded in inducing Salabat Jang to move from Aurangabad to 'Calacheputra' on his march towards the Carnatic; but it is believed that lack of money, the likelihood of rebellion, and the opposition of Balaji Rao will prevent his march. Saiyid Lashkar Khan has resigned in disgust. Have already reported that the rents of Rajahmundry and Chicacole were mortgaged to the French, but that Nawab Jaffar Ali Khan refused to obey the orders. He and Vijayaram Raz wrote to Saunders offering to defend the country if a force of Englishmen were sent to their help; but the situation in the Carnatic would not allow it. Jaffar Ali has now gone to Hyderabad, and Vijayaram Raz has accepted the government from the French, so that our settlements are still undisturbed. Possibly he will quarrel with the French when the revenue falls due for payment. ...

- Despatch from Thomas Saunders, etc., to the Company. Fort St. George. November 10, 1754. [*Public Despatches to England, Vol. 20. pp. 1-51 (Copy 51 pp.)*]

... As the *Brilliant* snow is believed lost, the *Prince George* is the only ship for Coast service. ... The surgeon, gunner and carpenter of the *Bombay Castle* have been sent to the Negrais. ...

The affairs at the Negrais have not improved. Taylor has returned here sick; Knapton has gone sick to Bengal; Lieutenant Bilhock's life is despaired of; the doctor is very ill; and few men are capable of duty. The selection of a marshy site surrounded by woods perhaps accounts for this. The north-east point is said to be healthy. Persaine is decidedly healthier but is 70 miles up the river. In April last, an agreement was made with the deputies of the Uppu Raja by which the English would receive the Negrais and a settlement at Persaine with a district round it; but it has not yet been ratified. Have sent the King of Pegu and Uppu Raja palankins, etc., as presents. Brooke should however cultivate friendship with the Burmese also as they might defeat the Peguers at any time. Will send by the January ship the plans of the Negrais and Persaine.

The fortifications at Madras and Fort St. David will be carried on by Engineer John Brohier. The Devikottai fort has been repaired. Have sanctioned the construction of a wall from the flag-staff on Martin's battery to 'Tonary's' [Tournery's] battery at Vizagapatam; and Thomas Heath is in charge of the work. ...

Supplement: Bombay cannot help in the disposal of Madras broadcloth, as they still have a large quantity unsold and as they expect twice what they indented for. Captain Bonham requests that the deficiency of 33 coils of cordage may be adjusted in England. Have ordered the payment to the heirs of **David Hunter** of the sums of 2,000 Rs. and 110 Pags. which he had disbursed on the Company's account but not entered in the books. Recommend that another Rs. 2,000, his private money which he lost in the coffee insurrection, may be paid to his heirs in consideration of his services. ...

The Tragedy of Negrais iii (Dalrymple's Account, 1759)

Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, London, 1793, pp.125-128 – available online at:

<https://ia802705.us.archive.org/17/items/orientalrepertor01dalr/orientalrepertor01dalr.pdf>

The italicisation of names is Dalrymple's own.

The Chief, Mr. *Hunter*, was a Person of Capacity, but of a very unfit Disposition for such an Undertaking, extremely haughty, and so bigotted to his own Opinion, that he ridiculed whatever any other proposed, even when his Sentiments were asked: Besides his Hopes did not rest in the Success of the Expedition, but he considered himself as assured of the Government of Madrass; So that when an Accident evinced that this Hope was vain,* He was not only greatly disappointed, but chagrined at the Reflection, that this Event, which he had considered as certain, and on which he had built, lessened his Influence amongst those under his Eye, whom he had endeavoured to keep in dependence, by the hope, or fear, of what might happen, on his removal to a more exalted Station.

* Capt. *Felix Baker*, Brother to *The Alderman*, who was, in 1752, *Chairman* of the *East India Company*, married a Daughter-in-law of Mr. *Hunter*; *The Alderman* disqualified in, or about, 1753, and consequently all Mr *Hunter's* Hopes, of the Government of Madrass, were overturned!

I am far from asserting that they were ever well grounded.

[William Baker (1705-1770) (knighted in 1760), became an alderman of London in 1739. He was an MP from 1747 to 1768. He was a director of the East India Company in 1741–5, 1746–50 and 1751–53. He was deputy chairman in 1749 and 1751–52, chairman in 1749–50 and 1752–53. (Annoyingly, his family connections on *Ancestry* do not currently list a brother Felix – my hope having been to establish the identity of the Hunter daughter-in-law, maybe one of Rebecca's children by her previous marriage?)]

