

DURELLS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CANADIAN HISTORY

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DURELL is a name deserving remembrance in Canada. It is perpetuated rather than remembered in Durell Island, near Canso, in Guysborough County, Nova Scotia, since the reason for that appellation has been virtually forgotten, if not entirely unknown, and the name itself is more likely to conjure up some of the feats of the naval officer who was at Louisbourg and Quebec than to bring to mind the deeds of the man for whom it was applied. That being so, justice to the memory of each, and a proper appreciation of the signal services of both, demand that an attempt be made to resolve any confusion that may persist and to disentangle the distinguished careers of two Durells—Thomas and Philip.

Thomas Durell was first in point of time. He seems to have commenced his activities in the New World shortly after Colonel Richard Philipps was appointed Governor of Nova Scotia in 1717. Acadia had again become Nova Scotia following the final capture of Port Royal in 1710 and the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, and peninsular Nova Scotia was henceforward to be permanently British. Not until after Philipps' appointment, however, was British policy toward Nova Scotia defined and a special set of instructions framed. Philipps himself had remained in Britain until these were ready, although Doucett, the Lieutenant-Governor, had gone out in 1717.

According to his instructions, Philipps was to make a survey of the coasts and harbours of the new colony, and here is where Thomas Durell came into the picture. In order to carry out this part of his instructions, Philipps asked that a suitable vessel should be placed at his disposal. The Council of Trade then summoned Captain Thomas Durell, who was about to leave Portsmouth for the New England station, to ascertain if he would undertake the survey. He declared that it would be impracticable with His Majesty's ship under his command, and advised that a small vessel might be built at Boston for that purpose. This advice was taken, Governor Philipps was instructed to make the necessary arrangements, and not long afterwards Captain Durell, having received a letter of credit from the Governor, contracted for the vessel at Boston¹.

¹ Scrope to Popple, 20 May 1724. *Calendar of State Papers—Colonial series—America and West Indies, 1724-25*, pp. 100-101.

By the spring of 1721, Captain Durell was in Boston, where the *William Augustus*, which was to be used for the survey of the coasts and harbours of Nova Scotia, was being built. Meantime, after attacks by Indians and Frenchmen on the New England fishing station at Canso in the summer of 1720, the Governor of Nova Scotia had dispatched Major Lawrence Armstrong with a company of troops to hold Canso until the return of the fishermen in the spring,¹ and arrangements were made for Durell to provide protection for the fishery in 1721. Early in 1721 Governor Philipps expected to be in Canso "in six weeks at farthest", for Durell, who was to bring the sloop which was being built for him in Boston and who was to call for him, was expected daily.² But it was not until about the middle of August that the government sloop built at Boston reached Annapolis Royal and Philipps could go to Canso to make plans for its fortifications.³ By that time the Governor thought that little could be done to survey the eastern coast that season.⁴ Durell, however, went on to Canso in His Majesty's ship *Sea-horse*, in order to afford protection to the fishery. Captain Cyprian Southack, who was long engaged in the colonial naval service, and who was then a member of the Council of Nova Scotia, saw him there, and afterwards wrote that Captain Durell was "very capable to make a good survey *etc.*"⁵ During the next three years, moreover, as Governor Philipps stated in a petition for funds to cover expenses incurred for the survey of the coasts and harbours, the *William Augustus* was found to be of great service in that work, as well as in preventing smuggling and in protecting the fishery.⁶

At this time there was an obvious and imperative need for a proper survey of the coasts and harbours of Nova Scotia. When Captain Cyprian Southack heard that a Lieutenant Young had presented a map of Nova Scotia to the Lords of Trade, he "very much wondered" at this news, Young having had only Southack's courses and distances out of Southack's books, which

1. Philipps to Craggs (and Board of Trade), Annapolis, 24 November 1720. *Nova Scotia Archives II, A Calendar of Two Letter-Books and One Commission-Book in the Possession of the Government of Nova Scotia, 1713-1741* (edited by Archibald MacMechan, Halifax, 1900), 70.

2. Philipps to Armstrong, 4 April 1721. *Ibid.*, 72-3.

3. Philipps to Board of Trade, 16 August 1721. *Ibid.*, 76-77.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Captain Southack's letter of 10 January 1722 from Boston. *Calendar of State Papers, America & West Indies, 1722-23*, p. 3.

6. Enclosure in letter of Scrope to Popple, 20 May 1724. *Calendar of State Papers, America & West Indies, 1724-25*, pp. 100-101.

