



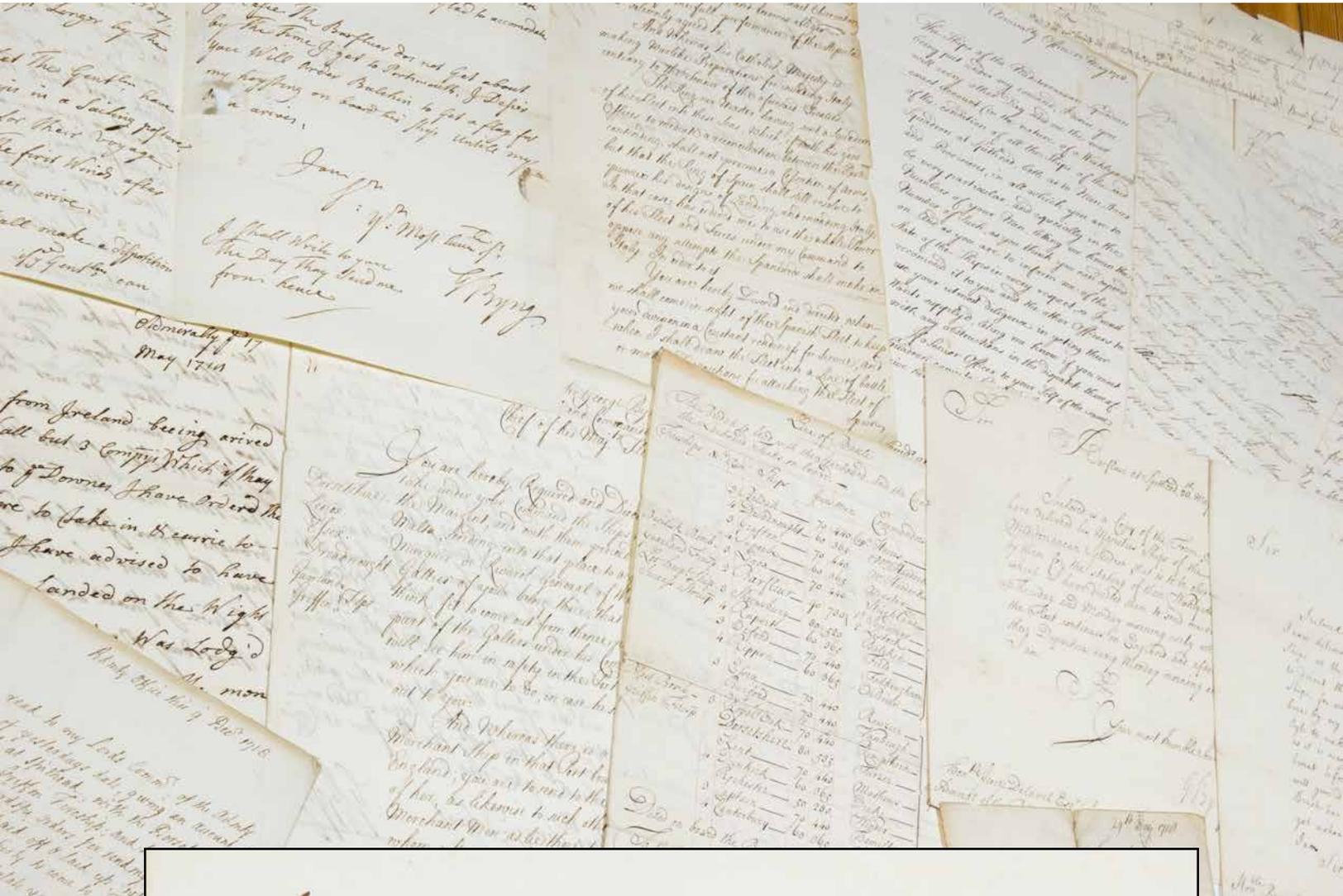
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Admiral of the Fleet Sir George Byng

[Correspondence]: Letters of Admiral of the Fleet Sir George Byng to Sir George Delaval concerning the Battle of Cape Passaro in 1718, including Line of Battle Orders \$25,000



I am
 Y^r most hum. serv^t
 G. Byng

A remarkable archive of 24 letters from Admiral of the Fleet George Byng, sent to Rear Admiral George Delaval, who commanded the Blue Squadron under Byng's command, along with associated documents from George Saunders and Josiah Burchett, Secretary of the Admiralty, relating to the British naval campaign of 1718 in the Mediterranean, culminating in the Battle of Cape Passaro, Sicily, on the 11th August. A mix of quarto and folio sheet with many folded once to form four pages. Each letter is **Signed** by Byng, with one signed twice. Despite their age the letters are near fine or better with only light wear and housed in a custom cloth chemise with printed labels.

