

**DOCUMENTATION OF THE BRITISH SHIPS AND BATTLE WITH THE DANES  
ON MARCH 3, 1801, ST. THOMAS, DANISH WEST INDIES**

Christopher H. Donnithorne

## Abstract

On March 3, 1801, the British Frigate, *Arab*, was patrolling her station to the south of the island of St Thomas, two days after receiving orders to stop all Danish, Swedish and Russian ships. She had already been busy, taking a Danish Schooner the day before. This day, she had closed and spoken to the British Privateer, *Experiment*, and in the afternoon sighted another sail to the southwest.

Going to investigate, she encountered the Danish Brig of War *Lougen* who was thought to be attempting to get into St Thomas. A running engagement of about forty minutes took place before the *Lougen* managed to escape under the guns of St Thomas.

Using exclusively British sources, this paper exploits the available records to provide a detailed picture of the *Arab*, the ship, and her state before the action. Captain John Perkins turns out to have been an extraordinary man, and his background, and that of his key officers, is investigated, and an assessment made of the ship's company. A detailed explanation is provided of just how the action was fought, and further information documents what happened, to ships and people, after the event.

## The SHIPS

### *British Man of War, HMS Arab*

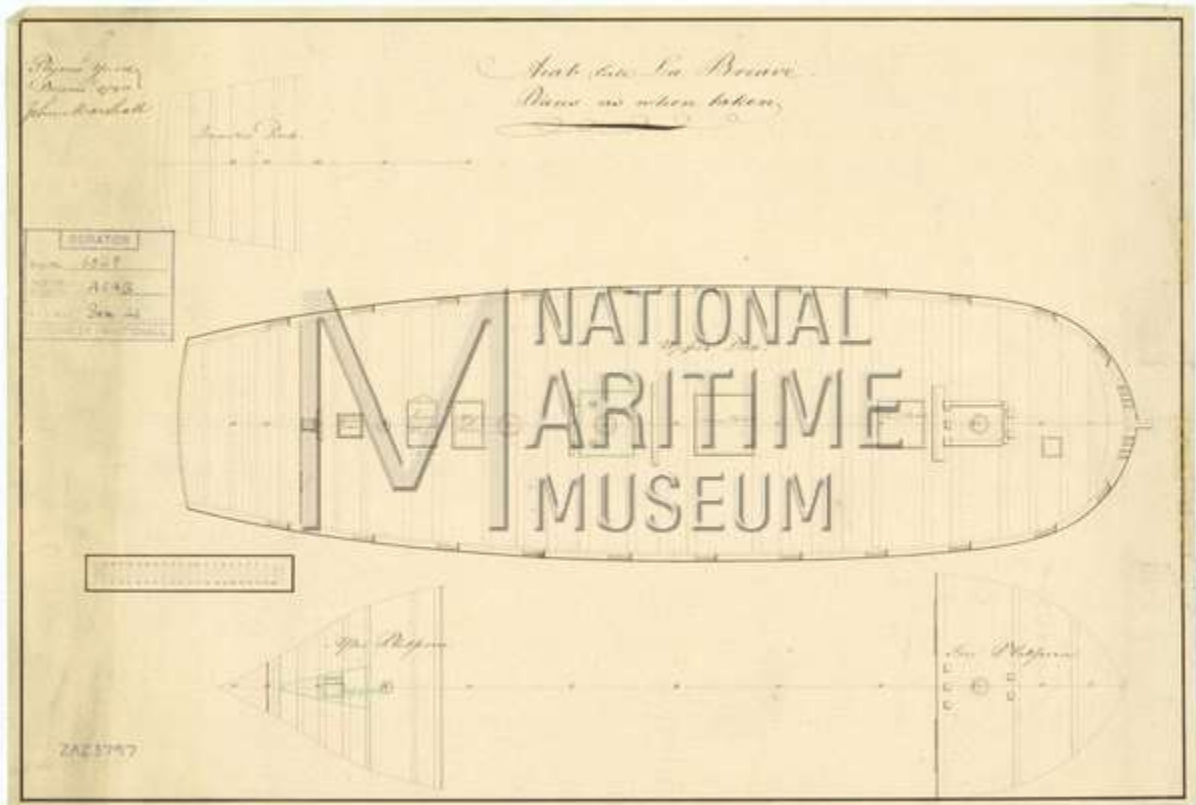
His Majesty's Ship (HMS) *Arab* was a French privateer named *Le Brave* (AL, MSS302/5, 1798), build ca.1797 at Nantes (Winfield 2005:234) and subsequently captured by the British 5th rate *Phoenix* of 36 guns, off Cape Clear on April 24, 1798. As the Captain of the *Phoenix* recorded in his log:

“½ past 3 PM saw a ship to the southward at 4 bore up and made sail in chace ½ past 10 short[ene]d sail & cleared ship for action at 11 came alongside of a French Privateer & commenced action at 1/4 past 11 she struck her colours. Proved to be the *Le Brave* of 18 guns & 160 men. Sent an officer to take possession of her” [TNA ADM51/1243, entry dated April 25, 1798]

She was sent in to Plymouth where she arrived on May 24, 1798 (TNA ADM108/9, p749).