Southack used to give to all Captains of His Majesty's ships stationed in North America.¹

By his surveys of the coasts and harbours of Nova Scotia, therefore, Captain Thomas Durell performed a valuable service during the first half of the third decade of the eighteenth century. There is evidence that he was on the New England station from January 1721 until at least August 1724,² and no doubt much of that time he was engaged in a new and necessary coast survey of Nova Scotia. Subsequently he prepared maps which embrace the results of his work and disclose his great skill as a cartographer.³

Captain Thomas Durell was also along the North American coast in the next decade. He succeeded Protheroe at Boston in 1732, and during that summer he carried Governor Jonathan Belcher of Massachusetts, in the *Scarborough*,⁴ to St. George's River, Kennebec and Casco Bay. While on this station his conduct was such that he acquired a fine reputation among the ship-owners and throughout the country and stood very high in the regard of Governor Belcher. During the winter of 1732-1733 Captain Durell, in the *Scarborough*, guarded a fleet of British merchant ships which went to load salt at the desolate island of Tortuga. While carrying out this convoy duty, notwithstanding the friendly professions of the Court of Spain, and an order issued by it against molesting British merchant ships, except such as were found engaging in illicit traffic, Durell and his convoy were attacked by two Spanish ships of war, one of seventy guns, the other of sixty. Durell, a brave and experienced officer, behaved so gallantly and manoeuvred so well with the frigate under his command as to keep the two Spanish ships very busy and in a great measure to frustrate their design, until all the vessels in his convoy had got beyond their reach, except four which had been taken at the beginning of the attack before they

1. Captain Southack's letter of 10 January 1722. *Calendar of State Papers, America & West Indies 1722-1723*, p. 3.

2. On Tuesday, 3 January 1721, Captain Durell was a dinner guest of Judge Sewall at the Dragon in Boston, when other guests included the Governor, the Lieutenant-Governor and other distinguished men. Captain Durell was then about to convey a number of persons to Barbados. On Friday, 7 December 1721, Durell was a pall-bearer at the funeral of Mrs. Elizabeth Yeomans in Boston. On Wednesday, 26 December 1722, the Governor, Judge Sewall and Captain Durell were dinner companions. On Saturday, 1 August 1724, Judge Sewall and a Mr. Bromfield went to Captain Durell and asked him to forbear sounding his trumpets past nine at night, "because 'twas offensive." Trumpet sounding at such a time was a disturbance when the fashion was to keep the Sabbath from sun-down on Saturday till sun-down on Sunday. *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, VII-Fifth Series, 278; 296; 316; 339.

3. Two noteworthy maps are available: A Draught of Torrington Harbour, Formerly Call'd by the Indians Chibucto, in the Latd of : 44: 31' Nth. on the Coast of Accadia in Nova Scotia in the year 1732" and A Chart of the Sea Coast of Nova Scotia Accadia and Cape Breton Drawed by Capt. Tho: Durell 1736."

4. Belcher to the Lords of Trade, 10 July 1732. *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Sixth Series, VI, Belcher Papers, Part I, page 159. The *Scarborough*, mounting 20 guns, was of a tonnage of 376, and in Sixth Rates, whose complements of men ranged between 110 and 140. Robert Beatson, *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain from 1727 to 1783*; 6 vols.; 1804; III, Appendix, note 5, page 4

were aware of the Spaniards' intentions.¹ His management of this convoy was such that he received the approbation of the Admiralty, although he received such rough treatment that he considered it best for His Majesty's honour and for the service of the trade to lay the *Scarborough* "by the walls" the next winter.² Governor Belcher was greatly pleased with both the personal characteristics and the professional qualifications of Durell. He regarded him as a fine gentleman, an extraordinary officer and a good seaman. He thought His Majesty had not a gentleman, for his standing, in his naval service, who exceeded Captain Durell. He praised his bravery as an officer, his generosity and goodness, and commended him for his good sense and temper, for his extensive knowledge of men and things, and more particularly for his skill in mathematics, navigation, surveying and drafting. Durell was a man having such qualities and qualifications, as well as such particular knowledge of the North American coast and harbours that Belcher was sure, so he wrote to Sir Charles Wager, "it wou'd be highly obliging to this government & to the people in general", if the Admiralty would extend this naval officer's term of service on the New England station.³

