

## INTRODUCTION

*Admiral* KEPPEL was one of the eighteenth century's most celebrated naval heroes. Having joined the NAVY as a midshipman at the age of ten, he went on a round-the-world voyage in 1740 and fought actively during the Seven Years War. In 1778 KEPPEL was accused of misconduct and neglect of duty at the battle of Ushant during the American Revolution. After a month on trial he was acquitted by the COURT MARTIAL, who found the accusations malicious and ill-founded. This pamphlet contains some extracts from the trial and the public reaction when the verdict was announced.

*Warrant by the Commissioners for  
executing the Office of LORD HIGH ADMIRAL  
of Great Britain and Ireland, &c*

Whereas we have issued our order to Sir Thomas Pye, Admiral of the White Squadron of his Majesty's Fleet, to hold a Court Martial at Portsmouth on Thursday next, the 7th of this Month, for the trial of the Honorable Augustus Keppel, admiral of the Blue Squadron of his Majesty's Fleet, upon a charge exhibited against him by Vice Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser, for misconduct and neglect of duty on the 27th and 28th of July last, in sundry instances therein mentioned; and whereas we think proper that you should take the said Admiral, the Honourable Augustus Keppel; into your custody, and attend him to and from the said Court; you are hereby requested and directed to repair to Augustus Keppel, and acquaint him therewith: But as it is not our intention that he should be put under any greater inconvenience or confinement than is absolutely necessary, you are to take his honour for his appointment at Portsmouth on or before the said 7th day of this Month, and on his arrival, attend him to and from the Court during the continuance of his trial, and then to dispose of him as the Court Martial shall direct. For which this shall be your warrant.

*Given under our Hands and Seal of the Office of  
Admiralty, this Day of January, 1779*

SANDWICH, T. BULLER, LISBURNE

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*Continuation of the Evidence of Captain Digby  
January 13*

Q. *Admiral Montagu. In the second article of the charge against Augustus Keppel it is stated, that he did not collect his ships together in the van of the 27th, when the French attacked him; was not the van and centre of the English fleet engaged as they passed?*

A. *A great part of them were.*

Q. *Was the ship you commanded engaged?*

A. *Yes.*

Q. *What was the condition of your ship?*

A. *Our main topsail was cut to pieces, our standing running rigging very much out, so that were not able to wear for some time. The foremast wounded in several places, and in one place was out one half through. Several of the other masts were wounded; the main yard and main mast in particular.*

Q. *Admiral Montagu. In the situation you have described your ship, was it such as you could have renewed the attack, if the Admiral had tacked [changed direction] immediately after the enemy?*

A. *I do not think my ship was in a condition to attack for a good while.*

Q. *Admiral Montagu. How long was it after before you could have renewed the attack if the Admiral had thought proper so to do?*

A. *It was near seven o'clock before I was able to tack. The lee leach mainsail being so out, that I could set it upon the other tack, which was necessary on account of my being so far to leeward.*

Q. *Admiral Montagu. Was not you to have lead on the van on the tack, when the Admiral had led his head to the enemy?*

A. *No Sir.*

Q. *Did you tack?*

A. *Yes.*

Admiral Keppel observed, that Captain Digby, the day before, had said, that though he was not in a condition to seek to renew the attack, yet if an attack had again been made, he considered himself in a situation to support it, there being a great deal of difference between attacking and being attacked.

SIR RICHARD BICKERTON,  
*called in and examined by AUGUSTUS KEPPEL*

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Q. *What tack was the French fleet on, when they appeared the morning of the 27th to be in a line of battle at ten o'clock?*

A. *Larboard.*

- Q. *Did you lose sight of them any time after?*  
 A. *No.*  
 Q. *Did the Formidable fetch in a-head of the Terrible, with the French fleet?*  
 A. *She did.*  
 Q. *How many ships of the rear of the French had the Formidable to pass, when you was compelled to bear up and go leeward of her?*  
 A. *I think three.*  
 Q. *Did the ships of the Vice Admiral of the Blue, that were a-stern of them, come out of action nearly at the same time as the Terrible?*  
 A. *I cannot say.*  
 Q. *What time did the terrible come out of action?*  
 A. *About half past one o'clock.*

AUGUSTUS KEPPEL:

*I won't trouble Sir Richard anymore.*

Sir Hugh Palliser. The cutting of leaves out of the Formidable's log-book, was a fact I was totally ignorant of, until discerned by a member of the Court, nor could any person be more astonished than myself; it is my wish that the whole be investigated; I shall therefore call the Master and Mate that made the entries; and in giving their evidence, I desire they may be put to the severest test, and that the court and Augustus Keppel might examine them without any previous questions from me.

## VERDICT

*Given on 9 and 10 February 1779*

The court do therefore unanimously and Honourably acquit the said Admiral Augustus Keppel of the several articles contained in the charge against him, and he is hereby Fully and Honourably acquitted accordingly. George Jackson, Judge Advocate

The noblemen and gentlemen had light blue ribbons in their hats, which they carried in their hands, with the word 'Keppel' inserted in gold letters, presented to them for the occasion by the Duchess of Cumberland, the Duchess of Richmond, the Marchioness of Rockingham, the Countess of Effingham, and other ladies of fashion. The band played 'He comes, he comes, the hero comes', while the whole concourse, noblemen, gentlemen in the procession, and ladies from the windows, supplied the vocal part, and the crowd closed each period of harmony with a vocal cheer.

*Extracts from An Authentic and Impartial Copy of the Trial of the Hon. Augustus Keppel, Admiral of the Blue. Held at Portsmouth on the 7th of January 1779, and continued by several Adjournments to the 11th Day of February 1779*

*A Congratulatory Ode to ADMIRAL KEPPEL*  
*By the Author of the Ode of the Warlike Genius*  
*of Great Britain*



*Concord! GODDESS, heavenly-bright!*  
*O'er Britain's realm, diffuse thy sacred light:*  
*To thee in Latium, temples rise,*

*Thou Lifted'st Rome IMPERIAL to the skies*  
*O'er the Atlantic sea extend thy wing,*  
*Bid British sires again embrace*  
*Their children of Columbian race*  
*Increasing joy and TRIUMPH bring*  
*To Britain's People, and to Britain's King.*



FROM *Keppel for Ever!*  
A CONGRATULATORY SONG ON  
HIS ACQUITTAL, 1779