**Figure 11** HMS *Arab* formerly *Le Brave*. Body plan, as taken [NMM, J6553]

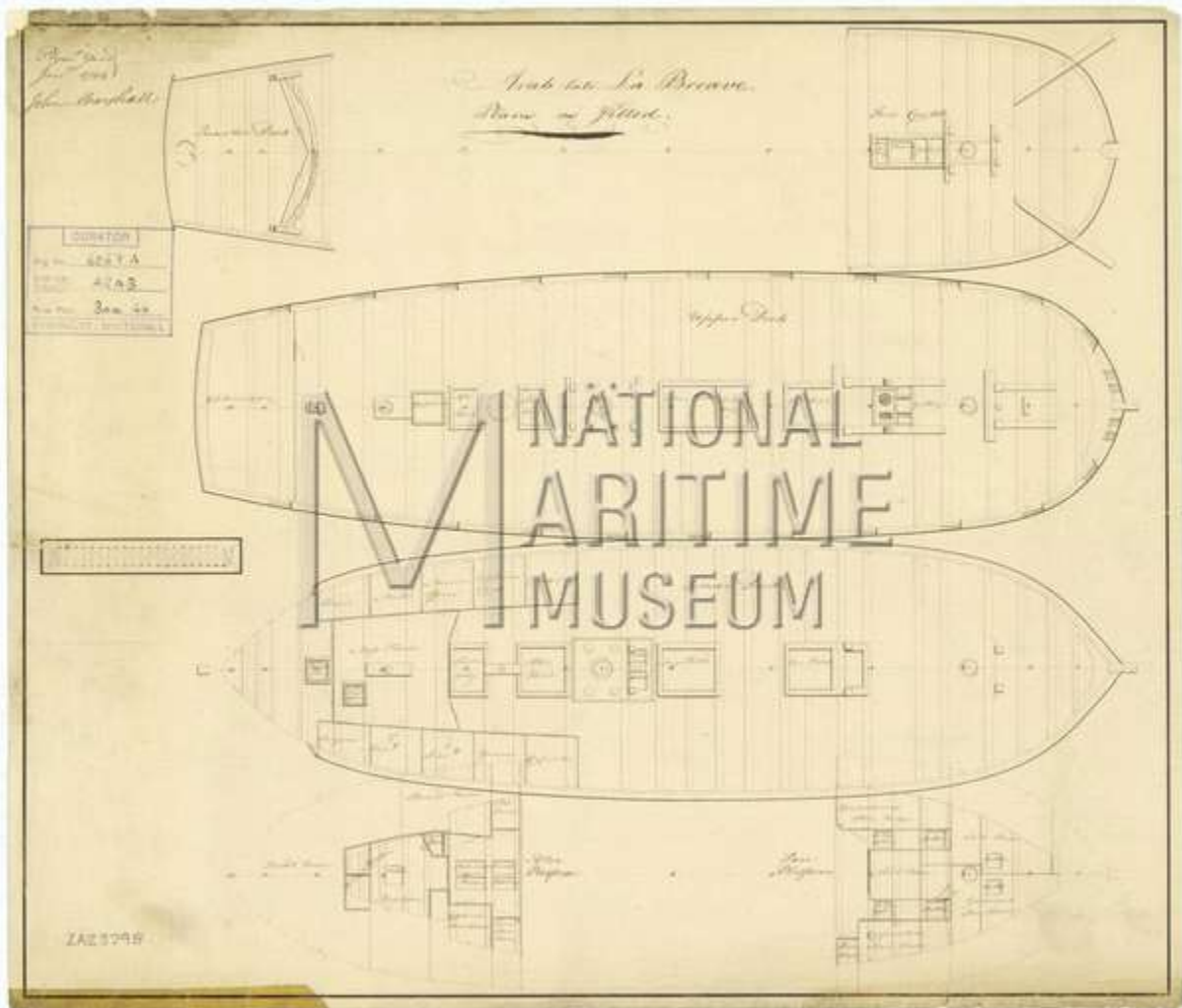


**Figure 22** HMS Arab formerly *Le Brave*. Deck Plan, as taken. [NMM, J6552]

Modified under the supervision of John Marshall, the Master Shipwright at Plymouth Yard, she was registered on the List of the Navy on July 24, 1798, and established as a 6<sup>th</sup> rate with a complement of 155 men (AL MSS302/5, 1798), the armament was to consist of 20 [in number] nine pounder [long] guns [4.082 kg] and two [in number] thirty-two pounder carronades [14.515 kg] (TNA WO55/1832).



