



**Note:**

The following account is one of many of the massacre at Negrais, an island close to Bassein where the English East India Company attempted to establish a factory in the mid-eighteenth century. An introduction for the account has been provided by Dalrymple:

It will be necessary, by way of Introduction, to mention that it having been determined to withdraw the settlement at Negrais except three or four people to take care of the teak timbers that had been collected there, and to secure the right of possession, in case it might afterwards be thought proper to resettle at that place. Captain Newton proceeded accordingly to Bengal, where he arrived 14th of May 1759, with thirty-five Europeans, and seventy black people. On 30th of July 1759. The administration at Bengal, thought proper to accept of Captain William Henry Southby's offer to go to Negrais, to take care of the teak timbers, and accordingly dispatched the *Victoria Snow*, Captain Walter Alves, to carry Mr. Southby to the Negrais. Captain Alves returned to Bengal in November, and gave the following account of the Settlement at Negrais, being cut off.

The papers concerning Negrais, and Captain Alve's Embassy to Ava [previous issue of the SBBR], with the letters that passed on that occasion, were communicated by my much lamented friend, the late Lord Pigot...

Alexander Dalrymple (1791)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction is as found in Dalrymple's *Oriental Repertory*, published in 1808, but originally written as a report in 1791. the second paragraph has been extracted from Dalrymple's introduction to that volume.

## Account of the Loss of Negrais

### Captain Walter Alves

On our passage to Negrais, on the 22d September, in the latitude of 13°. 30'N, about thirty leagues from the Coast of Choromandal, in a violent gale of wind from the SW, we were obliged, for the preservation of our lives, and safety of the Honourable Company's vessel, to cut away our main mast, main yard, with the sail to it, the main topmast, and our lee anchor; we had got down both topsail yards, and the spritsail yard, on deck; but when the main mast fell over the side, some ropes got foul of the topsail and spritsail yards, in such a manner, that not being able to clear them, and the mast thumping along side, for fear of bilging on it, we were obliged to throw them all overboard; at that time the sea broke all over us, and, when she got before it, we were pooped by a very large sea, which drove in the dead lights in the cabin window, and shipt a great deal of water in the cabin; all which run down into the hold, and must have done a great deal of damage to the cargo there, we had several other seas that broke on us; one in particular that filled the deck, fore and aft, and unhung one of the cabin doors, which were shut, and a great quantity of water run into the cabin and so down into the hold; when we had made Cape Negrais, our fore yard, which was the only yard we had left, broke in a squall, in a place where it was bad; and the morning of the 21st of September, in the beginning of the gale of wind, our boat, which we were obliged to tow astern as we were so crank we could not hoist her in, filled with a sea, so were obliged to cut it away: On the 4th October we got into Negrais harbour where we found the *Shaftsbury*, Europe Ship, Captain Inglis. In the Evening Mr. Southby went ashoar, and on the 5th, and on the 6th in the morning, sent for every thing belonging to him ashoar, By the *Shaftsbury's* Long Boat; only five leaguers of Arrack.

The day of his arrival at the Negrais, there came one Antonio, the Buraghaman Governor of Persaim, there also, with a letter from the Buraghamah King to the Resident, which was delivered in form the next day, and Antonio dined with Mr. Southby afterwards.

Next morning, vis. on the 6th, between 9 and 10 o' clock, under pretence of asking for an answer to the letter he had