Subsequently, Captain Thomas Durell saw service in the Mediterranean, and off the coast of Spain, as well as in the Gulf of Mexico. He commanded the *Kent*, 70 guns, in 1739 and 1740, serving under Vice-Admiral Vernon, in a fleet leaving England in 1739, under Rear-Admiral Haddock in the Mediterranean in 1739 and 1740, and under Sir John Norris in the expedition against Ferrol in 1740.⁴ In April 1740, in the *Kent*, he participated, in conjunction with the *Lenox* and the *Orford*, in the capture about forty leagues west of Cape Finisterre of the *Princessa*, which was considered to be the finest ship of the Royal Navy of Spain. In this engagement, in which the *Orford* and the *Kent* had each of them eight men killed, and the *Lenox* one, and a total of forty were wounded, Captain Durell had one of his hands shot off.⁵ In the following year he commanded

1. Beatson, *op. cit.*, I, 22; Isaac Schomberg, Esq., Captain in the Royal Navy, *Naval Chronology; or An Historical Summary of Naval & Maritime Events, from the time of the Romans, to the Treaty of Peace 1802* (5 vols.; London, 1802), I, 169; *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Sixth Series, vol. VI, Belcher Papers, Part I, 387; *Calendar of State Papers, America & West Indies*, 1733, page 87.

2. Belcher to Lord Townshend, 20 November 1733. *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol. VI, Belcher Papers, Part I, 420.

3. Belcher to Sir Charles Wager, 20 November 1733. *Op. cit.*, 417-419. Belcher to Josiah Burchett, 20 November 1733. *Op. cit.*, 419-420.

4. Robert Beatson, *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain from 1727 to 1783*, III, Appendix, note 10, page 17; Appendix, note 14, page 21; Appendix, note 15, page 22; Appendix, note 16, page 23.

5. *Op. cit.*, I, 75-76. Also Schomberg, *op. cit.*, I, 176-177. The *Princessa* was bought by the British Government and added to the British Navy by the same name.

the *Elizabeth*, 70 guns, in a fleet under Sir John Norris, on his first cruise of that year.

Notwithstanding his varied experience in the naval service of his country, Captain Thomas Durell made his greatest contribution to Canadian history in his coastal surveys and his cartography. The two important maps which illustrate this phase of his career are his 1732 map of Torrington Harbour (previously Chebucto, and now Halifax) and his 1736 map of peninsular Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island.

His map of "Torrington Harbour, Formerly Call'd by the Indians Chibucto", which has recently been acquired by the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, is of the scale 3 miles to $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches and 18x23. It is the finest map of Halifax Harbour and Bedford Basin made prior to the founding of Halifax in 1749. It is especially significant in that it was made 17 years before the founding of Halifax, at a time when the only persons of British origin in Nova Scotia were the small garrison and the few merchants and officials at Annapolis Royal, on the Bay of Fundy side of the peninsula, and the few fishermen or soldiers at the summer fishing station at Canso. Yet the importance of a base on the ocean-face of the peninsula was already realized, and some of the superb natural advantages of Chebucto were not unknown to both French and English. The careful survey of this harbour by Captain Thomas Durell, and the first-rate map of it which he prepared in 1732, form a notable link in the chain of developments which led to the founding of Halifax and the beginning of real settlement on the part of the British in Nova Scotia. It is, moreover, much more likely that the Durell plan of Chebucto, which Governor Cornwallis had at the founding of Halifax, was this map made by the capable draughtsman and cartographer Captain Thomas Durell rather than some other plan prepared by Captain Philip Durell, who was at Louisbourg in 1745.

The very name, on Durell's map, of this harbour, Torrington Harbour, the former Chebucto, is clearly in honour of George Byng, Lord Viscount Torrington, First Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty, and Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's fleet, who died in 1733, after having been First Lord of the Admiralty from 1727.

Among the other names on this map are Scarborough Island, apparently named after Durell's ship, the present McNab's Island, which after the founding of Halifax by Colonel the Hon. Edward Cornwallis in 1749 was granted to Henry Cornwallis,

James Cornwallis and William Cornwallis, sons of Governor Cornwallis' brother, Rt. Hon. Lord Cornwallis, and named Cornwallis Island; George's Island, a name which has persisted; Hawk's River, later Sandwich River and now the North West Arm; Pleasant Point which is now Point Pleasant; the Spaniard Shoal and Byngg's Reach.