**Figure 33** HMS Arab formerly *Le Brave* - body plan, as modified [NMM, J6550]



**Figure 44** HMS Arab formerly *Le Brave*. Deck plan, as fitted 1798

Dimensions:

Length of the Gundeck	109' 11"	[33.503 m]
Length of the Keel	88' 10"	[27.076 mg]
Extreme Breadth	32' 8 ½ "	[9.969 m]
Depth in the Hold	14' 0 ½ "	[ some sources 14' 32] [4.28 m]

Burthen	505 tuns [some sources 505 48/94]
	[c. 5772.476 kg] ??

She left dockyard hands on April 8, 1799.

### *The British Privateer, Experiment*

Both the Captain's and Master's logs record that the *Arab* had spoken to the *Experiment*, described in both records as a "Privateer of Bermuda" (TNA ADM51/1406 and TNA ADM52/2701 respectively, entries dated 4 March 1801), on the day of the action. However, from these records alone, there is no evidence that the *Experiment* played any part in the action itself, and it would have been very unusual if she had. Indeed, the previous year, the Commander in Chief (Rear Admiral Duckworth), responding to a complaint about privateers from the Governor of St Croix, wrote 'I much fear that I shall not be enabled to ... [get] ... further information from the Privateers in question as I am totally ignorant of their movements and equally so of the Ports to which they belong' (TNA ADM1,323, letter to Admiralty, dated 11 July 1800). Privateers may have been licenced by the state, but they were privately financed with the expectation of making an operating profit. For a number of obvious reasons, assisting British warships would not have featured in the business plan, not least because the chance of receiving any payment for resulting damage would have been virtually non-existent.

It is possible that the licences for such privateers could be found in the various Admiralty Court records, but such a search is beyond the scope of the current research.

### *Danish Ships*

The research objective was to search British archives for the British ships. For completeness, included here are the few pointers found in those archives, to the Danish ships. The Captain of the *Arab*'s log records 'the Danish Man of War Brig & Schooner', and only the Brig was engaged, while the Master mentions only the Brig. It is pure assumption, based on the names given in the research brief, that these two ships are the *Lougen* and *Den Aarvaagne*: neither are mentioned by name.

The *Lougen* is addressed below. Of the Danish ship named *Den Aavaagne*, presumed to be the Schooner referred to in the Captain's Log, the *Aarvaagne* (presumed to be the same) was taken at St Croix on April 1, 1801 (TNA ADM1/323, report dated April 1, 1801). There is no evidence in these sources that she had any part to play in the action.

## **The PEOPLE INVOLVED in the ACTION**

### *General*

The tracing of people, even commissioned officers, during this period is notoriously fraught. The following notes about the officers reflect the entries currently held in the *Naval Biographical Database* (NBD), using 'intelligence gathering' software. To avoid undue interruption of the text, individual sources for information quoted from the NBD, are not recorded here. Due to the method of data entry used for the NBD, there is no guarantee of accuracy or completeness.

### *Captain John Perkins*

Born in Jamaica ca.1745, John Perkins was "described as a mulatto, the child of a white father and a black mother"(Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [ODNB]: online edition). With the probability that his mother was a slave, this would have meant that Perkins, too, was legally a slave, and his formal education necessarily limited, "he could write only to the extent of signing his name mechanically" (Lecky: 1/102).

The sources provide confused signals about the next period of his life. ODNB records that "Perkins must already have been an experienced mariner by the outbreak of the

American War of Independence in November 1775, when he entered HMS *Antelope*, flagship at Jamaica, as a pilot, and later claimed to have been ‘from his youth ... engaged in the Sea Service’ ...”, and notes his first command as the *Punch* Schooner, between 1778 and 1779 (ODNB). Another source notes appointment to command the *Punch* after receiving his commission which seems most unlikely (Naval Chronicle [NC]: 27/352). No such appointment or ship (on the List of the Navy) has yet been identified, which raises the distinct possibility that Perkins could, perhaps, have been employed as a semi-official Privateer Captain at this stage. Certainly his fame was spreading, and hence his nickname on the Jamaica station, “Jack Punch” (Lecky: 1/102).

What is certain is that, in October 1781, he was appointed to command the *Endeavour*, a Schooner recently purchased at Kingston, Jamaica “as an Advice Boat and for gaining intelligence” (TNA ADM1/242, report from Adm Parker dated Nov 16, 1781). She was commissioned as an armed vessel on the establishment of a sloop on October 15, 1781, the date of Perkin’s local warrant as Lieutenant which was confirmed on February 25, 1782. Unusual is the fact that the latter date was taken as his seniority. He was made Master & Commander (of the *Endeavour*) by Admiral Rowley on July 11, 1782, but this was not confirmed and the ship was put out of commission at Jamaica in July 1783 (TNA ADM34/296, entries 1 and 55).

