

# Navigator

... and inventor, discoverer, merchant, privateer ...

## The career of an eighteenth century seaman under White Ensign and Red and the tale of the discovery of the two sets of “Mortlock Islands”

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In 1795 the merchantman *Young William*, Captain James Mortlock, was on passage from Port Jackson (Sydney) to Whampoa. Her course through Melanesia and Micronesia, past New Guinea and through the Carolines, took her past two groups of hitherto uncharted islands, both of which (confusingly) now bear the name of her commander.

James Mortlock was born in Edinburgh on 12th August 1760 and started life as James Lawson. His mother Mary had been born in Kirtling, Cambridgeshire in 1740, daughter of Lewis Mortlock of that place and earlier of Denham, Suffolk. Lewis was descended, via a Samuel and two other Lewises, from a Lewis Mortlock who in 1601 served as bailiff of Clare, Suffolk, where he had married in 1588. The intervening generations had South Wood Park in Denham. Mary died in Maidstone as Mrs Mortlock in 1817.

On 1st September 1779, the American War in full swing, James joined the Royal Navy, signing on as an Able Seaman aboard HMS *Romney*, a 50-gun 4th Rate of 1047 tons which wore the broad pendant of Commodore George Johnstone. James, being rated Midshipman after a month, may actually have been a Captain's Servant, in effect an officer cadet under her Captain's patronage.

James served aboard *Romney* for three months only. On 26th November 1779 he received an Admiralty warrant as a Master and was appointed in that capacity to HMS *Rattlesnake*. Aged a bare nineteen, he had total responsibility under the captain for the safe navigation and handling of the ship and had to command the respect and obedience of experienced seamen much older than himself. One can infer that he had been well educated, at least in the complex mathematics needed for astronomical navigation. However he was given to some rather erratic spelling, as shown in his later official journal - “riggon” and “rigon” for “rigging”, “brock” for “broke”, “heare” for “here” for example. Incidentally James refers to the ship's main deck, that is the deck below the upper deck, as the “twixt deck”. One has to suspect that he had been at sea in some mercantile capacity prior to joining the King's navy; his abilities suggest a full-blown apprenticeship. He proved a natural seaman, a round peg in its own immaculately-fitting round hole, and a man of above-average intelligence and well-honed resource. James served in *Rattlesnake* for three and a half years, at first under Captain John McLaurin, who as we shall see thought well of him. *Rattlesnake* was a 198-ton, 12-gun cutter-rigged sloop built by Farley of Folkestone in 1777. She carried a crew of seventy, and an indication of how small a ship she was is that she carried sweeps for use in calms. When James joined her she was part of Commodore Johnstone's squadron which was patrolling off the coast of Portugal. In June 1780, at St

Lucia, Commander Peter Clemens relieved McLaurin and was in command when *Rattlesnake* sailed from Portsmouth on 13th March 1781 as part of a force under Johnstone intended to capture the Cape of Good Hope. The fleet included Mortlock's own old ship *Romney* and another 50, the *Jupiter*, in which his younger brother Lewis was serving as a midshipman. On 11th April there followed Johnstone's rather muddled action when he was caught by Suffren in the harbour of Porto Praya in the Cape Verde islands. Fortunately for James, *Rattlesnake* does not appear to have played a major part in this battle (and *Jupiter* and *Romney* were pretty much out of it also).

Clemens was relieved at St Helena by James Kempthorne in July 1781. The ship was employed during this period cruising from the coast of Portugal to the South Atlantic, challenging any sail and on one occasion taking what may have been a lucrative Spanish prize. She ranged south from Madeira until on 6th June she was off Trinidad, a rocky islet some seven hundred miles off the coast of Brazil in position roughly 20° 30'S, 29°30'W. Its companion Martin Vaz island is about thirty miles further to seaward. Roughly lozenge-shaped, Trinidad is approximately two miles wide across its diagonals and is roughly conical with its peak about 1600 feet above the sea. It was a British possession from 1700 to 1895 when it was ceded to Brazil. Returning after a run north, the *Rattlesnake* was wrecked here on 21st October 1782, shortly after Kempthorne, on promotion to Captain, had been relieved by the newly promoted (18th August) Master and Commander Philip d'Auvergne, Prince de Bouillon\*, for political reasons.