Unless there be a Dependence on the Chief, every thing must be clogged; when Difficulties occur, they will be made impossibilities; for this reason every Person engaged on such Expeditions, should have their Preferment dependant on the recommendation of the Chief. Mr. *Hunter* was not of a Disposition, to gain the Affection of the People under him; and he, soon after his arrival, did a thing equally injurious and unreasonable to the *Coffrys* [those of mixed-race] whom he would not supply with Provisions, in common with the rest, as there was a great scarcity; but obliged them to rely on the precarious Fortune of the Chace: The Consequence naturally to be expected, was not guarded against, and when they rose, they easily got Arms, and drove the *Europeans* aboard the Vessels.

The loss of the *Coffrys*, of whom some were killed, and many took shelter in the Woods, from whence they got over to the *Main*, was very sensibly felt in the retardation of the *Works*, necessary for the General Accommodation, and Security; Luckily, none made an Hostile Attempt, (which could scarce have failed of Success). But the ravages of Disease, from want of Provisions and Shelter, were very great.

Mr. *Hunter*, the Chief, who for some time, had been sensible of his approaching end, had desired that he might be relieved; or at least that *some one, capable* of the *Trust*, might be sent to succeed him, declaring the Person, who had gone over with him as his Assistant, was *incapable*. Mr. *Hunter* was not relieved; but his *Death* made the appointment of a *new Chief* necessary: As *Negrais* had got the character of being *unhealthy* and as there was no prospect of advantage falling down from Heaven upon it, many were pointed out, but all declined; some on one, some on another pretence; It is a Custom in The Company's Service, that

Seniority precludes every consideration of Capacity, but as Persons, with this infallible Testimony of Perfection, were unwilling to proceed to so uncomfortable a Place, as *Negrais* was described to be, The Business ended in giving the Appointment to the Person, who had gone over with Mr. *Hunter*, and whom on his *death-bed* he had publickly represented as *incapable*: as He was also of an inferior rank, It could not be expected that much attention should be paid to his representations, of the Necessities of a *Settlement*, which had been so miserably neglected, in the appointment of such a *Chief*.

I have heard Governor *Pigot* declare, that in his opinion, some Person of Rank should have been sent over, with full powers to conclude a Treaty with the Government; and that the Establishment, if formed, should have been pursued with vigour; avowing that he would willingly have accepted of such an appointment; I dare say, if he had been sent, Success would have attended the Enterprise; as He is well qualified for such an office: and as, if He had been sent, it would not have been neglected, in the manner it was.

It is now time to end this Letter, which has run to a length much beyond what I expected: I trust what has been said will be sufficient to shew, how ill the *Negrais Expedition* has been conducted, and I shall therefore only add, that a Treaty, as it is called, was concluded in 1757 ...

July 1759.

POSTSCRIPT

Some idea of the value of the East Indiaman captain's appointment (see also pp.1 and 2 above) may be gathered from Capt. Eastwick's autobiography (Captain R.W. Eastwick, *A Master Mariner. Being the Life and Adventures of Captain Robert William Eastwick*, Fisher Unwin, London, 1891):

The captain of an East Indiaman, in addition to his pay and allowances, had the right of free outward freight to the extent of fifty tons, being only debarred from exporting certain articles, such as woollens, metals, and warlike stores. On the homeward voyage he was allotted twenty tons of free freight, each of thirty-two feet; but this tonnage was bound to consist of certain scheduled goods, and duties were payable thereon to the Company. As the rate of freight in those days was about £25 a ton, this privilege was a very valuable one. Of course much depended upon the skill and good management of the individual commander, the risk of the market, his knowledge of its requirements, and his own connections and interest to procure him a good profit. In addition to the free tonnage, he further enjoyed certain advantages in the carrying of passengers, for although the allowance of passage money outward and homeward was arbitrarily fixed by the Company, there being a certain number of passengers assigned to each vessel, and their fares duly determined, ranging from £95 for a subaltern and assistant-surgeon to £235 for a general officer, with from one and a half to three and a half tons of free baggage, exclusive of bedding and furniture for their cabins, yet it was possible for captains, by giving up their own apartments and accommodation, to make very considerable sums for themselves. In short, the gains to a prudent commander averaged from £4000 to £5000 a voyage, sometimes perhaps falling as low as £2000, but at others rising to £10,000 and £12,000. The time occupied from the period of a ship commencing receipt of her outward cargo to her being finally cleared of her homeward one was generally from fourteen to eighteen months, and three or four voyages assured any man a very handsome fortune.