During the American War, Perkins built an outstanding reputation. “During his command of that vessel [the *Punch*], and several others, he annoyed the enemy more than any other officer, by his repeated feats of gallantry, and the immense number of prizes he took. His knowledge of the different ports &c. in the West Indies was, perhaps, seldom equalled, and never surpassed” (Naval Chronicle [NC]: 27/352). Another source puts a figure on his achievement, “his claim to have taken 315 prizes and captured over 3000 prisoners in the course of the war was officially endorsed by the Jamaican house of assembly” (ODNB).



For the next decade appointments were rare, and circumstantial evidence suggests that he remained in Jamaica, where “he lived with little regard to the decencies of civilisation” [Lecky: 1/102). He is known to have visited Santa Domingo in 1792, possibly on a spying mission, when he was arrested at Jeremie and sentenced to death. Expediently, whether by design or coincidence has yet to be established, the *Diana*, Captain [later Admiral of the White] Thomas Macnamara Russell, appeared off Jeremie, the day before the planned execution. At a formal dinner given by the Colonial Assembly, he represented that:

“there was a Lieutenant Perkins, of the Royal Navy, cruelly confined in a dungeon, at Jeremie, on the other side of the island, under the pretext of having supplied the people of colour with arms; but, in fact, through malice, for his activity against the trade of that part of St. Domingo, in the American War. Captain Russell stated, that before he had ventured to plead his cause, he had satisfied himself of his absolute innocence; that he had undergone nothing like a legal process - a thing impossible, from the suspension of their ordinary courts of justice, owing to the divided and distracted state of the colony; and yet ... he lay under sentence of death”.

The assembly promised an immediate pardon, but prevaricated the next day, February 16, 1792. From the full account of this affair, it is known that Russell immediately moved his ship closer to the town, and threatened extreme violence, declaring that “he would sacrifice as many Frenchman as there were hairs on Perkins’ head, if they murdered him”. Perkins was released, “a most adventurous and enterprising officer, and good man [was carried] in triumph to the Commander in Chief in Jamaica” (NC:17/ 458-461)

With the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War, Perkins was an obvious choice for employment on the Jamaica station, commanding the *Spitfire* (Schooner, 4 guns) in 1793; the *Marie Antoinette* (Schooner, 10 guns) later the same year; the *Drake* (Sloop, 16 guns) from 1799 to 1800, during which time he was promoted commander; then acting Captain of the *Meleager* (5<sup>th</sup> rate, 32 guns) from July to Sept 1800. In Sept 1800 he was formally

promoted Captain, and exchanged appointments (with Captain, later Admiral Sir Thomas Bladen Capel, GCB) into the *Arab*, joining her on Sept 14, 1800.

*Lieutenant James Aberdour [or Aberdeurs]*

Passed for Lieutenant in 1799, his first commission, dated Feb 14, 1799, was to the *Arab* which he joined two days later.

*Lieutenant George Andrews*

Born in 1778, he was a Midshipman in the *Orion* in Admiral Howe's action "the Glorious First of June" in 1794. Promoted Lieutenant on Mar 9, 1797, he was appointed to the *Arab* on September 21, 1800, joining the next day.

*Master - Duncan Murphy*

Duncan Murphy was serving in the *Royal George* when the Admiral, Lord Bridport, requested the Board to issue him a warrant as Master of the *Magaera*; from this appointment stems his seniority as a Master of April 22, 1798. His warrant to the *Arab*, his next appointment, was dated March 30, 1799, and he joined her on April 7. The Captain's Log notes that he was arrested and confined for disobedience of orders between January 26 and February 1, 1801 (TNA ADM51/1406, entries dated Jan 26 and Feb 1). No further information is recorded but we can assume that there was a clash of personalities of some sort.

*Boatswain - John Phillips*

He came from the *Leviathan* (3<sup>rd</sup> rate, 74 guns), and was appointed Boatswain of the *Arab* on December 13, 1800, joining the next day.

*Master Carpenter - Robert Boddy*

Appointed Master Carpenter of the *Arab* on November 29, 1799; later seniority lists suggest the date was November 25 and that this was his first warrant.

*Master Gunner - James Smith*

Previously the Boatswain, warranted November 29, 1799, he was subsequently appointed as the Gunner on March 26 1800. Such changes were uncommon (TNA 35/178, entry no 188).

*Purser - William Wilson*

Appointed to the *Arab* on September 22, 1800, this was his first warrant.

*Surgeon - Richard Hinds*

Appointed to the *Arab* on August 30, 1800; subsequent lists give his seniority as August 26, 1800, making this his first warrant. He joined on September 3.