*Rattlesnake* had been ordered to survey the island to ascertain whether it would make a useful base for outward-bound Indiamen. She anchored but that evening the wind increased and by seven o'clock she was dragging. Two hours later the first cable parted and Commander d'Auvergne determined to club-haul his way out, setting main and fore sails, and using the remaining anchor cable as a spring. This successfully put *Rattlesnake's* head to seaward. The remaining cable was then cut, and the sloop wore round and stood out to sea. However the ground now shallowed quite rapidly and suddenly *Rattlesnake* struck a submerged rock. She started filling with water, so, in order to preserve the lives of the crew, she was run ashore. D'Auvergne and a party of his crew were ordered to remain on the island so as to establish British ownership in case it was wanted as a base (it wasn't). The party lived on the tiny island for three months, subsisting 'on sea-fowls' until taken off by the *Bristol*, 50 guns, and a convoy of Indiamen, which fortuitously called there on 28th December.

James obviously showed up well in coping with this débacle. Indeed, here he was, at 23, personally responsible for the handling of the ship and the exact timing of the club-haul manoeuvre, normally performed with way on and with the ship free to select her lee cable for the job of spring. He continued on the Admiralty books as *Rattlesnake's* Master until in 1783 he was appointed for half a year to the *Naiad*, Captain Sir Richard Strachan. *La Naiade* was a prize taken by HMS *Sceptre* in the East Indies a few days prior to James' appointment. An outbreak of peace found him out of RN service until in July 1786 he was appointed for nearly three years to HMS *Savage*, Captain Burgess, a 16-gun ship-rigged sloop built at Ipswich in 1778.

On 26th July 1784 James changed his surname by Royal Licence to Mortlock, in accordance with a Mortlock pedigree held in the College of Arms and so certified in a letter signed by Isaac Heard, Garter King of Arms, produced by James in January 1790 when he went up for Lieutenant. By this time he had seven years' sea service, attested by his professional journals and supported by certificates from five of his Captains, namely Johnstone, McLaurin, Clements, Strachan and Burgess. As to his Scottish roots, these are interesting because there is an alternative (but mistaken) tradition in the Mortlock family that the surname is of Scottish origin.

As a lieutenant James does not appear in the "active" section of the Navy List; in 1790 he is shown as "superannuated" at 6/- per diem. Perhaps he was unable to obtain a ship; the Navy was, as ever, much run down during the period of peace that followed the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. Indeed he was lucky to have found his post in the *Savage* and one can wonder what useful influence ("interest") he might have had behind him. His eventual promotion presumably followed assistance from his old Captain d'Auvergne, to whom James had written twice from HMS *Royal George*, the first time requesting a letter in his interest to the Earl of Chatham, the second asking for a testimonial relating to James' performance at Trinidad so that he could include such a note in a petition to the King.

It is a fair assumption that he transferred to the Merchant service where, as a trained and experienced Royal Navy navigator, he would have been a safe pair of hands for any shipowner. As Captain of a merchantman James would have been far better paid and rewarded than as a Lieutenant in the King's service - and, as we shall see, he would have been a better prospect as a son-in-law. His relatively late age on promotion to lieutenant might have told against him in respect of further Royal Naval promotion.

However, in 1790 we find James aboard the sloop HMS *Flint*, cruising off the Isle of Wight, for a week's trial of "Mortlock's Artificial Horizon", whereby a spirit level with appropriate adjusting screws was secured across the frame of a sextant. The ship's officers attested how, even in a heavy seaway, Mortlock's altitudes of the sun taken from the bottom of a hatchway agreed absolutely with theirs taken on deck. On 22nd April 1791 James submitted a lengthy explanation of his invention to the Board of Longitude, which was, it may surprise some people to know, not solely concerned with timekeepers. Unfortunately James was in competition with other projectors of artificial horizons (and of various improvements to compasses), and he does not seem to have received any award for his pains. Nevertheless this resourceful seaman may perhaps claim to be the inventor of the bubble sextant.

The story re-starts at Deptford on 11th September 1794 where the merchantman *Young William*, owned by Daniel Bennett of Blackheath and originally a whaling ship, is embarking stores "on a/c Government of New South Wales". Mail was also loaded. On 29 January the Victualling Commissioners had found her unfit for her outward voyage but the situation had been righted and she eventually sailed in company with storeship *Sovereign*, 362 tons. There is no indication of any passengers and in this, and in the style of the ship's

log, it is clear that the ship is not a regular Indiaman. However she was chartered to bring home a return cargo of tea from Whampoa, and this is how her log has finished up in the Oriental and India Office section of the British Library. The log itself shows Mortlock at all times as a careful, meticulous and highly professional seaman and organiser. Its opening pages give in fine and fascinating detail the story of a late eighteenth century sailing ship preparing for a long ocean voyage, and of the work of the ship and of the flavour of the times.

