

The British in the Adriatic, 1800-1825



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Malcolm Scott Hardy

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Contents

Foreword.....	ix
Part 1: The British Navy, Rijeka and A.L. Adamić: War and Trade in the Adriatic 1800-25	
The Arrival of John Leard in Rijeka, 1802.....	3
Nelson, convoys and naval supplies, 1803-04.....	6
The Oak Timber Project	11
The War of the Third Coalition.....	16
Trade War 1806-9	19
The War of 1809.....	30
Travels 1810-12.....	36
The Timber Contract of 1812	43
Adamić's Return to Rijeka, 1812	47
The Aborted Insurrection, February-April 1813	50
The British Attack on Rijeka, July 1813	52
Nugent liberates Rijeka, August 1813	58
Adamić's return to Rijeka, autumn 1813.....	62
The End of the War	65
Leard's return to Rijeka, July 1814	67
The Last Timber Contract 1818-20	70
Epilogue.....	73
Part 2: The British and Vis: War in the Adriatic 1805-15	
Introduction: The British and the Adriatic.....	81
The defence of Lissa: A safe harbour	91
The defence of Lissa: Delays and surveys.....	106
The defence of Lissa: Occupation and fortification.....	144
Life on Lissa.....	168
The British leave Lissa.....	184
Appendix 1: Sources	196
1 Primary Sources.....	196
2 Published Sources: Select Bibliography	197
Appendix 2: Names	199
Place-names.....	199
Peoples	199
Individuals	200
Naval and military designations	201
Maps and charts.....	202
Glossary of place-names.....	203
Appendix 3: Biographical notes.....	209
British	209
French.....	212
Austrian (and Croatian)	213

Appendix 4: Ships and soldiers.....	215
Warships.....	215
Boats	218
Gunboats	219
Supplies.....	220
Visibility at Sea	221
Sources	221
Soldiers.....	221
Appendix 5: Remains.....	226
Vis (Lissa).....	226
Korčula	228

Part 3: A Diversionary Attack in the Adriatic 1812

The British, Montenegro and Russia 1812	231
Admiral Fremantle goes to Lissa	235
News of Chichagov.....	244
Admiral Grieg arrives in Sicily.....	248
Fremantle and Montenegro: Second Phase	252
After Chichagov.....	257

List of Figures

Part 1: The British Navy, Rijeka and A.L. Adamić: War and Trade in the Adriatic 1800-25

Figure 1A. Andrija Ljudevit Adamić (1766–1828) (unknown artist, Museum of Rijeka).	3
Figure 1B. John Leard, master mariner.	3
Figure 2A. The Admiralty in 1818, built 1722–6, and the screen added 1759–61 (by Joseph Constantine Stadler, London Metropolitan Archives).	4
Figure 2B. Board Room of the Admiralty (Thomas Rowlandson, Metropolitan Museum of New York).	4
Figure 3. Somerset House, begun in 1775, the seat of the Navy Board.	5
Figure 4A. Gilbert Eliot, Lord Minto (1751–1814) (by James Atkinson, National Portrait Gallery).	5
Figure 4B. The victualling yard at Deptford.	5
Figure 5. The PREVOYANT at Porto Re (Kraljevica), 1802.	6
Figure 6. The Adriatic.	7
Figure 7. Horatio Nelson by George Baxter, after Lemuel Francis Abbott.	8
Figure 8. View of the Siege of Valetta. Malta was besieged captured by the British in 1800. Print after Major James Weir.	9
Figure 9. HMS ARROW, sunk in battle, 1805, detail of oil painting by Francis Sartorius.	11
Figure 10. The fortress town of Karlovac.	14
Figure 11. Deptford Dockyard, detail of oil painting by Joseph Farington (Royal Museums Greenwich).	15
Figure 12. Trieste, drawing by William Innes Pocock, 1813.	18
Figure 13. Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood (1748–1810). Book illustration based on an original portrait.	20
Figure 14. Types of vessel, drawing by William Innes Pocock.	21
Figure 15. Sir Robert Ardair (1763–1855), oil painting by Thomas Gainsborough (Baltimore Museum of Art).	28
Figure 16. The harbour of Mali Lošinj.	29
Figure 17. Sir William Hoste, c. 1833 by William Greatbach.	30
Figure 18A. Eugène de Beauharnais, c.1802–1804, oil painting by François Gérard.	31
Figure 18B. Auguste de Marmont (1774–1852), oil painting by Jean-Baptiste Paulin Guérin.	31
Figure 19. Admiral William Hargood (1726–1839), oil painting by Frederick Richard Say.	33
Figure 20A. Benjamin Bathurst, British diplomat (1784–1809) (unknown artist).	34
Figure 20B. Archduke Charles of Austria (1771–1847) (by Jean-Baptiste Isabey, Louvre).	34
Figure 21. Croatia 1809–13.	37
Figure 22. General Henri Bertrand (1773–1844) (unknown artist).	38
Figure 23A. Laval Nugent (1777–1862) (unknown artist, Trsat Castle, Rijeka).	39
Figure 23B. William Bentinck (1774–1839), by C.H. Gifford.	39
Figure 25. Malta, the entrance to Valletta (Museum of the Order of St John).	42
Figure 24. The fortifications of Valletta, Malta, illustration from <i>L'illustration</i> , 575 (XXIII), March 4, 1854.	42
Figure 26A & B. Somerset House; the Navy Board occupied the south wing. A. aquatint by Samuel Ireland, 1791. B. engraving for Dugdale's <i>England and Wales Delineated</i> (1845).	44

