

# Notes

## Marion du Fresne and the Young Pretender

THE QUESTION of which of the five sons of Julien Marion du Fresne came to New Zealand as captain of the *Mascarin*, there to be murdered on 12 June 1772, was not settled until recently.<sup>1</sup> The evidence needed to show that the unfortunate navigator was Marc-Joseph and not, as was generally believed, Nicolas-Thomas, has helped in turn to shed light on the return voyage of Charles Edward from Loch nan Uamh to Roscoff in Brittany; for, while the beginning of the Forty-Five is well known and well documented and the Rebellion itself and the Prince's post-Culloden wanderings have received the attentions of historians and sentimental patriots, the final escape is usually dismissed with a brief mention, often with the tantalising admission that some confusion remains. The captains of the two ships are frequently misnamed, and the date of departure — owing to the difference of twelve days between the French and English calendars which subsisted until 1752 — oscillates between 19 and 30 September 1746.

The Prince's rescue was organised, just as the outward voyage had been, by friends and sympathisers: the French government, although benevolent, remained in the background. At first, through lack of contact, through dispiritedness no doubt, very little was done and in late June the first ill-organised attempt to

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<sup>1</sup> See my *French Explorers in the Pacific*, I, Oxford, 1965, p. 168. Erroneous identifications and biographies were given in P. Levot, *Biographie bretonne*, II, Vannes, 1857, p. 408, and in H. Ling Roth, *Crozet's Voyage to Tasmania*, London, 1891, p. 1.

get Charles Edward back, in a small French cutter commanded by one Dumont, failed.<sup>2</sup> When, however, it became clear that he was managing to elude his pursuers, Jacobites and sympathisers in France began to plan an expedition to Scotland.

Richard Warren, Lord George Murray's former A.D.C., took the leading role, and it was under his charge that the two French ships eventually sailed on a rescue mission.<sup>3</sup> Not only was he in better odour than John Hay of Restalrig<sup>4</sup> and Sir Thomas Sheridan, the two leading figures of the immediate post-Rebellion period, but — far more important — he had been a merchant in Marseilles and had valuable contacts in the world of shipowners. Now that the rebellion had failed, he realised that the French government could afford less than ever to become involved; privateers had taken Charles Edward and the 'Seven Men' to Scotland, and privateers would have to bring him back. There was a group of Irish Jacobites in business in St. Malo, including Richard Butler, born at 'Rose' in Ireland, the son of Thomas Butler, and the husband of 'Marie-Anne Wailsh'. There were a number of Walshes living in France at the time, one of them being Antoine Walsh, born in St. Malo in 1703, and the owner of the *Doutelle* in which Charles Edward, accompanied by Walsh himself, had sailed to Scotland in 1745. The names Mary and Anne are prevalent in his family — his mother was Anne Whyte, his wife was Mary O'Shiel, and his only daughter was christened Marie-Anne-Agnès — and there is every likelihood that Walsh and Butler were related.

Butler owned, or controlled, two ships, the *Heureux*, 300 tons and 34 guns, built in St. Malo in 1744, and the *Prince de Conty*, 180 tons and 30 guns, built in the following year. In 1745 the *Heureux* was under commission as a privateer and commanded by Jean-Baptiste Beauflis;<sup>5</sup> on 12 November 1745

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<sup>2</sup> R. Forbes, *The Lyon in mourning*, Edinburgh, 1895-6, I, 373.

<sup>3</sup> A. Lang, *Prince Charles Edward Stuart*, London, 1903, p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> W. B. Blaikie, ed., *Origins of the Forty-Five, and other papers relating to that rising*, Edinburgh, 1916, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup> Port Register, St. Malo, Archives d'Ille-et-Vilaine, 9B 297.

Pierre-Bernard Trehouart de Beaulieu took over command. Beaulieu was aged thirty-two, a native of St. Malo, and probably a relative of Butler's — his grandmother was a Walsh. He died in 1764 at the Cape of Good Hope, being at the time in command of the *Comte de Provence*.

The first captain of the *Prince de Conty* was Francois Chesnard de la Giraudais who was to gain fame by circumnavigating the globe in 1768 with Bougainville. On 10 January 1746, this vessel was taken over by Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne who was then aged twenty-two. Du Fresne, also a native of St. Malo, had been given his first command by Butler, who had placed him in charge of *La Catin*, a privateer of 140 tons, in April 1745;<sup>6</sup> but this ship had been captured by the English.<sup>7</sup>

It was therefore to Walsh and Butler that Warren turned, and with the assistance of other Jacobite sympathisers — for the proposed expedition to Scotland would be expensive as well as dangerous — he chartered Butler's two ships. Secrecy being essential, the departure of two privateers already engaged on raids in the Channel and the Atlantic was less likely to attract attention. The port records are, not unexpectedly, incomplete. The customary captains' reports, normally filed upon their return, are missing; and the names of passengers are not recorded anywhere, although we know that Warren was on board<sup>8</sup> and he indeed appears in the logs as 'Warest'. Of the few available records, the most useful is *Extrait de Journal du voyage d'Ecosse dans le Prince de Conti, cpn. M. du Fresne Marion 1746*<sup>9</sup> which was in all probability written by Marion du Fresne himself. Much of it consists of navigational details, as does a companion *Extrait du Journal du voyage fait en Ecosse par les corsaires l'Heureux et le Prince de Conty*,<sup>10</sup> probably written by Beaulieu.

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Archives of the port of Brest, P C4 30.

<sup>8</sup> Lang, p. 316.

<sup>9</sup> Archives Nationales, Paris. Marine, C7 197 Cn 133/2 No. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Archives Nationales, Paris, Marine, B4 58 Cn 133/2 No. 33.