*The Ship's Company*

The nominal complement was 155. The ship was well short of this, and had no marines onboard at the time. In the year from March 1799 to February 1800, 42 men had deserted, and in the same period 1800 to 1801, 32 men, while, for the whole period, 13 men had been discharged dead. At the time of the action, the ship's company numbered 110. For a small ship without marines, and ample opportunities, the desertion rate would probably have seemed commendably low. Early in the commission, a previous Boatswain had been court martialled, and, under Perkin's command, the Master had been arrested for

disobedience, but a cursory look at the Captain's log indicates a relatively low punishment rate. The ship was, materially in a poor state, but the ship was operating independently (always was, and still is, popular), the company was kept busy with essential repairs and the occasional exercise of the main armament, efforts were being made to supply fresh provisions when opportunity arose, and a steady stream of prizes had been taken. Even so, with so many pressed men (throughout the Navy) morale was never going to be particularly good but onboard *Arab*, it was probably about as good as it got.

### **BEFORE the ACTION**

Commissioned in early 1799, the *Arab* had reached Jamaica by June 1799 (TNA ADM35/178, Pay Book, *Arab*, 1798-1802). In December 1800, now under the command of Captain John Perkins, she was transferred to the Leeward Island Station, then based at the Island of Martinique. The Commander in Chief, Rear Admiral John Duckworth was not amused, quickly registering his opinion in a letter to the Admiralty:

“For the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty I have to acquaint you of the arrival of His Majesty's Ship *Arab* yesterday from Jamaica, with her foremast useless, sails and rigging entirely decayed, without a Marine, and 30 Men short of complement ...” (TNA, ADM1/323, letter dated Dec 11, 1800 from RA Duckworth to Admiralty, London)

Even though the Admiral promised to repair her as best he was able, given the slender resources available in the temporary yard at Martinique, the ship needed a proper refit; no additional men or marines were found. On January 6, she was making three inches [7.5 cm]

of water per hour, and on the January 7, the company was turned to producing junk (shredded old rope) to stop the leaks “round the bends & stern of the ship which the Carpenter found in a very bad state” (TNA, ADM51/1406, Captain’s log, entries dated January 6, 7, and 8, 1801)

Coincidentally, on January 6, the Captain records “AM at 7 sent the boat on shore to the town of St Thomas. At 9 the boat returned with 280 lbs [ ... kg] of fresh beef“(TNA, ADM51/1406, entry dated January 6, 1801). Relations with the local Danish administration were obviously satisfactory. Further afield, matters were not so settled. In December 1800, Russia, Sweden, Denmark (and Prussia) agreed to an Armed Neutrality, to which the British Government took grave exception. “Most secret” orders were issued, dated January 15, which did not reach Admiral Duckworth until late February, a slow passage by the Pacquet being lamented by the Commander in Chief who had already heard rumours from other sources (TNA, ADM1/323, letter from RA Duckworth to Admiralty, dated March 4, 1801).

A digression is necessary here. At this period, the British Navy started the day at 12 noon. The log for a typical ‘sea’ day, say March 2, started with entries for PM ( which would equate to March 1 for everyone else), followed by entries, still for March 2, for AM (which would equate to March 2. For the entries and action following, the reference used in this paper includes AM or PM as appropriate as a guide to interpretation.

On March 2, the *Arab* met with the *Southampton*, who had sailed from Martinique on February 26 to provide back-up to the ships at the Saints and to bring orders from RA Duckworth “to detain all vessels under Danish, Swedish or Russian colours” (TNA ADM50/35, entry dated February 26, 1801, and TNA,ADM51/1406, entry AM, March 2, 1801). The *Arab* had been busy since the beginning of the year. Despite leaking like the proverbial bucket, she had taken several prizes, and the ship had just finished a very tedious period of convoy work. That day, she took her first Danish prize, a Schooner bound from St Croix to Antigua with Mill Timber (TNA,ADM51/1406, entry AM, March 2, 1801).

## The ACTION

The Captain's Log for March 4, 1801 reads (with minor modifications to aid the sense):

“PM Fresh breezes and cloudy. At 4 spoke the Experiment Privateer of Bermuda. Bore up and made sail in chace [sic] of a Brig and Schooner standing in for St Thomas, which proved to be the Danish Man of War Brig and Schooner. Fired to bring too [sic] the Brig at which she returned a broadside then a running fight ensued for about 40 minutes during which time we received 2 shot between wind & water our sails and rigging a little cut and 1 gun broke at 5 came within gun shot of the Fort when they fired round and grape shot at us which obliged us to wear round and to stand off by which means the Brig got into port. Ship making little water Carpenters stopping the shot holes.