This map contains a considerable number of soundings for harbour and basin, as well as the statement at the entrance to the Eastern Passage: "No Passage but for Little Vessels at high Watr."

The second notable map is "A Chart of the Sea Coast of Nova Scotia Accadia and Cape Breton Drawed by Capt. Tho: Durell 1736." The original of this map, which the Lords of Trade gave to Governor Cornwallis, the founder of Halifax, early in 1749, is in the Colonial Office Records. It is of the scale 5 miles to $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and is $28\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{1}{2}$. It is chiefly significant because it is a map of the sea-coast of peninsular Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island of the year 1736, but it is also interesting on account of many of its place-names. Cape Breton Island appears on it as "Island Gaspée now Called Cap Breton Since the Peace in 1713," thus showing that both the temporary and present names were derived from capes on the island, Cape North of today, formerly known as Aspy, and Cape Breton, a name which goes back to Portuguese maps of the first quarter of the sixteenth century. On this map Halifax is still Torrington Bay & Harbour; Shelburne is Port Wager, probably in honour of Sir Charles Wager who succeeded Torrington as head of the Admiralty Board in 1733; Spencer's Island, at the entrance of Minas Basin, is a name which occurred on a chart by Nathaniel Blackmore of 1714-15; and "Durell's Id", a name which persists as the designation of an island near Canso, probably commemorates the cartographer himself who was a guardiam of the fishery at Canso as early as 1721.

If Captain Thomas Durell should be chiefly remembered in Canadian history for his coastal surveys and maps, Philip Durell may be known for naval service of another sort. He was born in Guernsey and entered the Navy in 1721¹. On 6 February 1742 he was commissioned as a Captain in the Royal Navy. In the following year he commanded the *Eltham*, of

1. *The Journal of Jeffery Amherst*, edited with Introduction and Notes by J. Clarence Webster, (Ryerson Press, 1931), 48n.

40 guns, in the attack on Porto Cavallo, Venezuela;¹ the year after that he was for a time attached to Sir John Norris' fleet on the Home Station, then in Commodore Peter Warren's fleet at the Leeward Islands, and, still in command of the *Eltham*, he wintered at Boston.²

He was present at the capture of Louisbourg in 1745. Early in that year Warren ordered him to act as convoy to mast ships from Piscataqua. On 16 April the ships he was to guard dropped down the river, and the next day they were all actually under sail when Durell received orders to join Warren in the expedition against Cape Breton. "Just as I was ready to sail with the Mast Ships from New England to return Home", he afterwards wrote, "I received orders from Commodore Warren to join him off this Harbour (Canso), which commands were so agreeable that I made all despatch possible."³ So it was that he found himself in 1745 at Louisbourg, where in the ensuing year he was in command of the *Chester*.⁴

Between 1746 and 1758 he held several commands. In 1747 he was attached to Commodore Fox's squadron which chased the fleet of Admiral de la Mothe; in August of the same year he commanded the *Gloucester*, of 50 guns, in the fleet under Hawke which attacked the French Admiral Létanduère; and in the course of this year his ship captured the *Two Crowns*, a privateer from St. Malo, of 24 guns and 276 men, and the *St. Clair*, another French privateer, of 22 guns.⁵ In 1748 Captain Philip Durell served again under Hawke. Seven years later he was appointed to command the *Terrible*, a 74-gun ship, which was commissioned in March 1755.⁶ The next year he commanded the *Trident*, 64 guns, 500 men, in Admiral Byng's line of battle off Minorca.⁷

Early in 1758, after becoming Commodore Durell, he crossed the Atlantic in the *Princess Amelia*, 80 guns, to New York,⁸ and then continued on to Halifax on 16 May⁹ for the expedition

1. *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*; procured in Holland, England and France, by John Romeyn Brodhead, Esq., Agent; edited by E. B. O' Callaghan, Albany, 1858, X, 994.

2. *Ibid.*; also Robert Beatson, *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain from 1727 to 1783*, III, note 29, p. 43; note 33, p. 50; and J. S. McLennan, *Louisbourg* (Macmillan, 1918), 142.

3. McLennan, *op. cit.*, 142.

4. Beatson, *op. cit.*, III, note 48, p. 66.

5. Beatson, *op. cit.*, I, 375. Cf. I, 411.

6. Beatson, *op. cit.*, III, note 70, page 91.

7. Beatson, *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain from the year 1727, to the present time* (London, 1790), II, Appendix, note 86, page 29.