Figure 27. The courtyard of Somerset House, by Thomas Rowlandson and Auguste Charles Pugin.....	44
Figure 28A. Somerset House: stairs leading to the Navy Boardroom.	45
Figure 28B. West India Dock for sugar & colonial crops, by Thomas Rowlandson and Auguste Charles Pugin (Metropolitan Museum).....	45
Figure 29. The Rhinebeck Panorama, showing London between 1806 and 1811 (Museum of London).....	46
Figure 30. View of London from Greenwich, showing the Deptford Dock Yards, 1809 (Royal Museums, Greenwich).	46
Figure 31. Admiral Thomas Fremantle (1765–1819).....	49
Figure 32. British brig off Pula, February 1813, drawing by William Innes Pocock (National Maritime Museum).....	51
Figure 33A. Karolina Belinić, popularly believed to have saved Rijeka by petitioning the British commander.....	53
Figure 33B. Poster for the film <i>Karolina Riječka</i> , 1961.	53
Figure 34. Scene from the opera <i>Karolina Riječka</i>	54
Figure 35. The British bombardment of Rijeka (the Adamić sugar refinery can be seen on the left).....	55
Figure 36. The British bombardment Rijeka with Učka mountain and the sugar refinery. The batteries at the mouth of the Riečina are unprotected and unmanned.....	55
Figure 37. HMS BACCHANTE at Deptford 1811, commanded by Hoste in the bombardment of Rijeka (National Maritime Museum).....	56
Figure 38. A caricature of Napoleon, published Berlin 1813 and sent by Adamić to Fremantle...	59
Figure 39A. William Cathcart, by Henry Meyer, after John Hoppner (National Portrait Gallery).....	60
Figure 39B. Klemens von Metternich, oil painting by Thomas Lawrence (Royal Collection)..	60
Figure 40. The Louisa Road into Rijeka.	62
Figure 41. The Pool of London in the 1820s (the Customs House is on the right) (by Robert Havell).	72
Figure 42A. Andrija Ljudevit Adamić, identified here as ‘Deputy from Fiume’ (Rijeka).....	73
Figure 42B. Laval Nugent, who was buried in his residence of Trsat Castle, Rijeka.....	73
Figure 43A & B. John Leard and his wife.	74
Figure 44A & B. Paintings of Rijeka: A. from the sea and B. of the waterfront showing the Adamić Sugar Refinery.	74
Figure 45A & B. Adamić Sugar Refinery, by A.C. von Mayr.	75
Figure 46. The Sugar Refinery Palace, today the Town Museum.	76
Figure 47. Trsat Castle before Nugent’s restoration.....	76
Figure 48. Trsat Castle in 1837 with Doric Temple.	77
Figure 49. Trsat Castle today.	77