AM Moderate and cloudy at day light observing the Brig close under the fort with her topmasts struck” [TNA ADM51/1406, entry dated March 4]

The Master's log reads:

“PM Fresh breezes and clear. Bore up and stood to the southward through the Luger Rock passage at 2 boarded a Sloop from St Thomas to Martinique sent her into Tortola spoke the Experiment privateer of Bermuda at 3 made all sail in Chace of a Brig in the SW Quarter standing in for St Thomas which proved to be a Danish man of war Brig, fir'd 4 guns to bring her to which she answered with a broadside of Round & Grape wore round across her bow and engaged her. A running fight ensued for about 40 minutes during which time we received several shott between wind and water, the sails and rig[g]ing much injured and one Gun splitt and broke off five [?] feet under [?] the Muzzle ½ past five came within gun shott of the Outer Fort which began to fire at us Round & Grape the Brig stood on past the Fort apparently much

damaged in the Hull and Rig[g]ing. Wore & stood to the SE the ship making much water Carpenters emp[loye]d plug[g]ing up the shot Holes. AM fresh breezes and clear standing off and on St Thomas's the ship still making water at noon Tower of St Thomas's NNW 4 Leagues" [TNA 52/2701, entry date March 4]

Comment: There are minor discrepancies between the logs. For example, while the Master records the boarding of a sloop at two [PM], the Captain does not. Likewise the Captain records a brig and schooner standing to St Thomas' while the Master only notes the Brig.

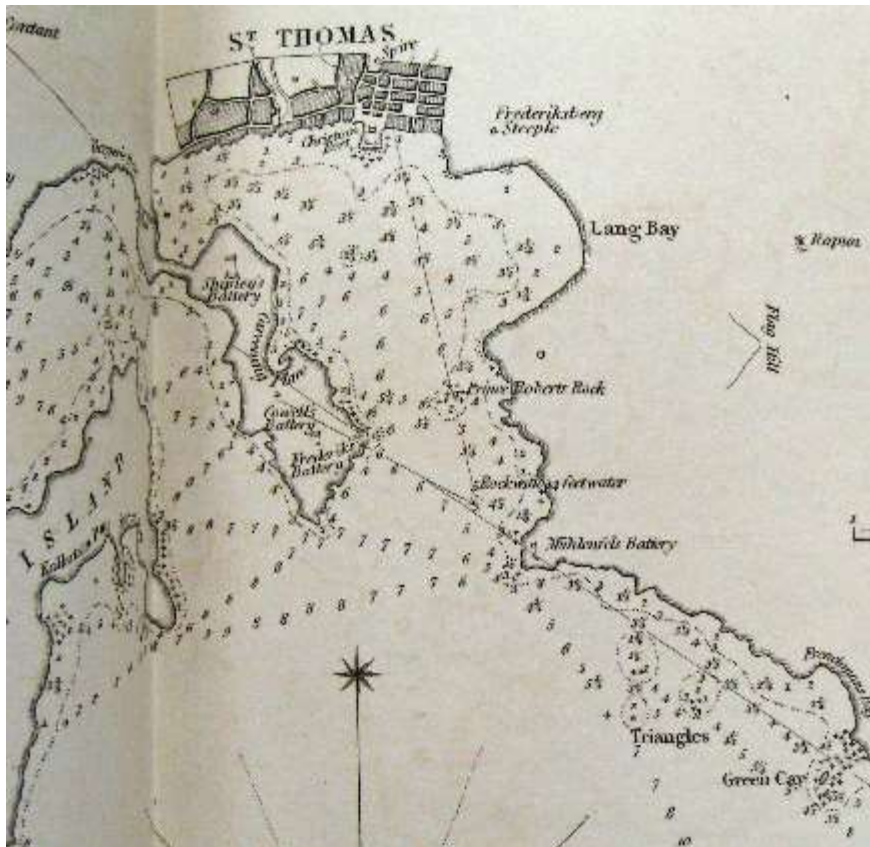


Figure 55 Approaches to St Thomas

On paper, the two ships are fairly evenly matched, with the slight gun advantage to the *Arab*. Assuming the wind held relatively steady from the ENE (as recorded in the logs) , conjecturally the action unfolds as follows. At 1600 on the afternoon of March 3, with a fresh breeze blowing, the *Arab* speaks to the *Experiment*, Privateer of Bermuda, which has no further part to play in the action. Sighting another sail to the southwest, the *Arab* bears away on a broad reach on the port tack to meet her/them [Comment: The Captain records a brig and a schooner, while the Master records the former only; thereafter there is no further mention of the schooner]

The un-named Danish Brig (hereafter referred to as the *Lougen*), is to leeward, tacking up from the south west towards St Thomas. At a range of about a mile, *Arab* fires four guns in the expectation that the *Lougen* will come up into the wind and strike her colours. Whether *Lougen* luffs up is not known but it is reasonable to assume that she now settles on the starboard tack and fires a full broadside, a mixture of round shot and grape, in the hope of achieving a lucky hit on a spar. *Arab* wears round and fires as she crosses the *Lougen*'s bow, but likewise fails to make a telling impact. *Arab* is now faced with a dilemma. She cannot bring her other broadside to bear without presenting her vulnerable stern as a target, and she is forced to wear ship again, loses the wind advantage and cannot turn quickly enough to allow her 32pdr carronades [14.515 kg] to influence the action. It now becomes a running fight until *Lougen* manages to get within the protective fire of the fort, when *Arab* is forced to break off what has suddenly become an unequal struggle.