8. McLennan, *op. cit.*, 238. *Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, VII, 343.

9. *Ibid.*

against Louisbourg. Before the end of May the fleet left Halifax for Louisbourg,¹ and Durell served at the siege under Admiral Boscawen. On 4 June the wind was so strong and the sea so heavy that it was impossible to land, and the *Princess Amelia* was driven from her anchor. For two or three days the sea was such that no landing could be made. On 6 June preparations for landing were made, some of the troops were put into the boats and all the frigates were drawn nearer to the shore. Everything was in readiness for a landing. But at 11 o'clock, as a result of the report of Commodore Durell, Captains Gambier, Belford and others, the Admiral declared that, on account of the high seas, the troops could not land, and Amherst ordered them back on board.² The next day the sea was still too heavy for a landing to be made, but a change in the weather appeared to be at hand, and Amherst gave orders for a landing to be made at day-break. The Admiral then gave orders for the frigates to cover the landing of the troops and for Commodore Durell to view the landing place so that Amherst might be informed as to whether the sea would permit the troops to land with safety. Commodore Durell and Captain Buckle reconnoitred the coast but were rather doubtful about conditions and somewhat hesitant about giving an opinion on the matter. In this state of indecision another inspection became necessary, and Durell returned this time to give the opinion that the surf would permit the troops to land with safety.³ Landing operations followed, and victory was eventually the outcome.

On the capture of Louisbourg, Durell was promoted to be Rear-Admiral of the Blue,⁴ and at the departure of Boscawen and Hardy on 1 October 1758, he was left in command of the North American station, with orders to employ his ships in the best manner in annoying the enemy, and particularly in preventing, if possible, succour or supplies from reaching Quebec.⁵ He was also directed by Boscawen to keep in constant pay as many English or French pilots as he could procure and to take

1. *The Journal of Jeffery Amherst*, 46-7.

2. *Op. cit.*, 48.

3. J. C. Long, *Lord Jeffery Amherst* (Macmillan, New York, 1933), 56-7; *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America*; by Captain John Knox (edited with introduction, appendix and index by Arthur G. Doughty; Champlain Society, 1914), III, 3.

4. English admirals used to be of three classes, according to the colour of their flag. *Admiral of the Red* used to hold the centre in an engagement, *Admiral of the White*, the van, *Admiral of the Blue*, the rear. The distinction was abolished in 1864.

5. Miss E. Arma Smillie, "The Achievement of Durell in 1759", *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Section II, 1925, 133-134.

care that those not employed at Halifax were ready to go on board any squadron of His Majesty's ships that might arrive from England.

For several weeks Durell, with eight ships of the line, remained at Louisbourg. There he busied himself largely with routine matters, such as arranging for the transport of sick and wounded to Halifax or New York, the distribution of food and water to the various ships and the prevention of French vessels from taking the inhabitants from Isle St. Jean (Prince Edward Island). And he took care to retain eleven of the fishermen brought from Gaspé, Mount Louis and Grand Riviere, as well as five of the best pilots among those who remained at Louisbourg. Before he departed from Louisbourg, Durell left directions with Captain Fowke (the officer in charge at Louisbourg, where two of the eight ships of the line were to winter) that, in case on his passage to Halifax they should be driven off the coast, and not be able to reach there that winter, orders should be sent to those ships that wintered at Halifax to go to Louisbourg as early in the spring as possible, and as soon as they arrived to dispatch two ships of the line with two twenty-gun ships to cruise between the Island of St. Paul and Cape Ray, in order to intercept any succour that the enemy might attempt to send to Quebec.¹

On 15 November Durell left Louisbourg for Halifax, which he reached on 19 November, and during the winter he was engaged in the routine duties of the port and in taking steps to have the ships ready for sea as early in the spring as possible. The winter however, was so severe that the frigates could not be heaved down for caulking and other repairs as soon as expected, and winds were so powerful in February that Durell found it necessary to send a schooner to look for a ship in distress to the eastward of Halifax, and then to order this schooner to cruise off the harbour in day-time, when the weather would permit, in order to give aid to any of His Majesty's ships or vessels, transports or store-ships, which might be approaching that port. About mid-February he wrote to the Governors of the colonies along the Atlantic coast requesting a number of seamen from them; and he also wrote to Amherst asking that, if seamen could not be obtained, permission might be granted for getting men from the regiments in Halifax. But he was hopeful of getting a number of seamen from Massachusetts Bay, and he sent the

1. *Op. cit.*, 138.

