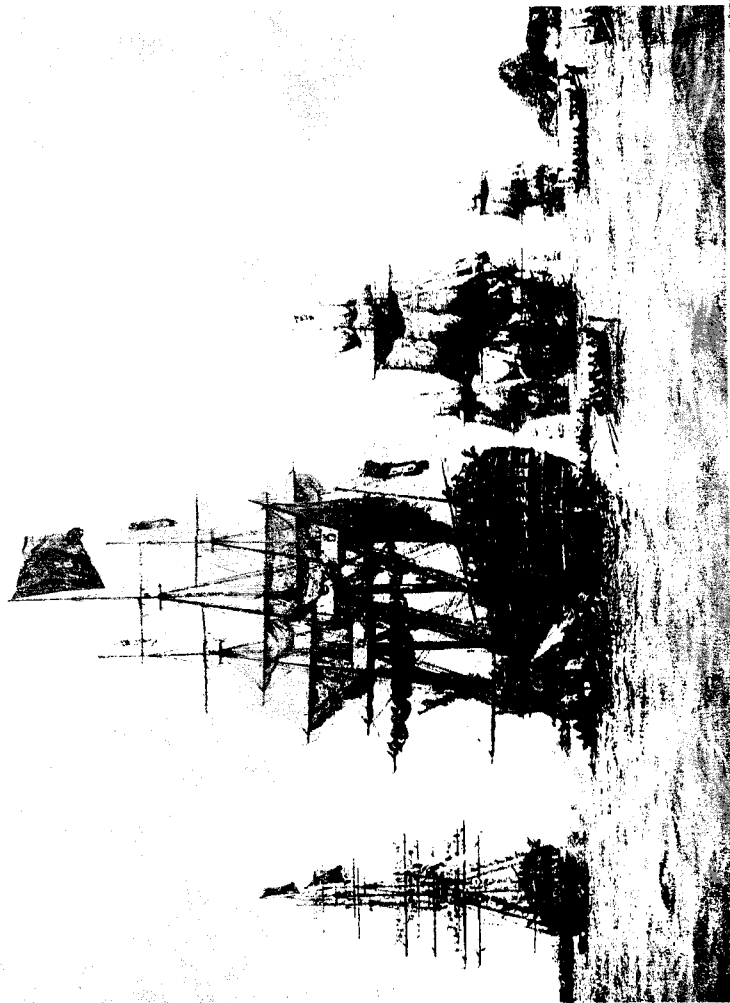


**THE BRITISH
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Quinta Nova
Carcavelos
2777 PAREDE



ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE ROYAL FAMILY
RIO DE JANEIRO MARCH 7 1808

The line of ships that accompanied the King and his family, approach
to the bay of Rio de Janeiro. H. H. Martens, 1818. The original is in the
Royal Collection, London.

CHegada da Família Real de Portugal
Rio de Janeiro - 7 de Março de 1808

A esta Princesa Real achá de bordar, a que de crianças se apresentam. José F. de
Brito. A uma Inglaterra. Martens, 1818. Original in the
Royal Collection, London.

ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE ROYAL FAMILY RIO DE JANEIRO MARCH 7 1808

by Kenneth H. Light

Five centuries ago sailors landed on the tropical shores of Bahia and a new era for Portugal began. Many believe that a second era unfolded, for both Portugal and Brazil, when another 'landing' took place – the arrival of the royal family and court in 1808.

During the last decade details of the journey undertaken by D. João and his Court have come to light and have been published (see previous issues of this Report). Identifying how artists have recorded this event has also been part of this research.

The results include: the embarkation on November 27 1807 at the *Cais de Belém* - a beautiful painting by Nicolas Delerive (it hangs in the *Museu Nacional dos Coches*); the departure from Brazil, on April 21 1821, drawn by the renowned artist Jean Baptiste Debret; an engraving by Constantino de Fontes showing the arrival of D. João VI at the *Praça do Terreiro do Paço* after the crossing that took 10 weeks, on July 4. The arrival at Rio de Janeiro, until now, has only warranted some tiny images painted on commemorative fans, probably drawn in Rio and produced in Macao.

Detailed knowledge of the event and the existing void were the main reasons for deciding to commission a painting depicting the arrival in Rio de Janeiro.