brought from the Buraghmah King, Antonio went again to the fort house to Mr. Southby, and was to have dined again with him; but just as the servants were bringing up the dinner, on signal given by Antonio, each of the Buraghmahns having singled out his man before, they stabbed Messrs. Southby, Robertson, Hope and Briggs, who were all above stairs; at the same time, and on the same signal, on pretence of buying something from the Europeans below, stabbed every man of them, only a midshipman that belonged to the *Shaftsbury*, the weapon glancing on his ribs made his escape to the water side, and hailed the *Shaftsbury*, telling them that the Buraghmahns had murdered all the Eurofzans in the fort. Captain Inglis immediately sent his pinnace armed, and took him on board, and as many of the black people, that belonged to the settlement, as had escaped; as we did also a country boat that we had from the shoar, for the Buraghmahns murdered man, women and child that fell into their hands; just before the midshipman came to the water side, we saw a great number of People run to the *Shaftsbury's* Long Boat (which had carried a loading of Mr. Southby's things ashoar from us and landed them) and she put off from the shoar, with the union of her ensign down, this was the first notice we had of what was done on shoar; there was killed of Europeans, besides those four already mentioned by name [Dalrymple's note: Mr. Robertson was not killed], a serjeant, a corporal, a matross and three private men, which were all that belonged to the settlement: also a sick man that belonged to the *Shaftsbury*, who was so ill he could not rise, him they stabbed on his cott. As soon as the Buraghmahns had got quiet possession of the fort, they brought all the guns there, which were nine in number, and fired at the *Shaftsbury* (they fired twenty-five chests of powder of Mr. Southby's that had been landed from us in the morning among other things) they did not fire at us; but, as we lay further up the river than the *Shaftsbury*, for fear in the night, when the tide of flood made, of their making an attempt on us by boats, which if it happened, the *Shaftsbury* could be of very little service in protecting us, and as we were of no force ourselves capable of opposing a number of boats and men on such a design, we weighed and dropt without the *Shaftsbury*, when we anchored. Afterwards some more of the black people that belonged to the Settlement got on board us, one of them was much bruised, by blows with a stick, and another was wounded with a lance, in six

different places, they gave us an account, that though the Buragmahns only brought about sixty men, in all the three Boats we saw, yet they had landed a great number of men, at a part of the island we could not see, and marched them through the woods; which come within half a musquet shot of the fort, in the edge of which they lay concealed, till, on the signal given, they rushed into the fort, by a gate that could not be seen by the ships, and assisted in the execution of the murdering scheme, and firing at the *Shaftsbury*.

In the evening I went on board Capt. Inglis, to see what he intended to do, and to ask his assistance for masts and yards, as there was little probability of getting them any where else; he told me, that as all the Europeans ashore were killed, and nothing of The Company's of value sufficient, that he could carry away, to excuse him if his ship should be much weakened by landing his men, especially as he knew not the numbers against them; he thought it best to leave the place, and resolved to do so as soon as possible. As to my request for masts and yards, he told me he would let me have what he could spare, and at the same time said, that as he was in want of rice, and could get none to buy, before this melancholy affair happened, so now with the additional number of people he had taken on board from Negrais, he had not sufficient for his Passage to Madrass, therefore requested, me to let him have one hundred Bags of The Honourable Company's rice on board us, for which he would be accountable to George Picot, Esq. at Madrass; which I agreed to, on his giving me a receipt, the price referred to be settled at Madrass; while I was on board the *Shaftsbury*, the Buragmahns kept firing at her, and she at the fort. A shot from the fort killed Mr. Burroughs the 2d mate, another man, and wounded the gunner much in the arm, they also lodged several shot in her between wind and water, and shot away a good deal of her rigging. I saw one French man with the Buragmahns the day before they cut off the settlement, who was an officer under the Buragmah King, and dined with Mr. Southby once, whether or not there were any more Europeans with them I can't tell, but think there was by their levelling and pointing their guns so well, for from first to last they lodged nine shot between wind and water, and great numbers struck her hull aloft, but luckily killed nobody, but what I mentioned before; the Buragmahns continued to fire all night at the *Shaftsbury*; this

evening we saw a sail in the offing. There escaped on board the *Shaftsbury* forty-seven men and two women, and on board us thirteen men, two women and one child from the Negrais.

On the 7th the Buraghmahns continued to fire at the *Shaftsbury* all the forenoon, when she, having unmoored, weighed and dropped down the harbour with the ebb; when abreast of us Captain Inglis hailed, and told me he intended to drop out of the harbour that tide, and if we would follow him he would give us all the assistance: on which we weighed and followed him out, and anchor about six miles without the Harbour, near the *Shaftsbury*; here we got what masts, &c. he could spare us, and for them signed a receipt, in which was mentioned, the prices of what I had received from him, and wrote to the Honourable George Pigot, Esq., to whom I referred him for payment, at Madrass; also there I delivered him the one hundred Bags of the Honourable Company's rice, and took his receipt for it, of which I also wrote to the Honourable George Pigot, and to settle the price, as I did not agree with him on that there. On the 10th, the *Shaftsbury* sailed, and the ship, we saw in the offing some days before, sent her boat on board; she proved to be a Moor-ship, from Madras, bound for Mergui, in great want of provisions. They had first been on board the *Shaftsbury*, and brought with them a Pass, signed by Mr. Hodges at Tellicherry; and money to pay for rice; they only wanted what would serve on their passage to Mergui, and as I shewed them our rice was damaged, they took eighteen bags of it, at three rupees per bag, and two bags of wheat at six per bag.