The Battle of Cape Passaro resulted in the defeat of the Spanish by the British Fleet under Sir George Byng four months before the War of the Quadruple Alliance. The Spanish refused to re-embark their army from the Sicilian mainland. Despite war not having been formally declared, Byng correctly anticipated approval from home and attacked and routed the Spanish fleet, thwarting their ambitions to take Italy and Sicily.

The subject matter of the letters is concerned with supplies, day-to-day naval matters, and continuing hostilities against the Spanish, and includes details of several rendezvous for meeting up in the event of separation owing to bad weather. Common problems are mentioned such as desertion and shortage of food and more particularly wine. The earliest is dated May 17th concerning the mobilization of troops and pressed men for the campaign. The letter of May 29th regards the Line of Battle detailing ships, ordnance and men, commanders and formation, and pennants, and the signals to be used. On July 3rd Byng gives orders to oppose the landing of the Spanish in Italy with a warrant order of operations to "take, sink, burn or destroy" the King of Spain's ships; the last of the series dates from the December 9th from the Admiralty office (not by Byng) congratulating Delaval on his safe arrival at Spithead and requesting him to escort the fireship Griffin to Deptford. Byng sent mail from on board his ship the Barfleur whilst at sea, and also from the Admiralty office in London.

Byng was sent on subsequent diplomatic missions on behalf of England to negotiate with Italian princes and states, and was instrumental in the acceptance of the terms of the Quadruple Alliance by Spain. In 1718 Byng was already a respected member of the establishment, having supported the accession of William and Mary at the Glorious Revolution, contributed to the burning of the French fleet at Vigo, and leading the bombardment squadron during the capture of Gibraltar. He was rewarded with a knighthood and a regular promotion. After the success of 1718 this included membership in the Privy Council, admittance to the Order of the Bath and the title of Viscount Torrington which his descendants still bear today. In 1727 Byng was made First Lord of the Admiralty and the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth was founded in his memory.

Delaval also had a distinguished naval and diplomatic career from a young age, with victory at the Battle of Malaga in 1704 and missions to Spain and Portugal, as well as his promotion to Rear Admiral and leadership of The Blue Squadron. He is perhaps best known for rebuilding his ancestral seat, the celebrated Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (now a National Trust property), with architect Sir John Vanbrugh.

It is important to note that Admiral George Byng should not be confused with his fourth son, John Byng, also present at the Battle of Cape Passaro as a 13 years old, who built a respectable career as a naval officer and became an Admiral but was court-martialed and shot by firing squad on 14 March 1757.

A remarkable collection of letters from the First Lord of the Admiralty during the reign of King George II.

Detailed list by date follows:

1. BYNG, George. ALS, 2pp., Admiralty Office: May 17th. Letter giving instructions for troops and pressed men on transport ships coming from Ireland to be taken to the Isle of Wight until the fleet is ready for them to board (care to be taken that they don't desert).

2. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., Admiralty Office: May 18th. Letter requesting reports every other day instead of weekly, now that the Mediterranean ships are under his command. Reports should give details of the condition of ships and provisions for the squadron at Spithead; ships to be kept well supplied. The letter is addressed to Capt. Balchon to be passed on to any more senior officer at Spithead.

3. BYNG, George. ALS, 3pp., Admiralty Office: May 19th. Letter requesting men to be dispersed where needed among the ships already assembled as Byng's ship the HMS *Barfleur* is held up by strong winds at the Downs. All should be in sailing order and prepared for voyage with Byng shortly making his way to Portsmouth.

4. BYNG, George. ALS, 3pp., onboard the *Barfleur* at Spithead: May 20th. Letter to accompany requesting twice weekly forms to be completed whilst in England and each Monday thereafter. [With] Blank form **Signed** by Byng to be completed with details of state and condition of ship, men and ordnance.

5. BYNG, George. LS, 1pp., Admiralty: May 20th. Letter in reply to one sent to him on the 19th with instructions that the men recently arrived at Spithead from Ireland should be dispersed "as you think fit" and only discharged if sick. Fleet should be assembled by the end of the week ready to leave as soon as possible so should be in sailing order.