The well known artist Geoff Hunt RSMA¹, a specialist on warships of this period, accepted the commission². Readers of the Aubrey / Maturin series by Patrick O'Brian will already know his work as his paintings adorn all the covers.

Preparations took place over 18 months: identifying old prints that showed the bay at Rio and the Villegaignon Fort (no longer in existence), research at the National Maritime Museum (they hold over 70,000 drawings and engravings) and, in Lisbon, the correct use of Portuguese flags. Using data from various logs, a GPS³ was used to find the locale where the ships had anchored, in order to photograph the shoreline, including the Sugar Loaf mountain.

The artist was briefed that, as far as possible, the scene should be accurate even to the less obvious details: wind strength and direction, light and condition of the sea. In addition the painting should reflect the joy felt by all because of having the royal family so near and for their safe arrival after the long and hazardous journey.

In June 1999 it was completed; just in time for the major exhibition, *D. João VI Um Rei Aclamado na América*, held at Rio's *Museu Histórico Nacional*. At the time of writing it is on loan to the *Museu Imperial* in Petrópolis.



Turning to the painting, the principal ship in the centre is the 80-gun *Príncipe Real*; having just anchored after using her spanker to turn into the wind. The personal ensign of the Queen, D. Maria I, flutters on the main mast. The *Príncipe Real* brought 1,054 persons (154 passengers and a crew of 900). In addition to the Queen, passengers

¹ Royal Society of Marine Artists.

For further information on the artist see www.io.com/gibbonsb/pob/GeoffHunt.html

² Oil 24 x 36 inches.

³ Global Positioning System. A hand held gadget that can identify its position, anywhere on earth, to within 10 yards.

included the Prince Regent D. João, his two sons D. Pedro and D. Miguel and the Infante of Spain (brought up in the Portuguese court) D. Pedro Carlos.

When the Prince Regent announced that he would only be disembarking the next day, local noblemen set off in small boats to go and pay their respects to the royal family.⁴

On the left HMS *Marlborough* fires a salute, her men cheering from the yards. Thomas Western captain of HMS *London*, also present at that moment in the harbour, recorded in the log: '...at 11 they entered the Harbour mouth and the Portuguese laying here Saluted...12.40 Mann'd Ship – Saluted the Prince with 21 Guns and on His Anchoring Cheer'd him...as did all the English and portuguese Ships...'.⁵ These ships were part of the Lisbon squadron. In November 1807 they were under Rear Admiral of the Blue Sir Sidney Smith but, by March 1808, the command had been transferred to Vice Admiral of the Red Sir Charles Cotton.

On the right the *Afonso de Albuquerque*, carrying D. Carlota Joaquina and 4 of her daughters, prepares to anchor. She has begun to furl her fore and main topgallants and has unleashed her best bower, which is now hanging from the cathead⁶. Behind follows the *Medusa* and the frigate *Úrania* that remained close to the *Príncipe Real* during the entire voyage. Also on the right, HMS *Bedford*, her escort duties now nearly over; she had picked up the squadron on

⁴ An eyewitness, Luiz Gonçalves dos Santos, wrote in *Memórias para Servir a História do Reino do Brasil*, Editora Itatiaia da Universidade de São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, 1981. 2 v.

'...todas as pessoas as mais distintas pelas suas graduações, e empregos, sem demora se dirigiram em escaleres, e outras embarcações para a real nau, ansiosas de terem a honra de beijar a augusta mão do Principe Regente Nosso Senhor, e de Suas Altezas, que nela tinham vindo...'

⁵ Light, Kenneth H., *The Migration of the Royal Family of Portugal to Brazil 1807/08*, Rio de Janeiro, Private printing by Kenneth H. Light, 1995.

⁶ The large anchor on the right side of her bow, seen hanging from a horizontal beam to maintain it clear of the hull.

December 14, off the island of Ferro in the Canaries. Nearby the Villegaignon Fort fires a salute.

In the background – from left to right – the Niteroi coastline, the entrance to the bay and the Sugar Loaf mountain.

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Kenneth Light is a member of British Historical Society and has also contributed many articles in the past years to the Annual Report.