Part 2: The British and Vis: War in the Adriatic 1805-15

Figure 1. Map of the Adriatic including the Ionian Islands.....	82
Figure 2. Valletta, Malta, during the British siege of 1800, drawn by Major Weir.	83
Figure 3. Types of vessels in use in the northern Adriatic, watercolour by William Innes Pocock (National Maritime Museum).	87

Figure 4A. the trabaccolo, a small cargo vessel, suited to cabotage (drawing by Aldo Cherini)	88
Figure 4B. A model of a chebec, a swift merchant vessel, typical of the northern Adriatic. ...	88
Figure 5. The Adriatic in 1806	91
Figure 6. The Adriatic in 1809, showing French territorial gains.....	92
Figure 7. British frigate of 38 guns.	93
Figure 8. Istria and Kvarner (Umago lies between Pirano and Cittanova, Lussin is bottom right).....	94
Figure 9. Piccolo Lussin/Mali Lošinj, engraving by Jacob Emil Schindler.....	94
Figure 10. Auguste de Marmont (1774–1852), oil painting by Andrea Appiani.	95
Figure 11. Lesina/Hvar harbour, photographed in 1908.....	97
Figure 12. Admiral Lord Collingwood. Succeeded Nelson as commander-in-chief of the British fleet in the Mediterranean. Oil painting by Henry Howard, after a painting by Giuseppe Politi (National Portrait Gallery).....	99
Figure 13. Captain William Hoste. Most famous of the British naval officers serving in the Adriatic but never an Admiral. Drawing by William Greatbach (National Maritime Museum).....	102
Figure 14A. Eugene de Beauharnais, portrait by Jean Duplessi-Bertaux.	103
Figure 14B. Bernard Dubourdieu (1773–1881), led the French raid on Lissa in 1810 and was killed at the Battle of Lissa, 1811.....	103
Figure 15A & B. Battle Lissa 1811. A. Map, created by Ruhrfisch; B. watercolour by Nicholas Pocock (Tate).....	105
Figure 16A. Admiral Sir Charles Rowley (1770–1845), portrait by George Sanders.	107
Figure 16B. Admiral Edward Pellew (1757–1833), portrait by Samuel Drummond (Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery).....	107
Figure 17A. Sir Murray Maxwell (1775–1831), etching by Richard Dighton (National Portrait Gallery).....	110
Figure 17B. Captain James Alexander Gordon (1782–1869), engraving by an unknown artist....	110
Figure 18. Admiral Sir Charles Cotton (1753–1812), by Henry Meyer (National Portrait Gallery).....	111
Figure 19. Lord William Bentinck. Commander-in-chief of the British army forces in the Mediterranean and British Minister to the Court of Sicily. Portrait by Thomas Lawrence.....	113
Figure 20. Hudson Lowe (1769–1844), British commander on the island of Santa Maura, portrait by R.C. Seaton.....	114
Figure 21. Admiral Thomas Fremantle, commander of the British naval squadron in the Adriatic, 1812–13.	118
Figure 22. Captain Bennett’s sketch map of the port of St. George, October 1811 (University of Nottingham Portland (Welbeck) Collection).	121
Figure 23. Captain Smith’s map of Lissa, October 1811. He may not have surveyed the whole island in person as Comissa (Komiža) is misplaced. (Nottingham University Portland (Welbeck) Collection).	132
Figure 24. A traversing cannon in the battery on Hoste Island. From Austrian drawings in 1854. Although from 40 years after the British had built the batteries, little has changed.....	134