### *Action - Comment*

From his log, it is obvious that John Perkins was an energetic and effective man, and quick to seize the initiative, and braver than most in those extraordinary times.

There were a number of factors which would have influenced his decisions on the day of the action. He commanded a materially deficient and leaky ship, thirty per cent short on complement. He also knew the Leeward Island command was chronically short of ships and, with the very recent receipt of orders regarding the Armed Neutrality, that he wouldn't be thanked for incurring major damage taking one Danish Brig. These factors would support the conclusion that he ran down to intercept the *Lougen* in the hope that she would strike after a token resistance. When she did not do so, Perkins continued without seeking close action until the arrival of the *Lougen* under the guns of the fort made further action impracticable. Mission accomplished. The *Lougen*, visibly damaged, would not be a further threat for some time, and the *Arab*, still operationally effective, was free to carry on with her current task.

**AFTER the ACTION - the SHIPS**

## *Arab*

*Arab* had taken some damage, a few shot holes and a damaged gun, and nobody killed. The number possibly wounded is more difficult to assess, although an entry would be expected in the Captain's log if the numbers were noteworthy: no such note was made. The Master reported the ship was making "much water", described by the Captain as "a little water", and the main sail was unbent and repaired on March 6. A month later, on April 7, the Captain recorded the ship making "6 feet water in 24 hours", alarming but exactly the same leakage rate as reported in January (see above) (TNA ADM51/1406, various entries]. There is no evidence of anything other than superficial damage and, in the ten days after the action, she detained four sloops, including the Danish Sloop "Loven", and two schooners, including the "Neptune" from St Thomas.

Apart from the action at St Thomas, the ship was present when that island subsequently capitulated on March 28 (TNA ADM50/35, entry dated March 28, 1801), and instrumental in the formal capitulation of the island of Eustatia on April 22, 1801 (TNA ADM1/323, letters including from *Arab* and terms of capitulation). She returned to Plymouth Yard in 1802, was refitted and re-coppered, and left the yard in Dec 1803 (TNA, ADM1/180/9, p749).

In 1805, then commanded by Keith Maxwell, she was part of a squadron in action, near Cape Grisnez, on July 17<sup>th</sup>, and was involved in driving ashore several small brigs of a combined Franco-Batavian flotilla. At one stage of the action, *Arab* was reported as "within musket-shot of the shore, in two fathoms' water". Such efforts were not without risk. She had seven men wounded, much damage to the rigging, and "several shot in the hull; one of which, or the fragment of a shell, set fire to her on the poop, but the flames were fortunately extinguished" (James: 3/312).

By July 1810, she was considered unfit for further service. Ordered by the Admiralty to be sold or taken to pieces; she was sold for £3,000 to Mr Christopher Smith on September 20, 1810 (AL, MSS302/9, p57)

### *Lougen*

The Danish Man of War, *Lougen* (of 20 guns and 87 men) was at St Thomas when the island capitulated (TNA, ADM1/323, Report dated March 28, 1801). There is evidence of damage on both sides and, if the Master of the *Arab* is to be believed, the Danish brig was “apparently much damaged in the hull and rigging” (TNA, ADM52/2701, entry dated March 4, 1801). It is therefore possible that the same ship remained at St Thomas until the end of the month. Subsequently there are some mentions of the *Lougen*, including, on April 16<sup>th</sup>, when Rear Admiral Duckworth notes arriving at Martinique “this day in His Majesty’s Ship *Leviathan*, accompanied by the Danish Brig of War *Logen* [sic]” (TNA, ADM1/323, letter to Admiralty, dated April 16, 1801), indicating that she may have been allowed to retain her identity. Later, a further rather cryptic note has been found, as the Admiral prepared to leave Martinique for a few days, “gave an order for the Lougin Brig to remain in the charge of Mr Marshall who is to keep a good look out to prevent surprise from the enemy placing her in such position as may best suit for that purpose” (TNA ADM 50/35, entry dated May 10, 1801)

*Surgeon - Richard Hinds.*

Remained with the ship until the end of the commission. He died in 1856.

*Purser - William Wilson*

He was still with the ship when she re-commissioned in October 1803, under the command of the Rt Hon Lord Cochrane. Wilson is known to have been appointed as Purser of the *Gloucester* (3<sup>rd</sup> rate, 74 guns ) on April 6, 1812, and to have died in early 1855.

*Master Gunner - James Smith*

In 1802 he became ill, was discharged to the hospital at Antigua, and marked as "Run" on June 30, 1802 (TNA 35/178, entry no 188).

*Master Carpenter - Robert Boddy*

He was still with the ship when she re-commissioned in Oct 1803 under Rt Hon Lord Cochrane. Noted in the Navy List in 1816. Possibly died November 1838 (TNA ADM45/10/307)

*Boatswain - John Phillips*

Known to have left the *Arab* on October 18, 1801.