Months passed as *Young William*, kept hanging about at Portsmouth and Plymouth, waited for a convoy to Australia to form up under Royal Navy escort - for it was now wartime again and the Channel and the Atlantic swarmed with French privateers.

The company of the Royal Navy was a mixed blessing for on 26th December two of Mortlock's men, perhaps enticed by a bounty, deserted to the King's service. This incident alone shows that life in the Royal Navy was NOT unattractive to good men. Four weeks later there is a major note of irritation in the log. "21st January. Came on board one of the Lieutenants of the Scepter (sic) and robbed the ship of the cloths (sic) left by two deserters." The inference is that besides their pay, the personal possessions of deserters were forfeit to the owners by ancient custom of the sea.

It was the 24th May - later, appropriately for this voyage, Empire Day - before *Young William* eventually set off, from St Helens' Roads off the Isle of Wight. By 11th July the Trade Winds had brought her to Rio de Janeiro and she stayed there, revictualling with beef and vegetables, until 22nd. It will be seen later that Mortlock had well-polished connections in Rio.

Mortlock's navigational observations are exact and he shows considerable natural curiosity. On 19th August, past the Cape of Good Hope and running his easting down, he noticed disturbed water in 27°11'S 35°35'E and decided it was the shoal discovered by one Hot Van Copple. Smug with two centuries of science, we can now say that he was in very deep water indeed, and that what he saw was an under-sea volcanic disturbance far down below. Four days later something more serious happened when a large sea broke inboard and washed overboard everything that was loose on the upper deck. At last on 4th October *Young William* arrived at Port Jackson.

Life in Australia was raw and this rubbed off on board. On 21st the 2nd Mate suspended two men from duty in consequence of some abusive language. The next day Mortlock sent the men on board HMS *Reliance* where they would learn manners the hard way. This shows him as a humane captain - many an East India Company Commander would have given them at least a dozen at the gangway first. Then on 26th two men ran. Mortlock, feeling the pinch, signed four new men from shore "with the approval of the Governor". There may have been an over-supply of volunteers who would NOT have been approved.

There was a final joke in store before *Young William* sailed for the return journey on 28th October. On 27th "in searching the ship this day for convicts who might have secreted

themselves, found three male convicts I was informed the Chief Mate had a [presumably petite] female convict secreted in his chest she was found upon examination and sent on shore he was likewise discharged at his own request". Thus does the Second Mate get a useful step. Mortlock navigates well but does not much punctuate.

*Young William* now set off on the haul to Whampoa, casting north-east of New Guinea. On 14th November she was beset by a fleet of war canoes. This must have been an awesome sight of some splendour, denied us today, but somewhat worrying for Mortlock. It was clear they intended to board. Mortlock fired a single shot from one of his cannon which was effective in scaring them off. A less humane and careful commander - perhaps one freer with expensive powder and shot - would have hauled his wind and given them a full broadside, if only for useful gunnery practice. There is a story that James actually annexed a portion of New Guinea for the British crown, although this act was never ratified in London and the tale is not supported by his log.

19th November 1795: "At 11 a.m. [i.e. on 20th, sailing ship logs run from noon to noon at sea] discovered a low island covered with Palm Trees and Coconut Trees the cluster perhaps extends further to the North than we saw them as Governor Hunter had discovered some Islands to the East which he called Lord Howe's Islands called these Governor Hunters Isles". NB this does NOT refer to the modern Lord Howe Island, alone in the Pacific off New Zealand. The log entry is accompanied by an elegant sketch and the noon position is given as 4°56'S 157°5'E. These islands are shown in the Times Atlas as "Tauu Islands (Mortlock Islands)". They lie about 195 km E of Bougainville, in the N Solomons Province which includes the Bismarck Archipelago. They are described in the *Lonely Planet* guide to Papua New Guinea as "a ring-shaped reef which has about 20 islands. Population 600, mainly Polynesian".

