

# “Action at Sea”, by Harold Wylie

This is a view of the painting “Action at Sea”, by Harold Wylie. It is held at the Glenfinnan Monument in Glenfinnan, Highland. It represents the battle between the HMS Lion (left) and the French warship the “Elisabeth” (centre). The third ship is the “Du Teillay”. The two French ships were carrying guns, ammunition, men and Prince Charles Edward Stuart from France to Scotland. However only the “Du Teillay”, the ship carrying the Prince, reached Scotland. The “Elisabeth” and its attacker HMS Lion were badly damaged and had to return to port.



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Lt. Col. Harold Wylie was born in London on 29th June 1880. By the time he was eighteen he had moved to New York as the special artist to “The Graphic”. He fought in the Boer War and as a pilot in France during the First World War. In 1934 he was appointed Hon. Marine Painter to the Royal Yacht Squadron and in 1958 became the vice president to the Society of Marine Artists. He lived in Portsmouth and Perth and died in 1973.



Figure 1 - [National Maritime Museum](#)

When Charles Stuart boarded the French ship 'Du Teillay' at St Nazaire bound for Scotland on 7 July, he was joined by her French escort ship the 'Elizabeth'. Two days later they were intercepted by the English ship 'Lion', commanded by Captain Piercy Brett. A close action began at 17.00 between the 'Lion' and the 'Elizabeth'. The 'Du Teillay' attacked the 'Lion' several times and, at 18.00, the 'Lion's' mizzen topmast came down. The 'Lion' continued to fire at the 'Elizabeth' until she broke free at 22.00 to join the 'Du Teillay'. The 'Lion' was too damaged to follow; 52 of her men were killed and about 110 wounded. The 'Elizabeth' lost about 57 men with 175 wounded, with her commander, Captain Dau, among the dead.

The painting shows the third phase of the action at about 20.00. On the left of the picture the 'Lion' is in close action with the 'Elizabeth' shown in the centre. The 'Lion's' mizzen top and topmast is shot away and hangs over the side. On the right the 'Du Teillay' is firing at the 'Lion' who is retaliating with her guns at the stern. Painted many years after the event, the artist may have referred to three related drawings by Captain Piercy Brett, for this work.

I shall not fail to be attentive to what you mention in your little note.

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PRINCE CHARLES TO HIS FATHER.

*St. Nazaire, at the Mouth of the Loire,  
July 2. 1745.*

SIR,

THE contrary winds that have been blowing hitherto, have deferred my embarking, which will be this afternoon, at seven, for to go to the rendezvous of the man-of-war of 67 guns, and 700 men aboard, as also a company of sixty volunteers, all gentlemen, whom I shall probably get to land with me, I mean to stay; which, though few, will make a show, they having a pretty uniform. The number of arms are just as I mentioned in my last of the 12th, that goes with this, except the augmentation I was in hopes of is of a hundred or two less than I expected, which is no odds. I keep this open, and do not send it until I am fairly set off from Belle Isle—*id est* the rendezvous—so that I may add a note to it, if being sea-sick does not hinder; if it does, Sir Thomas will supply in mentioning what more may occur. It is a mortification to me to want so many of your packets which are lying at Paris, because of the daily expectation of parting. We have nothing to do now but to hope in the Almighty favouring us and recompensing our troubles; which, as you may see by the nature of the thing, were not small. I hope in God my next will bring comfortable news. In the mean time I remain, laying myself at your Majesty's feet, most humbly asking your blessing,

Your most dutiful son,

CHARLES P.

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PRINCE CHARLES TO MR. EDGAR.

*St. Nazaire, July 2. 1745.*

THIS being the last note I shall write this side of the seas, I would not fail to give you adieu in it, making my

The action between [HMS \*Lyon\* and the \*Elisabeth\*, July 1745](#) H H Brindley in *The Naval Miscellany* Volume III (Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 63 1927 [sometimes shown 1928]).

## Attack on the Pretender's Fleet

Captain Peircy Brett to the Secretary of the Admiralty

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*Lyon*, Plymouth Sound, 30 July 1745

On the 9th inst. west of the Lizard 39 leagues, I saw two of the enemy's ships. By four o'clock I was within two miles of them, they then hoisted French colours, and shortened sail, one was a man of 64 guns, and the other a small ship of 16 guns. At five I ran alongside the man of war within pistol shot, and began to engage. By six my mizzen mast and yard came down upon deck. By nine all my lower masts and top-masts were shot to pieces, so that I lay muzzled and could do nothing. The enemy did not receive much damage in his masts and yards, but his hull must have suffered greatly. At ten he sheered off, and as he was going I gave him a farewell with two of my 24-pounders, but he made no return, and in less than an hour was out of sight, and my condition was such I could not follow him. The small ship in the beginning of the engagement made two attempts to rake me, but I soon beat him off with my stern chase.

From the beginning to the end of the engagement we kept a continual fire at each other, about the distance of a pistol shot. The *Lyon*'s hull is very much shattered as well as her masts, yards, rigging, two of my guns dismantled, and 45 of my men killed and 107 wounded. The next morning at daylight I saw the enemy to the southward of me, making the best of his way to some port in the Bay of Biscay, and as the small ship was not then in company I imagine he proceeded on his voyage to the westward. It was near 24 hours after the engagement before I was in a tolerable condition of making sail....

My officers all behaved extremely well except the Captain of the Marines, whom I have put under arrest, for skulking on the poop under cover of some bags that were there, for the greatest part of the engagement, which encouraged most part of his men to do the like. I was not an eye witness of his bad behaviour, else I should have treated him as he deserved, for the poop ladder being shot away, and myself wounded, rendered me incapable of climbing up.... As I was not so happy as to take him, I have only this satisfaction left, that I spoiled his voyage.

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*Naval Miscellany*, III:110. Volume 63 Naval Records Society

The action between HMS *Lyon* and the *Elisabeth*, July 1745 (Editor H H Brindley)

The **Naval Miscellany III**, Navy Records Society, LXIII, 1928; pages 85-122.

## Item details [SP 54/25/61B](#)

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### *Context*

[SP](#) Records assembled by the State Paper Office, including papers of the Secretaries of State up to 1782

[Division within SP](#) State Papers Scotland

[SP 54](#) Secretaries of State: State Papers Scotland Series II

[SP 54/25](#)

### *Record Summary*

**Scope and content**

Report of an engagement between British and French ships [HMS Lion and the Elizabeth], in which both were disabled; on Angus [Aeneas] MacDonald's landing on Barra; and on the subsequent jacobite activity, involving Kinloch Moydart [MacDonald of Kinlochmoidart] and Young Clanranald

**Covering dates**

[1745 Aug 11]