Hind to Boston to refit and to bring back the men raised there.

Meantime, on 29 December 1758, Pitt drafted instructions for Rear-Admiral Durell in connexion with an expedition to be sent against Quebec as early in 1759 as possible, and these instructions may have reached Halifax via New York on 24 February 1759, although it may be more likely that they did not reach that port until April. In order effectually to prevent, and to cut off from Quebec "all Succours of Troops and Provisions, from Europe, by the River St. Lawrence," and at the same time to facilitate by every means the success of so very important and decisive an operation, Durell was directed to use forthwith the utmost diligence in repairing and refitting all the ships under his command, so that they might be in every respect ready for actual service as early in the year as possible. Furthermore, he was ordered, as soon as ever the navigation of the Gulf and River St. Lawrence should be practicable, to repair with his squadron to the River St. Lawrence and to establish his cruise as high up the river as the Isle de Bic, where he should station his ships in such a manner as might most effectually prevent any succours whatever passing up that river to Quebec, and where he was to remain until he should receive further orders from Admiral Saunders who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the King's ships in North America, and who would soon proceed to those parts to take up that command. He was also informed that some of the ships of Admiral Saunders' squadron (already forward in their preparations), which should be the earliest ready, would very shortly sail for North America and no fewer than four ships of the line might be expected at Halifax by the month of April.¹

Shortly afterwards Durell ordered the work on the vessels speeded up as the season was advancing "very fast" but, notwithstanding a number of indications that spring was on its way, the weather continued severe. Nevertheless, on 19 March Durell was able to write to the Admiralty that all His Majesty's ships at Halifax, except the *Prince of Orange*, had been refitted, and that she was all ready to be heaved down, an operation which could not be attempted until the severe frost they were then experiencing had broken up. "This Winter", he added, "proved the severest that has been known since the settling of the place—For these two Months past I have not heard from

1. A. Doughty, *The Siege of Quebec* (6 vols., Quebec, 1901), VI, 108. Cf. W. T. Waugh, *James Wolfe* (Louis Carrier & Co., Montreal and New York, 1928), 205.

Louisbourg, many vessels have attempted to go there, but have met with Ice eighteen or twenty Leagues from the Land, so were obliged to return, after having had some of their People froze to death, and others frost bitten to that degree, as to lose Legs and Arms." The Gut of Canso, so he told the Admiralty, was generally the first pass open into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and he proposed to send the *Sutherland* and the sloop *Porcupine* into it as soon as practicable. The part they would anchor in was not more than half a mile wide, he continued, so that this would effectually prevent any vessels getting through that way. He would sail himself with the rest of the ships and cruise off the Gulf, "as soon as there (was) a possibility of doing it."¹

Thenceforward Durell continued to watch for a break in the weather so that he might carry out his instructions to blockade the St. Lawrence. On 29 March he ordered Lieutenant David Collins of the *Princess Amelia* to proceed in the sloop tender *Betsy* along the shore and into the Gut of Canso, in order to report whether ice conditions would permit ships to go where he intended to send the *Sutherland* and the *Porcupine* as soon as the weather would allow. When 31 March brought a thick fog and milder weather, hopes rose, and the *Pembroke*, the *Centurion* and the *Squirrel* were ordered to complete their provisions and to hold themselves in readiness to sail at a moment's notice. But Collins, returning by 7 April, brought the disappointing news that he had not been able to get to the eastward "there being such quantities of ice", and reported that it was his opinion, as well as that of the pilot, a man long acquainted with this coast, that it was not yet practicable for ships to go to the eastward without running greater danger or being obliged to go to the southward of the ice.

When the *Ruby*, a snow, arrived from England on 8 April, Durell was told that she had sailed on 14 February under convoy of Rear Admiral Holmes and his squadron and that when she had left England Admiral Saunders was at Spithead with a fleet supposed to be destined for America. Now Durell ordered the Captains of the ships under his command, which were then all ready for sea, to complete their provisions and to hold themselves ready to sail at a moment's warning. Soon Durell received other news of ships on the way to Halifax from England, and he ordered two small schooners to cruise off the harbour with pilots for the approaching ships. But reports of

1. Smillie, *op. cit.*, 141.

ice along the coast continued to be received,¹ and Durell deferred the dispatch of ships to the Strait of Canso and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. By 12 April, however, so that there might be a sufficiency of stores at Louisbourg for the use of ships that might assemble there, he ordered Gerrish, the store-keeper, to send supplies, and clerks to handle them, to that port. On the next day Durell gave to the Captains of the ships the "disposition of our line of battle etc." but again reports of ice delayed things.² On 16 April reinforcements of thirty-three volunteer seamen arrived at Halifax, and five days later Durell decided to sail on the 26th if the wind and weather permitted. By that time other developments deferred such action.

