

RESEARCH NOTES

THOMAS GULLOCK'S ARRIVAL IN THE EAST INDIES

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Introduction

In a previous Research Note in *BRB* it was suggested that Thomas Gullock, who suffered many misfortunes in trade with Borneo at the end of 17th century, first arrived in the East from across the Pacific Ocean, as a member of the crew of the English ship, *Cygnets*, (Smith 2015). Commanded by Charles Swan, this ship had departed from England in 1683 as a legitimate trading vessel. Its crew later turned to piracy, as described by William Dampier, a former buccaneer in the West Indies (Dampier, no date, and 1697). Evidence that Gullock had himself spent time in the West Indies comes from correspondence from the English East India Company (EIC) in Madras in 1696, following a major financial dispute that arose from a voyage to Borneo that ended in shipwreck. In seeking (unsuccessfully) Gullock's arrest, the EIC stated that he had been a privateer in the West Indies and they feared that he "may return to his old trade" (*Letters from Fort St George* 1696:85).¹ The suggestion that Gullock was a crewmember of the *Cygnets* relied in particular on his presence in Batavia (now Jakarta) at the same time as Francis Nelly and Kerril Roffey, both of them known members of the *Cygnets*' crew.²

A second Research Note (Smith and Paul 2018) added more to the story of Gullock's career but provided nothing definite about his first arrival in the East. A document preserved in the records of the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC), the Dutch East India Company, held in *Het Nationaal Archief* (the National Archives of the Netherlands) confirms the original suggestion that Gullock had arrived in southeast Asia aboard *Cygnets*. We discuss that suggestion here along with more VOC archival and other records. This account highlights the tangled circumstances that led to Gullock's arrival and his ongoing interest in the region, especially Borneo. We also give new information about his marriage arrangements and update the previous suggestion (Smith and Paul 2018) about Gullock's birth and social status.

1 Text in the quotation has been modernized. Privateers were private vessels commissioned to capture vessels of hostile nations. The term was also used for crewmembers. Such commissions were issued by governments during declared wars. Lesser authorities also issued them and their legality could be vague, with "hostile" interpreted loosely. Some vessels inevitably turned to general piracy. The EIC authorities in Madras obviously thought that the ship on which Gullock was thought to be escaping would do so, but they were wrong.

2 Roffey is called Rofy in some sources (see Smith 2015).

Dutch Archival Records: Gullock in Mindanao

The HNA archives cited here include a list of eleven men who, by various means, found themselves among the Dutch in Ternate, and who all came from the Maguindanao Sultanate, Mindanao, in the Philippines. They had been the only Europeans living there and were former crewmembers of the *Cygnets*, as recorded by Dampier. In the list Gullock's name is in second place, between Nelly's and Roffey's, named as *Thomas Gulick, van Wexroud, pe: derdewaak*, i.e. Thomas Gullock of Wexford, third mate (VOC 1689:449).³ Thus, as Smith and Paul (2018) had found, Gullock was Irish or, more precisely, Anglo-Irish and born in Wexford in present-day Eire.

Interestingly, this list precedes a group of documents gathered under the title *Journal der Engelse in de Zuid Zee, met enige particulier brieven daar achter gevoegd*, that is, "Journal of the English in the South Sea, along with some private letters". The two main documents include a daily diary of a voyage from Jamaica with Captain Peter Harris to the Gulf of Panama, from 26 April to 6 September 1684 (VOC 1689:451-469).⁴ It is followed by a formal logbook of the voyage of the *Cygnets* from 25 October 1683 to 28 July 1686, with a few more entries up to 2 September 1687 (VOC 1689:525-560, 501-524,497-500, 471-494, 561-575).⁵

Both documents are Dutch translations of English originals. The events reported in each of them show that they were written by two different individuals. The author of the first journal belonged to Captain Harris's company, who forced Captain Swan to turn pirate in August 1684. The second journal is the work of an officer of the *Cygnets* who can be identified quite easily, thanks to the information provided in the logbook (VOC 1689:506) and the writings of Dampier (Dampier no date:ff. 75v, 93v, 198r; 1697:374). He was Francis Nelly, second and then chief mate of the *Cygnets*.⁶ Moreover, Dampier mentions that after their arrival amongst the Dutch, both Nelly and Roffey had their logbooks seized by the VOC officials (Dampier 1697:445). Accordingly, Roffey would probably have been the author of the first document. This is likely since, like Gullock, he is said to be a *derdewaak* in the above-mentioned list.⁷