Figure 25. Comisa (Komiža) in a nineteenth century view with the Venetian Tower. The important spring that served as a watering place for the British warships is inside the harbour to the left. (Fisković Collection).....	134
Figure 26A & B. Captain Smith’s map of Port St. George, October 1811 with the hills numbered and named according to English conventions, e.g. Hornby Hill, Cove Hill etc. The note at the bottom (B.) is initialed F.M. (Frederick Maitland). (University of Nottingham Portland (Welbeck) Collection).....	137
Figure 27B. HMS WEAZLE, 18 gun brig. Watercolour by Nicholas Cammillieri (National Maritime Museum).....	142
Figure 27A. Captain John Talbot (1769–1851), commanded the British ships in the action against the RIVOLI. Portrait by Catterson Smith (National Maritime Museum). .	142
Figure 28. The battle between the new French ship-of-the-line RIVOLI and HMS VICTORIOUS with their escorts near Pola. Oil painting by Thomas Luny (National Maritime Museum).	143
Figure 29. HMS WEAZLE in action against French gunboats in Bassogliana Bay (Zaljev Marina west of Trogir) in April 1812. (National Maritime Museum).	143
Figure 30. Chart of Port St. George with soundings made by the sailing master of HMS EAGLE in March 1812 and copied into his sketchbook by William Innes Pocock. (National Maritime Museum).....	145
Figure 31A. Lt. Colonel George Duncan Robertson, appointed commander at Lissa in February 1812.....	146
Figure 31B. Captain of the 35th Regiment of Foot which provided the main body of soldiers sent to Lissa in April 1812. Caption reads ‘from Colonel Luard’s “Dress of the British Soldier”’	146
Figure 32. Uniform of the De Rolls Regiment, a company of which served at Lissa.	147
Figure 33. Captain Henryson’s sketch map of the entrance to Port St. George, April 1812, showing the sites he chose for the fortifications. (University of Nottingham Portland (Welbeck) Collection).	151
Figure 34. Admiral Thomas Fremantle, print from a portrait by Edmund Bristow.....	153
Figure 35. HMS BACCHANTE, the newly built 38 gun frigate in which Captain William Hoste returned to the Adriatic and Lissa in August 1812. (National Maritime Museum).	156
Figure 36. Curzola/Korčula showing the British tower to the left of the town. Detail from a Panorama of Dalmatia by Giuseppe Rieger (Fisković Collection).	161
Figure 37. Plan of Curzola/Korčula showing the fortifications of San Biaggio (Sveti Vlaho), including the British tower on the hill above the walled town. From the 1835 Austrian survey of fortifications (Kriegsarchiv, Vienna).	162
Figure 38A. The original design of Curzola Tower by Captain Taylor of the navy and Lieutenant Cole of the army, neither of whom were trained engineers. (Buckinghamshire Record Office).....	163
Figure 38B. Korčula Tower today.	163
Figure 39A. Jean Andoche Junot, Governor of the Illyrian Provinces, May–July 1813.....	165
Figure 39B. Joseph Fouché, who succeeded Junot in July 1813, portrait by Claude-Marie Dubufe, after an original by René Théodore Berthon (Palace of Versailles).	165