The day before the 26th four of Admiral Saunders' transports and six victualling ships arrived at Halifax with the news that the remainder of the fleet was off the coast endeavouring to get into Louisbourg. In accordance with instructions from Admiral Saunders, on the 26th Durell ordered Captain Adams of the sloop *Hunter* to take under his direction the *Pelican* and the *Baltimore*, bomb ships, and to proceed with them and four of the victualling ships which had just arrived to Louisbourg, and directed the other two victualling ships to remain at Halifax until the arrival of Admiral Holmes, in case he should be in want of provisions.

On 27 April, having heard of a French fleet arriving at Martinico and refitting there, Durell ordered Captain Douglas of His Majesty's ship *Alcide* to get his ship ready for sea as quickly as possible, so that he might sail with or soon follow Durell on his cruise, and thus enable Durell the better to oppose the French fleet, if he should fall in with it.

At last—on the same day—the *Sutherland* and the *Porcupine* sailed for the Gut of Canso, where Durell had ordered them to be stationed, in order that they might intercept any French supplies passing through the Strait into the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

1. On 10 April, the sloop *Rachael*, Hugh McLane, Master, which had sailed from Boston for Louisbourg on 24 February, arrived at Halifax, not having been able to get beyond Canso, "there being such great quantities of Ice all along the Shore, and so far out to Sea from Canso that he could not attempt to go round it, without running the utmost danger." On 12 April the Master of the *Young Eagle*, a Boston schooner, which left Boston for Louisbourg on the 4th, declared that he could get no farther to the eastward than 22 leagues from Cape Sambre, "there being such quantities of Ice floating that he could hardly find Room to work his Vessel," and after repeated attempts to get through found himself obliged to put back into Halifax. On 14 April a great quantity of ice went into Halifax harbour, along with the *Richmond*, a ship which had left Plymouth 27 days earlier. The same day Durell noted in his Journal that Capt. Hankerson, who seems to have given another version of ice conditions to Saunders a little later, told him that he was six days in ice to the eastward of Halifax, "there being such quantities all along the Shore that it was all he could do to see Cape Canso from His Mast heads, when right off it.—" Smillie, *op. cit.*, 142-3.

2. *Ibid.*

Durell now planned to set sail himself on the 28th but damage to the *Prince of Orange*, of 60 guns, one of the larger ships, caused him to delay his departure again. On that day, however, he sent to Louisbourg a bowsprit for the *Prince Frederick*, as well as a foreman and a number of caulkers for refitting the *Bedford* and the *Prince Frederick* at that place.

Everything was in readiness for Durell's departure from Halifax on Monday, 30 April, and signals for unmooring were given, when the wind dropped and what wind there was was unsuitable for setting sail that day. On that day, however, Admiral Saunders and General Wolfe, who had been for some time trying unsuccessfully to get into Louisbourg, arrived at Halifax with His Majesty's ships *Neptune*, *Royal William*, *Dublin*, *Shrewsbury*, *Orford*, *Medway*, *Stirling Castle* and *Race Horse*. Wolfe was rather pleased with the preparations made at Halifax by Amherst, Monckton, Murray and Governor Lawrence, but he was somewhat chagrined to find there Durell, whom Pitt had ordered to sail into the St. Lawrence as soon as it was navigable, with a view to intercepting reinforcements and supplies from France for Quebec.¹

More delay ensued for Durell. For two days there were fresh gales, hazy weather and unfavourable winds. On 3 May the ships got under sail but the wind dropped and they came to anchor near Mauger's Beach. That day Durell distributed amongst the ships to act as pilots a number of French prisoners, taken at Gaspé, who were supposed to be acquainted with the navigation of the St. Lawrence.² On the 4th another attempt to sail was made, with the same result as on the preceding day. Finally, on 5 May, when 100 seamen arrived from Boston and were referred by Durell to Saunders for disposal, Durell's squadron, including the *Pembroke*, *Devonshire*, *Vanguard*, *Captain*, *Centurion*, *Prince of Orange*, *Richmond* and *Squirrel*, the brig tender *Boscawen*, and the transports *Russel*, *Britannia* and *Wallington*, sailed from Halifax.