At first, Maguindanao was an unexpected place of rest for these men who had lived as wanderers for two years. But only those who had enough gold could really enjoy their stay, being the most esteemed, the best housed and served, and able also to maintain mistresses and concubines. These privileged men, about one third of the whole company,

3 *Copia lijst van de namen der elf overgezonden Engelse en France enterloopers uit de Magindanauw...* [Ternate, 31 July 1689]. Lengthy titles are here abbreviated and references are as in the online catalogues.

4 *Beschrijving van voyage aangevangen bij Captain Pieter Harris met 86 mannen van de eiland van Bonacko in de Noord Zee, ende daarna over het gebergte van America naë de Zuid Zee...*

5 *Journal van onze voorgenomen voyagie... naë de Straat van Magelanus..., op het schip Cygnets, schipper Carolus Swann van London.* The pages were out of order when a Dutch archivist numbered them and are here in the right order to understand the text.

6 Nelly is mentioned as *opperstuurman* (chief mate) in the Dutch records. Later he became a junior Royal Navy officer, and then commander of EIC ships. He died in 1709 (references in Harrison, no date).

7 On his return to England, he had a successful career as a Royal Navy officer, dying in 1716 (Charnock 1795, Vol. III:85-86).

were obviously in no hurry to leave. Moreover, the English had to wait until the end of the monsoon, three months after their arrival, to careen the *Cygnets*. The ship was ready to sail in late December. Captain Swan remained undecided as to a time of departure, however, and, although he set 23 January 1687 as the day, he gave no order to sail. In consequence, many of the men mutinied and departed in the *Cygnets*, leaving behind Swan and 36 of the crew.⁸ Some weeks before the mutiny, 15 crewmembers, including Dampier, had twice attempted to leave for Borneo, believing that there was an EIC factory there, but Swan had prevented them each time by seizing their pirogue (Dampier no date:fol.197r). In fact there was no EIC factory on Borneo. This misunderstanding arose following the receipt of a letter from Thomas Bowrey, who had visited Borneo only as a private trader, and who believed that the EIC had established a factory in Mindanao (Dampier 1697:370).

The master of a Dutch sloop from Amboyna, Barend Brouwer, was witness of all these events. He had arrived from Ternate in the Moluccas on 5 November 1686. The governor of this island for the VOC, Joan Hendrik Thim, had sent him there to investigate discreetly what the English were doing in Mindanao. Five of Swan's men left with Brouwer; four were French and one was Dutch.⁹ The latter was sent as a mariner aboard a yacht that Governor Thim despatched to Batavia to advise the Governor General of what was going on in Mindanao.¹⁰ He was questioned and mentioned that among the Englishmen who remained in Maguindanao were Swan's two merchants (John Hartop and George Smith), his pilot (Nelly), his surgeon (Alexander Ramsey), and his quartermaster (David Shahan).¹¹

Gullock leaves for Batavia

Without going into more detail, the position of the English became increasingly precarious and eight more men departed in a boat, including Nelly, Roffey and Gullock. Perhaps they had no more gold to be able to live there comfortably, but they had apparently also fallen out with their captain and their other comrades. They might have learned of the return of the *Cygnets*, which anchored on the southern part of the island from late October to mid-November before setting sail for the Celebes. Indeed, that island was the destination of these eight Englishmen when they left Mindanao. The exact date of their flight is still unknown, but it must be between November 1687 and February 1688. They landed on the Minahasa peninsula, where they attempted by force to obtain cloves and nutmegs, but Dutch merchants persuaded them to surrender. This was how they came to be sent to Ternate, where Governor Thim kept them under guard for some time (VOC 1688:244-249).