6. BYNG, George. ALS, 3pp., Admiralty: May 21st. Letter requesting the pressed men from the Dunkirk should be put on board the HMS *Success* and the HMS *Drake* sloops from Ireland. Men are

in short supply and the expected West Country recruits from Captain Drake have not materialized.

7. BYNG, George. ALS, 1p., Admiralty: May 24th. Letter apologizing for not replying to Capt. Winder's proposition of taking wine and Byng agrees with it. Suggests he (Byng) should set out next day for Portsmouth with the rest of the squadron as long as his instruction is signed by the King – he's impatient at the delay.

8. BYNG, George. ALS, 1p., Admiralty (at night): May 24th. Letter advising that following the morning's Cabinet Council meeting, the King wants Byng to stay until Monday, by which time the ships from the Downs should have arrived.

9. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., onboard the *Barfleur*: May 29th. Line of Battle with full details of ships, guns, men commanders, divisions and flags/pennants.

10. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., onboard the *Barfleur* at Spithead: June 1st. Letter to accompany Rendezvous details 12 and Instructions books.

11. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., [onboard the *Barfleur* at sea]: June 1st. Rendezvous details with variations to suit prevailing winds etc if the fleet should become separated by weather. Also men are put on short rations.

12. BYNG, George. ALS, 2pp., [onboard the *Barfleur* at sea]: July 3rd. Byng aboard the *Barfleur* - order by Admiral Corbett's Command to "take, burn, sink or destroy" the King of Spain's ships.

13. BYNG, George. LS, 2pp., [onboard the *Barfleur* off Cape Malaga]: July 3rd. Line of Battle with full details of ships, guns, men, commanders etc. **Signed** twice.

14. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., [onboard the *Barfleur* at sea]: July 13th. Rendezvous details for unavoidable separation to meet in the Bay of Naples.

15. BYNG, George. ALS, 2pp., [onboard the *Barfleur* at sea]: July 19th. Letter regarding wine supply from the Agent Victualler at Lisbon, giving instructions for payment on the King's account. Instructions for new Commander-in-Chief Carker to be given a guard when boarding ships.

16. BYNG, George. ALS, 1p., [onboard the *Barfleur* at Naples]: July 25th. Letter to accompany 18 and giving details of flags to use if the Viceroy of Naples should visit the fleet.

17. BYNG, George. LS, 1pp., [onboard the *Barfleur*]: July 25th. Rendezvous details.

18. SAUNDERS, George. ALS, 1p., onboard the *Barfleur*: August 13th. Saunders instructions to Byng's for the HMS *Dorsetshire* to tow the HMS *Felucca*.

19. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., onboard the *Barfleur* at Reggio: September 5th. Letter referring to correspondence directing giving boat hole tops to the ships.

20. BYNG, George. LS, 2pp., onboard the *Barfleur* at Reggio: September 13th. Order by Corbett's command directing Delaval to take named ships under his command, to proceed to Malta then give safe passage for merchant ships to Syracuse and on to Reggio.

21. BYNG, George. LS, 2pp., onboard the *Barfleur* at Reggio: September 22nd. Order by command of Corbett, addressed to Capt. Beverley of the Montagu for Delaval to deliver, to take mast ship to Port Mahon under protection and to await further orders.

22. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., onboard the *Barfleur*: October 3rd. Rendezvous details to meet in the Bay of Mallafso or at Cuzzolo near Naples, in the event of separation.

23. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., onboard the *Barfleur* in Bay of Baio: October 23rd. Order by Corbett's command regarding Mr Ralph Archbould's application to be a Lieutenant of one of his Majesty's ships. His qualifications are to be checked and, if satisfactory, a Certificate to be issued of his ability to perform the Duty of a Lieutenant.

24. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., onboard the *Barfleur* in Bay of Baio: October 24th. Order by Corbett's command to take named ships (*Dorsetshire*, *Shrewsbury* and *Griffin*) back to Spithead in England to await orders.

25. BYNG, George. LS, 1p., onboard the *Barfleur* in Bay of Baio: October 25th. Order to take, sink, destroy, etc., the King of Spain's ships and/or effects.

26. BURCHETT, Josiah. LS, 1p., December 9th. Josiah Burchett, Secretary of the Admiralty at the Admiralty Office. Letter acknowledging Delaval's letter giving details of his safe arrival at Spithead with the ships named on October 24th order and requesting that the fireship be taken to Deptford to be paid up. Congratulates Delaval on his safe arrival. [BTC#387459]