Encountering ice, fog, snow and wind, Durell's ships proceeded slowly towards the St. Lawrence. On 16 May the *Centurion* captured a French sloop, the *Hardie*, bound to Quebec from St. Domingo, and laden with rum, molasses, sugar and coffee. On the 24th Captain Douglas of the *Alcide* took a French prize, of 250 tons, with 120 soldiers and sailors, between Cape

1. W. T. Waugh, *James Wolfe* (Louis Carrier & Co., Montreal & New York, 1928), 205.

2. Smillie, *op. cit.*, 145.

North and Cape Ray, bound for Quebec. In this prize were several excellent charts of the St. Lawrence, which proved to be of great value to the British fleet.¹ Meantime, however, although the French sloop *Hardie*, which had been captured on the 16th, had been upon the coast for a month vainly trying to get into the Gulf, other French ships had better pilots and, between the time of Durell's departure from Halifax and his arrival in the river, had succeeded in making their way up the river to Quebec. One of these was the *Chezine*, which arrived at Quebec on the 10th, bearing Bougainville, who had been sent to France for help in the preceding autumn, but who was now returning almost empty-handed. Shortly afterwards, however, about 17 provision ships also reached Quebec with succour for the French. But the moral effect for the French was no doubt greater than the material, although Durell's delay had enabled those French ships to slip up the river just in time, for those at Quebec had to be content with 326 men, 17 vessels laden with provisions and ammunition, and a number of military decorations, together with advice and stirring exhortations to hold out and keep for France at least a foothold in Canada until the end of the war.² "A little", as Montcalm said, "is precious to him who has nothing."

On arriving in the river, Durell's ships hoisted French colours. On their appearance, the inhabitants, who were expecting ships from France, rushed the joyful tidings to Quebec, and pilots hurried to meet the approaching fleet. These pilots, who were detained by Durell's order, afterwards proved to be of great service in navigating the English fleet up the river.³

Reaching St. Barnabé on the 20th and Bic on the next day, Durell tested the charts, which had been captured, by careful sounding; on 27 May he got up to the Isle aux Coudres and on the 8th of June he sent three ships of the line and one frigate to cross the Traverse and anchor off the Island of Orleans. Other ships followed soon afterwards. Durell not only sent pilots to navigate Saunders' fleet but had charts ready with detailed directions for navigating the dangerous portions of the St. Lawrence. And the fact that the fleet could anchor off the Island of Orleans rather than near the Isle aux Coudres had

1. *Knox's Journal*, I, 327-328, 328n; Doughty, *op. cit.*, II, 25-6, 55.

2. Durell's ships captured 3 vessels and a number of schooners.

3. Beatson, *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain, from the year 1727, to the Present time*, II, 359-360.

an important bearing on the siege of Quebec. If Durell's delay in getting into the Gulf and River St. Lawrence had enabled Bougainville and his supplies to reach Quebec, his demonstration that it was possible for the main fleet to pass the Traverse was an important factor in enabling Wolfe to move his troops up and down the River under the protection of a powerful fleet. For his services on this occasion Rear-Admiral Durell's name was included in Parliament's vote of thanks.

After his return to England Durell does not appear to have held any commission until 1761, when he was appointed port admiral at Plymouth on 14 June of that year.¹ On 21 October 1762 he was promoted to be Vice-Admiral of the Blue.² In 1766 he was sent, the *Launceston* of 44 guns being his flag-ship, as Commander-in-Chief on the North American station in succession to Lord Colville. He died in this command soon after his arrival at Halifax, and was buried beneath St. Paul's Church, Halifax, on 27 August 1766.³

For meritorious service in the navy, and more particularly for splendid work in coastal surveys and maps, as well as for the performance of duties in the protection of fisheries and trade, in the one case, and for distinguished achievement at the two captures of Louisbourg and at the siege of Quebec, in the other, Captain Thomas Durell and Admiral Philip Durell have won a firm place in Canadian history.

1. Smillie, *op. cit.*, 151.

2. Isaac Schomberg, *op. cit.*, I, 369. He had been made Rear-Admiral of the Red in February 1759. *Ibid.*, I, 323.

3. Reginald V. Harris, *The Church of Saint Paul in Halifax, Nova Scotia: 1749-1949*. (Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1949), 286.