As in the case of the other *Cygnets*'s men who Brouwer had brought there the pre-

8 *Journal van onze voorgenomen voyagie* (VOC 1689:573-574; Dampier, no date:fol. 197v-199r, 1697:371-374). About 15 men had died since their arrival in Mindanao.

9 *Archivo General de Indias* (1688).

10 News from Ternate, 27 July 1687, in *VOC Dag Register*, Batavia (DR):2502:ff 543-545; also *Lijst waar bij kan gezien werden wanneer en in wat kwaliteit de Engelse enterlopers alhier tot Ternate in dienst zijn aangenomen*, 29 June 1689 (VOC 1689:593-594).

11 Declaration of Matthijs Abramszoon, Batavia, 27 July 1687, in VOC DR 2502:ff 545-550. The names in parentheses are reconstructed from Dampier's writings and VOC records.

vious year, five of the newcomers officially entered the VOC service in Ternate, namely John Timberley and Edward Bayne as soldiers, Nelly as a chief mate, Roffey as a gunner, and Gullock as a ship's steward or purser.¹² Gullock began his employment in late October 1688 but did not work continuously (VOC 1689:593-594). These jobs were not sinecures - Roffey later declared to Dampier that on several occasions they were sent to destroy nutmeg trees on uninhabited islands of the Moluccas (Dampier 1697: 311, 316-317). The VOC had a policy of eradicating all of the spice trees where there were not natives to prevent their being exploited by European competitors. Five of the English, Theophilus Boxton, Gullock, Nelly, Roffey and Timberley, left Ternate on the VOC ship *China* on June 30, 1689, arriving in Batavia on 8 August (VOC DR 2505:fol. 505).

Gullock's Departure for England

During the following weeks, the English passengers petitioned Governor-General Joannes Camphuis and his Council to return to Europe. One of them, Boxton, was allowed to embark on a ship that sailed about a week later for Holland (VOC, *General Resolutiën van het kasteel Batavia* (GR) 903:425, 13 Sept. 1689; DR 2505:fol. 691, 22 Sept.). Gullock sent a petition on 23 September and another one four days later. In response, the Governor-General and his Council granted him payment of his wages as a VOC employee in Ternate but denied his request to be sent to the Coast of Coromandel in India rather than to Europe (VOC GR 903: 449, 23 Sept.;455-456, 27 Sept.). On 4 October the authorities gave the same answers to the petitions of Nelly and Roffey, which also contained requests for payment of their wages and their transportation to Coromandel (VOC GR 903:473). Although these English demands seem to have greatly annoyed the VOC officials, it is not clear why. Perhaps it was feared that the three men, all of them pilots, and fortified by the experience acquired during three years in the Philippines and the Moluccas, would find in Madras either EIC or private investors to back a trading scheme in the VOC sphere of influence in that part of the world. Gullock's subsequent career and his own trading ventures involving Borneo shows that such a risk was real.¹³

Early in October Timberley was also authorized to embark on the first ship destined for Holland, also with the payment of his wages as a soldier in Ternate (VOC GR 903:476, 7 Oct.). It is not known what further delayed the departure of Nelly, Gullock and Roffey, but on 25 November they jointly petitioned the Governor General for their repatriation to England. What motivated this final request was the arrival of the EIC's *Resolution*, Captain William Sharpe, about a week earlier (DR 2505:fol. 845, 19 Nov.). Having left Madras two months previously, this ship came to recover the pepper cargo of another English ship disabled in Batavia, with orders to proceed afterwards directly to England (*Records of Fort St George, Diary and Consultation Book* 1689:73-78). Governor General Camphuis granted the request by the three men, but on condition that they did not leave the ship before it departed. Perhaps it was feared that they might transfer to a ship bound for India (VOC GR 903:576, 25 Nov.). Eventually, on 3 January 1690,

12 The word in the VOC record is *bottelier*, in this context the officer responsible for food supplies.

13 Moreover, a decade later, the EIC, wishing to establish a trading factory in Borneo, sought the advice of Thomas Bowrey and Captain Roffey, then a Royal Navy officer (Temple Carnac 1905: xlii).

the *Resolution* weighed anchor (DR 2506:fol. 4), and on 12 July arrived in Plymouth, England (*Resolution* c.1692).