On the 14th, the wind coming fair, we run to Diamond Island to get water and ballast, as we were too light, and had only one cask of water left; for the time was so short that we were at Negrais before the Settlement was cut off, that we had got no supplies of any thing from thence. While we lay at Diamond Island, On the 16th, we saw a Snow under English Colours, that came from the Northward, working to get into the Negrais, we weighed and endeavoured to speak her, and made also signals for that purpose, as I imagined it might be dangerous, after what I saw, for a small vessel to go in, but they, not suspecting what had happened, run into the harbour and anchor there: we could not get nearer, as the wind and tide was, than within three miles of Pagoda Point, however I sent in a Canoe, we had, and found her to be the *Helen Snow*, Captain Miller, from Bengal, to the Strait of

Malacca, who had run in to get his water filled; the *Snow* in the evening; and, in the night, and next morning, the Buraghmahns set fire to the place, it kept burning all night. In the morning they sent a small boat off to him, which would not come on board, but called to him to moor, and he should have whatever he wanted: he asked them to come along side, but they said they would go ashore, and ask for orders to do so; soon afterwards they brought all the boats they had there, and rowed up the river, as fast as possible, a short time after that happened, I got aboard the *Snow*, in our canoe, for when I saw the place in flames, the night before, I imagined the Buraghmahns might be going away, therefore intended to run in with the vessel, as soon as opportunity served, in order to recover any thing of The Company's that might have escaped the fire, if possible; but the wind continuing to the Northward, I went into the harbour in the canoe in the morning, and found Capt. Miller's boat going ashore to fill their empty water-casks. I also went ashore in ours, to see if we could not make a raft of The Honourable Company's timbers and tow down to the vessel.

On going ashore I saw one of the most shocking sights I ever beheld, viz. the bodies of all the Europeans, and a great number of black people (by their dress I knew them, as they had not been stript, for they were all putrified) lying scattered up and down, some in a wet ditch, that was round the fort; others by the water side, and about thirteen or fourteen on a Plain, about twenty yards without the fort, to the SE, among which were the remains of Messrs. Southby's, Hope's and Brigg's bodies, the others were the Europeans that belonged to the settlement, and black people; they had been all pinioned, for the ropes, that had been used for that purpose, were still visible about their arms. The Buraghmahns had set fire to every [thing] that would burn that they left behind, viz. All the houses in general were burnt down, the company's schooner and longboat, that lay in the creek to be repaired; they had endeavoured to burn the teak timbers also, but they lying in a swampy place, would not take fire, the remains of the gun carriages (for they had burnt them for the sake of the iron) lay on the beach, the guns they carried away, they had sunk an eight oar pinnace of The Company's, at low water mark, which, as she had lain some days, was full of sand, the weight of which had split her to pieces; I found a yard and the main boom belonging to the

schooner, that was burnt, and brought them off, and as much old iron and few coddallies which were amongst it, as there was a heap of it lay thrown together not carried away, as the canoe could carry; I tried to get some of the timbers into the water, but had not people enough to do it, as they were about fifty yards above high water mark, so I went to Captain Miller, to ask him for some people to make a raft, as our own vessel was so far off, the canoe could not have returned from her before night. Just after I had got on board there, we saw about fifteen or twenty large boats, that rowed from twenty to thirty oars each, coming down the river, towards us as fast as possible: this immediately determined Capt. Miller to weigh, and run out of the harbour; just after he had got up his anchor, they landed at the fort, I believe there might be five hundred men that we saw come out of them on the beach. I went on board our own vessel again, and as I saw no probability of getting any thing from Negrais, weighed and run to Diamond Island, to get our water filled, and our masts and yards refitted as well as possible, also ballast, we were very crank; Captain Miller went also along with us; and as he said he was in want of rice, I let him have thirty bags of The Honourable Company's that was on board here and took a receipt for it, specifying that he had received it for the use of the *Helen Snow*, and desiring his owners to pay for it, the price to be settled by the Gentlemen at Bengal.

We continued at Diamond Island till the 23d of October; when having filled our Water, got some ballast and fitted every thing in the best manner we could, we sailed for Bengal, and arrived in Ballasore Road the 10th November. We left Captain Miller ready to sail, from Diamond Island, the first fair wind, he had tried to get to the SE, but the wind and current being against him, he was obliged to anchor again.