Figure 40. Port St. George Harbour. Martello Towers are seen on the hills to the left and right of the harbour (Fisković Collection).....	166
Figure 41. Port St George/Vis Harbour today showing the sites of the British fortifications.....	166
Figure 42. Plan and elevation of Fort George. Modern drawing based on originals. Changes were made in the Austrian period although projects that would have resulted in its complete replacement by a new and larger fortress were never realised.....	166
Figure 43A. Fort George from the approach to the harbour, 2012 (author's photo).	167
Figure 43B. Fort George entrance, 2013 (author's photo).....	167
Figure 44. Port St George with the Franciscan Church on the other side of which Fremantle established his dockyard.	169
Figure 45. The Franciscan church today.....	170
Figure 46A. Admiral George Anson (1697–1762), who circumnavigated the globe and served as First Lord of the Admiralty during the Seven Years War. Midshipman Charles Anson was his grandson. Portrait in pastels by Francis Coates (Shugborough Hall).	170
Figure 46B. The Anson family seat of Shugborough Hall.	170
Figure 47. The tombstone of Midshipman Anson on Vis (author's photo).	171
Figure 48. View of Hoste Island looking towards Lessina (Hvar) and the mainland beyond. By William Innes Pocock (National Maritime Museum).	175
Figure 49. Port St George with the 74 gun ship-of-the-line HMS EAGLE, on which the artist, William Pocock served as Lieutenant. (National Maritime Museum).....	178
Figure 50. Royal Marines private, 1815, aquatint by J.C. Stadler.	181
Figure 51A. Graf Laval Nugent in 1837, watercolour by Moritz Michael Daffinger.	183
Figure 51B. Francis Archduke of Austria-Este (1779–1846) visited Lissa in September 1813. Portrait by Adeodato Malatesta (Palazzo Ducale, Modena).....	183
Figure 52. Grenzer Uniforms. By late 1813, Italian and Grenzer troops made up the majority of Napoleon's forces in Illyria.....	184
Figure 53A. Baron Franjo Tomassich (1761–1831), Governor of Dalmatia from 1814.	186
Figure 53B. Sir John Gore (1772–1836) (Unknown artist, National Maritime Museum).	186
Figure 54. Lord Aberdeen (1784–1860), British ambassador to the Emperor of Austria in 1814. Portrait by Thomas Lawrence.	188
Figure 55A. François-Xavier Donzelot (1762–1843), commander of the French forces in Corfu. Portrait by Charles Mullié.	190
Figure 55B. Lord Castlereagh (1769–1822). Portrait by Thomas Lawrence (National Portrait Gallery).....	190
Figure 56. Henry Bathurst (1762–1834). Engraving by Henry Meyer after Thomas Phillips (National Portrait Gallery).	193
Figure 57A & B. Fort George Gate and Inscription to George III 195.....	195
Figure 58. Plan of HMS MILFORD, designed by Jean-Louis Barrallier and built by Jacobs of Milford Haven, 74-gun 3 rd rate ship-of-the-line (National Maritime Museum). ...	216
Figure 59. Frigate of 38 guns, built 1805 (National Maritime Museum).	218
Figure 60. HMS REINDEER, 18-gun Cruizer-class brig, built 1804.	219
Figure 61. British Army Gunboat, 1800.....	220

Part 3: A Diversionsary Attack in the Adriatic 1812

Figure 1. Peter Petrovich Njegos (1748–1830), Serbian Orthodox Prince-Bishop of Montenegro.....	231
Figure 2. French power in the Adriatic before Napoleon’s attack on Russia in 1812.....	232
Figure 3A. Stratford Canning, 1st Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe (1786–1880), British Ambassador to Constantinople. Portrait, aged 29, from biography by Stanley Lane-Poole, 1888.....	233
Figure 3B. General Mikhail Kutuzov (1745–1813), supreme commander of the Russian forces, 1812, portrait by R.M. Volkov, 1850.....	233
Figure 4A. Tsar Alexander I (1771–1825), oil painting by Stepan Shchukin, 1809 (Regional Art Museum, Tver).....	234
Figure 5. Admiral Pavel Vasilyevich Chichagov (1767–1849), portrait by James Saxon, 1824 (State Hermitage Museum copy from Saxon portrait).....	234
Figure 4B. Prince Michael Andreas Barclay de Tolly (1761–1818), detail of portrait by George Dawe, 1829 (Military Gallery of the Winter Palace, Saint Petersburg).....	234
Figure 6. Colonel George Duncan Robertson of Strown (d. 1842), commander of the garrison of Lissa (Vis) 1812 (artist unknown).....	235
Figure 7A. General Lord William Bentinck (1774–1839), commander-in-chief of the British armies in the Mediterranean, lithograph based on a painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence.....	236
Figure 7B. Admiral Thomas Fremantle (1765–1819), in command of the British navy in the eastern Mediterranean, artist unknown.....	236
Figure 8. Admiral Edward Pellew, 1st Viscount Exmouth (1757–1833), commander of the British fleet in the Mediterranean, portrait by James Northcote, 1804 (National Portrait Gallery).....	237
Figure 9A & B. Field Marshal Laval Nugent von Westmeath (1777–1862), commander of Austrian actions against the French in the Adriatic area. A: original lithograph 1848; B: oil painting by Friedrich Ritter von Amerling (undated).....	238
Figure 10. Bishop Maksimiljan Vrhovac of Zagreb (1752–1827), portrait by unknown artist.....	239
Figure 11A & B. Admiral Aleksey Greig (1775–1845), admiral of Scottish extraction in the Russian navy. A: portrait by Georg von Bothmann, 1877 (Hermitage Museum); B: lithograph by unknown artist.....	245
Figure 12A. Andrey Yakovlevich Italinsky, Russian ambassador to Constantinople, portrait by Orest Kiprensky.....	246
Figure 12B. Sir Robert Liston (1742–1836), ambassador to Constantinople, oil painting by David Wilkie, 1811 (National Galleries of Scotland).....	246
Figure 13. Sir Robert Wilson (1777–1849), engraving by Roberts from an original picture for C. H. Gifford’s History of the Wars Occasioned by the French Revolution, 1827.....	247
Figure 14. General Jean-Joseph Gauthier (1765–1815), général de brigade in the French Illyrian provinces (Jura Musées).....	254
Figure 15. The battles of Napoleon’s Russian campaign 1812 and Russian occupied lands to the west of the Black Sea.....	256
Figure 16A. Henry Bathurst, 3rd Earl Bathurst (1762–1834), engraving by Henry Meyer after Thomas Phillips’ stipple engraving, 1810 (National Portrait Gallery).....	259
Figure 16B. Christoph von Lieven (1774–1839), copy of original portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence c. 1826 (Hermitage Museum).....	259