At dawn on 28th November the *Young William* was approaching the Carolines. Mortlock discovered a group of islands right ahead; hauled his wind to the SW and steered around the leeward or southerly side of the group. He was lucky not to run into this low-lying, and probably unlit, archipelago while it was still dark. The log contains a sketch plan of which he says the northerly sector of islands is in elevation only. These are drawn in a straight line to show the way they appeared on the horizon. The whole form a ring around a reef of shallow water with (then) a lone tree in the centre. Now the Japanese airstrip has been long replanted with coconut and breadfruit; but Japanese guns still lurk beneath some of the lush vegetation. James gave the position of the south-easterly point of this (Satawan) atoll as 5°17'N, 153°28'E. Not the least interesting point is that Mortlock's longitudes are exact, only a few years after the first chronometers were introduced into use.

Satawan may previously have been sighted by the *Britannia*, Captain William Raven, two years earlier. The whole Truk Atoll was first discovered by Schouten and Le Maire in 1616, and was visited by Tasman in 1643 and by a Captain Wilkinson in 1790. The name Mortlocks now attaches to all those islands lying in a line stretching 290 km SE from Truk Lagoon. They are also called the Nomoi Islands. The *Lonely Planet* for Micronesia

describes them under Truk (now, apparently, Chu'uk). Captain James, who might have been regarded as lunch by the natives, was followed by Christian missionaries, and the islanders now carve hibiscus wood masks for the tourist trade. The masks were originally placed on one's house to protect the family breadfruit tree from storms. The Mortlockese have their own language, with special names for individual astronomical constellations, and astronomical names for the months of the year, indicative of an ocean-navigating people. Ashore they cheer themselves up with Omung, a love potion or magic perfume whose over-use can lead to madness and hysteria. Little could the natives have realised that this solitary, small, sailing ship was the harbinger of a Western influence that would culminate, a century and a half into the future, in the smashing and sinking of a vast Japanese fleet in Truk Lagoon, by the massed naval air-power of a United States, thousands of miles away, that barely existed when James Mortlock first passed their way.

*Young William* arrived off Macao on 13th December and worked up to Whampoa where she wintered, loading Bohea tea.

The trip home was not without problems. In March 1796 the rajah who ruled the Straits of Allas refused all provisions except water to the *Young William*, because a Captain Layman had locked him up until some deserters were returned (Layman later denied this).

She arrived back off St Catherine's on 2nd August 1796. Almost immediately most of the crew, who had been at sea for sixteen months and on board for nearly two years, were pressed by the Navy. No happy homecoming for them; but, whatever they were in 1794, they were now prime seamen and we were fighting Revolutionary France for the preservation of decency, justice and freedom. *Young William's* hands must have wished they had jumped ship in Australia.

This seems to have been *Young William's* and indeed James Mortlock's only trip for the Hon. Company, which perhaps explains why his voyage has been confused by others with those of Captain Charles Mortlock, who was a regular officer of HEIC's Maritime Service, but 22 years Captain James' junior. The two are not related except in the sense that all Mortlocks probably come ultimately from the same stock.

At the start of his voyage Captain James had recently been married (on 25th April 1792) to Elizabeth, second daughter of John McLaurin of Greenwich. James is the Captain James MORTLAKE (the original derivation of Mortlock) listed in 1802 as resident at 28 Surry Place, Kent Road, Southwark (title to which descended to his daughters, probably in a trust held for them by their putative cousins the Wolfe stockbrokers). In 1804 James and Elizabeth had a daughter, Harriett. She was baptised at Southwark and in 1825 married Charles Joseph Fitzwilliam at St Clement Danes. In what may be a curious repetition of her grandmother's career there is a further marriage of a Harriett McLaurin Mortlock recorded for London in 1838 to a James Mason, silversmith; and again she is reputed to have married a George Golightly in Houghton le Spring in 1851, but the only near-matching record for that shows a George Golightly marrying there to a Harriett SMITH in 1848. Perhaps Mason was not as dead as he needed to be for this marriage to

be wholly above-board.

Another daughter, Eliza, was baptised in Southwark in 1804. She eloped with an Irish tutor in 1820 and went on to have two sons, the younger of whom (Alexander) went to the New World with his father, John Saxton, after Eliza had separated from John when he had run through her money. There had been a baptism of twins Harriett and Eliza to James in 1797, but the later baptismal record suggests that these had failed to thrive and that their names may have been re-used for a fresh start.