*Master - Duncan Murphy*

He remained with the ship for the rest of the commission, and, on leaving, his (then) Captain wrote that he was “worthy of promotion” [TNA ADM106/2932, letter dated Sept 10, 1802].

He was appointed Master of the *Blanche* (5<sup>th</sup>, 36 guns) in 1802; *Lion* (3<sup>rd</sup> rate, 64 guns ) and *Invincible* (3<sup>rd</sup>, 74 guns) in 1806; *Polyphemus* (3<sup>rd</sup> rate, 64 guns ) in 1808; *Clarence* (3<sup>rd</sup> rate, 74 guns ) in June 1812; and to the *Minden* (3<sup>rd</sup> rate, 74 guns ) in July 1812, by which time he was formally qualified to be Master of a 1st rate ship. He had gone from the Navy List between Dec 1815 and May 1816, which would suggest that he died in early 1816.

#### *Lieutenant George Andrews*

He left the ship due to illness, being invalided to the *Tromp* on March 22, 1802, which didn't stop his promotion to Commander on Apr 29, 1802. Between 1806 and 1809, he commanded the *Ringdove* (Sloop) and *Intrepid* (3<sup>rd</sup> rate), the latter probably as acting Captain to which rank he was promoted on September 22, 1809. He died at Weymouth, Dorset, on June 16, 1840, aged 62.

#### *Lieutenant James Aberdour [or Aberdeurs]*

He remained with the ship until the end of the commission in 1802. Subsequently employed with the Sea Fencibles between 1803 and 1804, he commanded the *Pincher* (Gunboat) from 1804 to 1808, being promoted Commander on Oct 13, 1807. He commanded the *Muros* (Sloop) from 1811 to 1813, promoted to Captain on Dec 2, 1812. He died ca 1820.

#### *Captain John Perkins*

By the time of his arrival back in Martinique in the *Arab* on May 7, 1801, Perkins was not well. The Admiral's journal records "arrived His Majesty's Ship *Arab*, and a Schooner *Prize* to Captain Perkins, having stated the alarming state of his health, and requesting a Survey." This was quickly done and, the following day, the Admiral "received the reports of the Captains and Surgeons recommending a change of climate to be indispensably necessary for the preservation of the health of Captain Perkins". Perkins is known to have been an asthmatic, better served by a hot rather than cold climate which would not have helped his condition, so what 'change of climate' the doctors had in mind will have to wait further research (NC: 27/352). On May 9, the *Arab* was ordered to sail under the command of the Captain of the *L'Aimable* (TNA ADM50/35, entries dated May 7, 8, 9, 1801). Perkins was formally invalided on May 17, 1801 (TNA ADM35/178, entry no 258).

Perkins recovered sufficiently to be given another command, the *Tartar*, a 5<sup>th</sup> rate of 32 guns, a new ship only completed the year before, and also based at Jamaica. He was actively involved in the taking of the French 74 Gun *Duquesne* off Santa Domingo in July 1803, an action which must have given him particular pleasure after the events of 1792. In company with the *Vanguard* and *Bellerophon* "he fell in with the *Duquesne*, a French 74, and two brigs of 16 guns each; and had it not been for the superior sailing of the *Tartar*, and Captain Perkin's bravery, the *Duquesne* would have escaped; he kept her engaged, by raking her, until the *Vanguard* and *Bellerophon* came up, when she instantly struck, as also the two brigs" (NC 27/352).

He was also involved off St Dominique during the struggle between the French and the slaves:

"There he found himself caught between, on the one hand, Edward Corbett, 'extra minister' sent from England to assess the situation, who complained that Perkins was unduly friendly to the black population, and, on the other, his admiral, Sir John

Duckworth, who firmly backed him” [ODNB].

This was his last recorded sea command. Now about 59 years old, and ill, he resigned his command in December and retired to Jamaica. There is some slight evidence that he came to England ca. 1806 or 1807, seeking employment and was “offered a command either in the Channel or Mediterranean, which he declined” for health reasons but, from the evidence to hand, this seems unlikely. He probably remained at Jamaica where he died at Kingston on January 27, 1812 (NC27/351/2).

Every officer of the day dreamed of glory, promotion and prizes. John Perkins prospered in a system apparently loaded against him. Possibly for reasons of background, he was denied the important confirmation of his Master & Commander’s appointment to the *Endeavour*, but he rose above this setback and continued to make a positive contribution. In his way, John Perkins realized the dream and, for seizing the initiative at St Eustatia, he achieved the accolade, granted to relatively few, of a letter printed in the *London Gazette*. Reading between the lines of the rather starchy records, it is little wonder that Admiral Duckworth seemed so sorry to lose such a successful and decisive officer. What an extraordinary man.

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