At 11 a.m. on Wednesday 24 August 1746 (French style), with a light northerly breeze, the two ships sailed from St. Malo. They went no further than the western end of the bay and dropped anchor at 3.30 p.m. under the shelter of Cap Fréhel. This enabled preparations to be completed away from prying eyes, further crew members to be taken on, and possibly the Jacobite passengers to slip aboard unnoticed. In addition to Warren, the expedition included young Michael Sheridan — the logs refer to a ‘M. Cheridon’ — and two Irish soldiers of fortune, O’Byrne and Lynch<sup>11</sup> — the ‘M. Lincke’ of Marion du Fresne’s *Extrait*. A week later, at 6 p.m. on Wednesday 31 August, the two ships sailed on a cautiously westerly course, sensibly hugging the Breton coast as far as Ushant, ‘steering various courses according to the winds and the ships we saw’. On 4 September, off Ushant, they sighted several vessels ‘bearing from us N and NW, one of which pursued us, which forced us to flee with all sails’.<sup>12</sup> The pursuer forced the French to sail southwest, well to the south of Brittany and out into the Atlantic, steering west and north in a wide arc around Western Ireland, eluding several more sails on the way, and veering east when they reached the fifty-fourth parallel on 12 September.

The Outer Hebrides were sighted three days later. The ships rounded Barra Head late that morning, hauled along the East cost of Barra, sighting ‘an old ruined castle which, according to the reports, is called Barra Castle’, continued ‘at a good pace’ for nearly an hour ‘until 5.30 p.m. when we anchored in the bay of With [South Uist].’<sup>13</sup> Warren and Sheridan went ashore ‘with a detachment of twenty of the bravest officers from the two vessels’, but, meeting no one, returned on board at nightfall. The next day the French changed their anchorage to the island of Ouia where the Prince had been in hiding in early June. Here they at last established contact with local people whom ‘having questioned . . . about our enterprise we put . . . back ashore

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<sup>11</sup> A. and H. Tayler, *Stuart Papers at Windsor*, London, 1939, p. 181.

<sup>12</sup> Marion du Fresne, *Extrait*, entry of 4-6 September.

<sup>13</sup> Beaulieu, *Extrait*, 15 September.

except for one officer who claimed to be a pilot and to have served the Prince in his misfortunes, after which the *Heureux* and ourselves set sail on a course SE and SE by  $\frac{1}{4}$ E. We ranged along the coast of Canna at a distance of 13 leagues. At about midday, leaving Canna, we ranged along Rum and then Eigg.<sup>14</sup>

They reached Loch nan Uamh the same evening, capturing a small English vessel they found in the bay and seized her cargo of flour, oats and wheat. This capture was made easier by the fact that the *Heureux* and the *Prince de Conty* were flying English colours. ‘At 7 in the evening, the two boats went to the mainland with a detachment of 40 men under the orders of the four representatives.’ Until the end of the month the French merely waited for news from the messengers who had been sent to various loyal Jacobites asking them to lead the Prince to the loch. Beaulieu and du Fresne’s situation was unenviable, for some traitor might at any moment reveal their presence to the English and they could easily be trapped in the relatively narrow loch; but nothing happened, apart from a constant trickle of refugees. According to Nicholas,<sup>15</sup> when the Prince finally arrived at Loch nan Uamh, at 8 p.m. on Friday 30th, he found there young Clanranald, Macdonald of Dalilea, and one hundred and twenty gentlemen and clansmen. With the party which had accompanied the Prince, such as Lochiel and Lochgarry, and other sympathisers whom enthusiasm for the cause drew to the waterside, the Jacobite gathering must have numbered close on a hundred and fifty. Sixty of these were, as du Fresne reports,<sup>16</sup> put ashore by the Prince’s order.

The departure took place, with Charles Edward on board the *Heureux*, at 5 a.m. on Saturday 1 October. The French sailed back, logically, the way they had come, avoiding the well patrolled and highly dangerous waters of the North Channel and the Irish Sea. From the afternoon of the 1st and for a week thereafter they were helped by ‘very thick fog, which forced us

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<sup>14</sup> Marion du Fresne, *Extrait*, entry of 17 September.

<sup>15</sup> D. Nicholas, *The Young Adventurer*, London, 1949, p. 204.

<sup>16</sup> *Extrait*, entry of 30 September.

to fire the guns at frequent intervals to enable the *Heureux* and ourselves to keep together'.<sup>17</sup> They sailed around Ireland, keeping approximately 130 miles from the coast. The plan was to make for Brest, but the winds were unfavourable; they sailed instead to Roscoff, a port on the north coast of Brittany. On Monday 10 October 'we lowered our boats. The Prince and his suite went in the *Heureux*'s. We saluted with cheers and 21 guns each. He was put ashore at Roscoff.'

Thus ended the Rebellion. Charles Edward, having sailed on his great adventure in one French-Irish privateer, finally escaped in another. Before landing, he had thanked his captains and offered them a sum of money. Both refused and were promoted instead, a week later, to the rank of *Lieutenant de frégate*.<sup>18</sup> For Marion du Fresne it was an important step forward. It led to his appointment as first officer in the royal naval vessel *Invincible* in the following year and, incidentally, to his capture and imprisonment in Plymouth; above all, it provided him with useful contacts and prepared the way for a successful peacetime career in the merchant navy that was to take him, twenty-five years later, to the Bay of Islands.

JOHN DUNMORE

*Massey University*

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, entries of 1 to 9 October.

<sup>18</sup> Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, N.A.F. 9439-62; Archives Nationale, Paris. Marine, B2 329 fol. 148.