James does not however entirely vanish from view at this point. April 1798 finds him in Cape Town seeking permission to ship to Rio “two small boxes of waistcoat pieces not suitable for this [Cape Town] market”. In the same month he petitioned the Governor: “I arrived here some time ago in the ship *Adelphi*, but finding that I still have a considerable part of my investment to dispose of, I request His Lordship’s permission to remain here for two or three months till another opportunity with the first convoy”. Presumably he went home, and then returned, for in November 1799 we find him asking for a certificate to land gunpowder sold to the government.

There are a number of Mortlocks in the Capetown area of mixed race. One does wonder if James contributed to this.

In October 1798 Mortlock left Cape Town for a privateering cruise aboard his “Private Ship of War” *Britannia*, a modest vessel with a total complement of 31. I have not discovered whether this was the same ship as the *Britannia* mentioned previously but the connection is intriguing. On 25th June 1799, eight leagues SW of Rio de Janeiro, *Britannia* fell in with a hundred-ton Spanish merchantman, the *Nuestra Senora de Carmen*, which tried to run off but which hove-to and surrendered after a warning shot from Mortlock. Two officers, and a black man who promptly signed aboard *Britannia* - presumably working out that he would at least get paid thereafter, but there would be nothing for his services to date to the Spanish - were brought aboard the privateer and the remainder of the Spaniard’s crew (some of whom were Portuguese) were put into their boat and told to make for Rio. Brought into Cape Town in September 1799, the prize was sold because, according to Mortlock, her anchors and cables were not up to the rigours of riding to anchor in Table Bay. Similarly the cargo of beef, tobacco, tanned hides, sugar, fish, marine cordage and thirteen boxes of textiles and garments was all auctioned off at the Cape, although a cask of rum was retained on the grounds that it had been opened - this perhaps went to cheer up the privateer’s crew. A long series of affidavits and hearings between the court in Cape Town and the Admiralty Court in London followed but eventually, after presumably the auctioneers and the court officials had had their cut, a sum of 9671 Rix Dollars (equivalent to about £1700) was paid to Mortlock in settlement on 11th January 1800.

In May James’ tale took a new twist. The *Britannia*, “late Mortlock”, and another merchantman, the *Castor and Pollux*, were captured at the Galapagos Islands by a Spanish ship of 24 guns and were taken to Lima (presumably to Callao) in prize [*Lloyd’s Marine*

List, 19.5.1800]. No replacement Captain is mentioned in the press report and it would probably be a mistake to assume that Mortlock had no financial interest in this event. It must have been quite a blow.

In March 1801, the War continuing, Mortlock found himself in hot water. He, by then described as “of Cape Town, merchant”, was arrested with one Franklin Brooks, mariner (the Master of the *Chesterfield*), for “traitorous correspondence with the Spaniards”. The couple faced the capital charge of treason. James had been on board the *Chesterfield* (180 tons, 14 guns, 20 crew) as supercargo when she was taken by HMS *Diomedé* (the Hon. Charles Elphinstone) off the Brazilian coast in November 1800 with allegedly compromising papers, and a Spanish national on board. It was a complicated story about a rendezvous off the Plate where some cargo from Rio would be transferred to Portuguese vessels. Mortlock had been summarily brought on board the *Diomedé* and not even allowed to bring spare clothes with him. In April 1801 Mortlock and Brooks were found guilty of “adhering to, aiding and comforting HM enemies”. However the court was uncertain whether the treason charge would stick and decided to refer the proceedings to London. Immediately the pair petitioned for permission to proceed to England under escort to await the verdict, eventually arriving on 25<sup>th</sup> September. However some sort of frame-up is perhaps implied when, still in Cape Town, the couple were refused permission to have 250 copies of the trial transcript printed and distributed. This was on top of clear evidence that neither Captain Elphinstone nor the officials ashore had any clear grasp (by today’s standards) of proper procedure or due process. One might even infer that Elphinstone was spinning things so as to make a Prize claim against the *Chesterfield*. The eventual outcome is not formally available to us today, but the Admiralty formally ordered their absolute release on 25<sup>th</sup> November. The evidence above for Mortlock’s later family life in Southwark suggests that the case was fairly speedily thrown out in London. Indeed, the owners managed successfully, eventually, to wriggle out of paying the Crown’s costs. Mortlock’s story in extenso and the correspondence relating to the trial were published by Brooks in ‘Trial of the Master and Supercargo of the Merchant Ship *Chesterfield*’, in 1802. The irregularities in the Crown proceedings are glaring. The *Morning Chronicle*, 3.2.1803, contains an illuminating report of a retrial of Robertson vs. French before Lord Ellenborough in the court of the King’s Bench, an argument about the cargo with Mortlock as a witness. The *Morning Chronicle* returned to the tale on 25th April with an account of Emsley vs. Page, a spat between insurers also before Lord Ellenborough.

