

John Paul Jones's Whitehaven Raid
as reported in Whitehaven

LLOYD'S EVENING-POST.

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From MONDAY, April 27, to WEDNESDAY, April 29, 1778.

In our last we gave an account of the landing of part of the Crew of the Ranger American Privateer, at Whitehaven, where they set fire to a Ship, and committed other Outrages: -- This is confirmed by the following accounts from the Cumberland Packet Extraordinary, printed by Ware and Son.

Whitehaven, April 23.

LATE last night, or early this morning, a number of armed men (to the amount of thirty) landed privately at this place, by two boats, from an American privateer, as appears from one of the people now in custody. Whether he was left through accident, or escaped by design, is yet uncertain.

Thus much has however been proved, that a little after three o'clock this morning he rapped at several doors in Marlborough street, (adjoining one of the piers) and informed them that fire had been [benn] let to one of the ships in the Harbour, matches were laid in several others; the whole would be soon in a blaze, and the town also destroyed; that he was one belonging to the privateer, but had escaped for the purpose of saving, if possible, the town and shipping from destruction. The alarm was immediately spread, and his account proved too true. The Thompson, Captain Richard Johnson, a new vessel, and one of the finest ever built here, was in a flame. It was low water, consequently all the shipping in the Port was in the most imminent danger, and the vessel on which they had begun the diabolical work, lying close to one of the steaths, there was the greatest reason to fear that the flames would, from it, be communicated to the town. The scene was too horrible to admit of any further description; we shall therefore only add to this part of this alarming story, that by an uncommon exertion, the fire was extinguished before it reached the rigging of the ship, and thus, in a providential manner, prevented all the dreadful consequences which might have ensued.

The man who remained on shore was examined by the Magistrates, Merchants, &c. about eight o'clock in the morning. The following is the purport of his affidavit:

"The Ranger privateer is commanded by John Paul Jones, fitted out at Piscataqua, in New-England, mounted by 18-six pounders, and 6 swivels, but is pierced for twenty guns. She has on board between 140 and 150 men; sailed from Piscataqua for Brest the 1st of November, 1777, arrived at Nantz the 2d of December [November]. Took in the passage two brigs, one commanded by Captain Richards, the other by Captain Goldfinch.

"Sailed from Nantz for Quiberon Bay; lay there about three weeks and returned to Brest; left that Port about three weeks ago, in which time she has taken one ship from London to Dublin, (having on board Gen. Irwin's baggage) and sent her to Brest. She also took and sunk a brig laden with flax-feed, a schooner with barley and oats, and a sloop from Dublin to London, in ballast.

"On Sunday, or Monday night, from the intelligence she gained by a fishing boat, she sailed into Belfast Lough, with an intent to attack an armed vessel, (the Drake sloop of war) stood within half gun shot of her, hailed her, and then stood out again."

David Freeman, the person who was examined and gave the above information, says, that the name of the Commander of the Ranger is John Paul Jones, the First Lieutenant Thomas Simpson, Second Lieutenant Elisha Hall, Sailing-Master David Cullen, Lieutenant of Marines Samuel Willinsford.

The above John Paul Jones, alias John Paul, it further appears, served his apprenticeship to the sea in a vessel called the Friendship, belonging to this port, was afterwards in the employ of some Merchants here, latterly had a brig out of Kircudbright, and is well known by many people in this town. David Freeman, it is said, has also declared, that the said Paul Jones commanded the party which landed here this morning, and was himself on shore.

While this infernal business was transacting, the ship laid to with her head to the Northward, distant about two miles, until the boats put off to go on board, which was between three and four o'clock. By this time some of the guns at the Half-moon-battery were loaded, two of which were fired at the boats, but without the desired effect. The boats then fired their signal guns, and the ship immediately tacked and stood towards them till they got along-side, and then made sail to the North Westward.

The Incendiaries had spiked most of the guns of both our batteries, several matches were found on board different vessels, and other combustible matter in different parts of the Harbour.

It appears that this infernal plan, unprecedented, except in the Annals of John the Painter, was laid at Brest, where, for a considerable sum of money, Paul, or Jones, (the latter is only an addition to his name,) engaged to burn the shipping, and town of Whitehaven; for which purpose he was convoyed through the Channel by a French frigate of 38 guns.

A number of Expresses have been dispatched to all the capital sea ports in the kingdom where any depredations are likely to be made; all strangers in this town are, by an order of the Magistrates, to be secured and examined: Similar notices have been forwarded through the country, &c. and, in short, every caution taken that the present alarming affair could suggest.

The privateer is the same ship which chased the Hussar cruizer last week, but the cutter, or smack, did not belong to her.

They took three people away with them and staid some time in a public-house on the Old Quay.

The Hussar, Capt. Gurley, and other vessels, are sent to different ports in Ireland express with the news.

There has been almost a continual meeting at Haile's Coffee-room to-day; a number of men are raising for the defence of the town by subscription; and the forts, guns, &c. it is expected, will now be put into proper condition.

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EXTRAORDINARY states it as follows:

On Thursday morning, about two o'clock, 20 men, together with Captain, landed on the battlement near the head of the Old Quay, from a boat belonging to the said vessel, (which proves to be the Ranger American privateer, from Nantz, then standing off and on about two miles from this Harbour) whilst another boat came into the Harbour, and landed ten men at the Old Quay slip, when they proceeded to Nich. Allison's, a public house, on the Old Quay; they made very free with the liquors, &c. and would not permit any of the family, to stir out; after which a party went on board the Thompson; Capt.[.] Johnston, a coal laden vessel, lying opposite to Allison's took the boys out of bed, and set her on fire: They offered money to the boys to induce them to go with them, but on their [there] refusing they put them under guard on the Quay, without any other covering than their shirts; having handkerchiefs tied over their mouths to prevent their crying out, at the same time the privateer's people threatening to shoot them if they made any noise or resistance. Immediately after the alarm was effectually given, the fire engines were brought to the Quay, and by the vigorous exertions of people of all ranks, the fire on board the Thompson was speedily extinguished, without damaging any other vessel; thus were the malicious attempts of those daring Incendiaries frustrated. -- Lighted matches, made of canvass dipped in brimstone, had been thrown on board several other vessels, but had gone out without having the intended effect.

The privateer's people were all armed with pistols and cutlasses, [.] and retired to their boats about four o'clock (taking with them two boys, one from the Thompson, and the other from the Saltham.) They had, on their first landing, spiked up several of the cannon, in order to secure their retreat. A number of people flocking to the forts, some shot were fired at the boats, but without doing any execution. After the boats reached the privateer, she stood over the Scotch side, and as large columns of smoke have been seen on the Scotch shore this afternoon, it is feared she has done some mischief there.