Some New Light on Gullock's Marriage

More information has come to light about Gullock's marriage to Ann Styans that was mentioned by Smith and Paul (2018). Although the surviving Glenfield, Leicestershire, parish registers give November 1697 as the date, six years earlier, on 16 July 1691, a London lawyer gave an "allegation" (affidavit) at Glenfield that there was no impediment to marriage by license (Armytage 1890:186). Such licenses removed delays caused by calling banns. It appears that there was no actual marriage at this time, possibly because Gullock was preparing to go to sea in the EIC's *Berkeley Castle*. There would have been ample time, however, because although the ship had been licensed to depart as part of a convoy for India in July it was not permitted to depart until March 1692 due to warfare with the French (Khan 1926:228,229). The 1691 document also indicates that Gullock was then about 27 years old. Assuming there was no copyist's error (since this is a transcription of the original minute), he would have been born around 1665, and he would have been barely 20 years old when he arrived in the Pacific. Gullock's being thirteen years younger than Dampier might explain why that more experienced fellow voyager did not mention him in his writings, as he did Roffey and Nelly.

Gullock's Birth and Social Status

It was suggested previously that Gullock went to the West Indies as an indentured servant, in other words that he had very low social status (Smith 2015; Smith and Paul 2018). The fact that the will that he drew up in 1701 did not name his father or mother also raised the possibility that he was an illegitimate child. While this last suggestion cannot be ruled out, his social status might have been higher. Very soon after Gullock arrived home from the East in 1690, although previously a buccaneer in the West Indies and ex-pirate against the Spanish, the 1691 allegation for marriage calls him a "Gent"[leman]. This was rather a specific term at the time. Also, his uncle Nicholas Fotheringham, named in the will, was a Cambridge graduate and minister in the Church of England. Gullock's family was Protestant, as shown by his bequest of money to the poor of St Iberius' church in Wexford where he was born (Smith and Paul 2018).¹⁴

Gullock was born in about 1665 according to the 1691 allegation for marriage. Wexford, in the southeast of Ireland, was an important port at the time. Intense warfare in the region between 1641 and the early 1660s resulted in considerable displacement of the local people (both Anglo-Irish and Irish).¹⁵ In this context there is mention of a Thomas Gullock as an ensign (junior lieutenant) in a list of officers in the English royal army in Ireland in 1662 (Gilbert 1895:242). He seems a very likely candidate for our Thomas

14 Unfortunately, surviving baptism records for Wexford appear only to be for Roman Catholics.

15 Some Catholic Irish landowners rebelled against the English administration between 1641 and 1649, when Oliver Cromwell's troops arrived for a successful campaign. Some of Cromwell's soldiers afterwards settled in the region. Further disruptions occurred before and during the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660. There are well-researched articles about the history of Wexford and the 17th century wars in *Wikipedia*, with many references.

Gullock's father. This is speculation but it is not surprising, given all the warfare and disruptions, that there were many buccaneers in the West Indies in the later 17th century who originated from Ireland.

Conclusions

Unfortunately, the documents that have been examined give no information about Thomas Gullock's life as a mariner prior to his arrival in the Philippines on the *Cygnnet*. He might have been a crewmember of the *Cygnnet* when the ship departed from England in 1683. Alternatively, he might have joined the ship from buccaneers led by Captain Peter Harris across the Panama isthmus or, like Dampier, transferred to the *Cygnnet* from the *Bachelor's Delight*, a ship captured off West Africa and taken to the Pacific. Nevertheless, despite the uncertainties, the documents described here reveal definitely how Gullock arrived in Ternate and then Batavia, after which he departed for England. He returned to the East in 1692 and began his eventful and unsuccessful trading career that involved Borneo and the dispute with the EIC in Madras and then piracy by his ship's crew off Sumatra in 1698 (Smith 2015). Gullock was certainly quite wealthy when he drew up his will in 1701, shortly before his last voyage that ended in 1702 with his death in a ship's explosion (Smith and Paul 2018). Despite the remaining gaps in our knowledge, this ongoing saga can now be considered as complete.

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