Foreword

In the early 1970s when I first lived and worked in Zagreb I was intrigued by references in guide-books to British activity in the Adriatic during the Napoleonic wars and the existence of British fortifications on the island of Vis. However, given its strategic importance, it was not until the 1990s that foreigners were able to visit it.

In 1994 my friend Goran Nikšić, responsible for the conservation of historic monuments in Split, made enquiries concerning the possibility of British funding for the restoration of the forts on Vis. In the following year 1995 our friend Professor Toni Lešaja drew my attention to the British tower above the town of Korčula. After this I made my first visit to Vis.

On my return to London I began to search in British archives for documents related to British activity in the Adriatic in the larger context of Napoleon's schemes to invade and partition with Russia the Ottoman empire in the Balkans and to attack the British in India. By 2000 I had amassed a lot of material and written a number of chapters with little prospect of publication without giving my research a narrower focus on the British and Vis.

With the help of academic friends Igor Fisković and Joško Belamarić 'The British and Vis' was published in Croatian and English (but without English appendices and notes) by Književni Krug (the literary association) of Split in 2006.

In the meantime in 2003 Flora Turner, then cultural attache at the Croatian Embassy in London, put me in touch with Ervin Dubrović of the town museum in Rijeka who needed research undertaken on the British links of the merchant Adamic. This resulted in a lengthy illustrated chapter translated into Croatian within the book 'Adamovićevo doba' published in 2005. Later in the same year Archaeopress published this in English but without illustrations.

Archaeopress again came to the rescue in 2009 by publishing the full English edition of 'The British and Vis' with illustrations and appendices.

In 2011 my wife and I were invited to Vis to talk in an international symposium on aspects of the history and architecture of the island organised by architect Boško Budisavljević. In 2012 for the subsequent symposium I wrote the third part of the present edition exploring the links between the British on Vis and Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia. In 2013 Fort George on Vis was partially restored and reopened as a venue for wedding receptions etc. by a Swedish entrepreneur. I advised on the contents of a museum but this was not realised.

After recently being given the BBC's most recent version of 'War and Peace' I illustrated the third section and gave it to David Davison. To my surprise and delight he then proposed the present fully-illustrated omnibus edition.

My thanks go to all the friends who have encouraged and helped me over 30 years and particularly to my wife Vesna who translated my work into Croatian.

Malcolm Scott Hardy
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