An interesting aside to the Cape court case is a walk-on part for a Mr George Rex, reputed an exiled illegitimate son of George III. Another is Elphinstone peremptorily pressing three Americans out of the *Chesterfield*, an example of what was spun by Madison into one of his casus belli for his War of 1812. Elphinstone married a Spanish lady in 1816 and went on to become an admiral and an MP. Brooks went back successfully to privateering and in 1804 was advertising for the crew of the *Marianne* to come and collect their prize money [*Hampshire Telegraph*, 29.2.1804].

After what must have been an unaccustomedly long spell of domesticity James went back to sea in 1805. *Lloyd’s Marine List*, 20.9.1805, reported that *Antelope*, Captain Mortlock



(also owned by Daniel Bennett, who had many a finger in Pacific shipping and whaling and who died in 1826), had sprung her foremast while cruising off the Plate with other vessels, and that he was going to put in to St Catherine's for repair. *Antelope* had sailed from London with a smaller companion in January 1805. *Lloyd's* further reported on 25.4.06 that the previous October the *Antelope* was cruising off South America and all was well with her. Note how long it took this sort of news to reach London. In fact she had taken five prizes in a cruise near Montevideo, forced the Spanish warship *Asuncion* aground in bad weather, and had now rounded Cape Horn to look for pickings off Callao. As a privateer she had a crew of 64 and was armed with ten 12-pounder carronades and six six-pounder cannon.

The *Diario de Mexico* of 8<sup>th</sup> March 1806 (which describes her as a brig or brigantine) gives an account of *Antelope's* activities, describing him as a smuggler prior to his cruise in the *Antelope*.

Mortlock, having decided to try his luck privateering on the coast of Peru, dispatched his companion corvette, with his acquisitions from the Plate, to London. Rounding Cape Horn, he appeared off Valparaiso where he found two launches and forced them to hand over stores. He then proceeded to Coquimbo, where he looted a church and several farmsteads. He carried on to Pisco, and in sight of the island of San Gallao seized two small guano brigs, took their spars for firewood, removed the compasses from their binnacles, and forced them not to enter Callao, lest they relate news of event, or his existence in those waters, and tell the officials of his privateering methods. He did manage to dissuade his men from scuttling the guano boats with all hands.

Mortlock moved on to the island of San Lorenzo, just off Callao, where it seems he was cruising back and forth for a week, chasing every light that he encountered, hoping to meet up with a British twenty-gun frigate (with its crew of 120 men), with which he planned to campaign off Coquimbo.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October 1805 *Antelope* was lurking near San Lorenzo, when the *Nuestra Senora de Isiar* alias *la Joaquina* appeared. *Joaquina* was a well-found merchant frigate belonging to a Senor Aguirre and commanded by Don Domingo de Ugalde. She had a crew of 70, fourteen 8-pounder cannon and two 'howitzers', and was carrying 150 unfortunate negroes shackled below decks as well other cargo worth a million pesos belonging to the King of Spain and private individuals. She had left Callao on 24 December but the war had put paid to the idea of carrying on to Spain. She was now returning to Callao from Montevideo, hoping to arrive about eight that night. However at four p.m. she sighted the *Antelope* and an hour later had identified her as a warship. At six thirty Mortlock was within hail, challenged *Joaquina*, struck his Spanish ensign, broke out British colours and opened fire. By 1900 *Joaquina* had overhauled and closed Mortlock's ship and an intense firefight developed, during which the *Joaquina* grappled the *Antelope*. The *Joaquinas* attempted to board the *Antelope* but were repelled with eight casualties. The fight continued until nine p.m. when, Ugalde calculating that he now had the upper hand, 50 (or 28) of the *Joaquinas* managed to board and take their opponent.

Sixteen of the *Antelope*'s crew, including James Mortlock, died in the action and fourteen were wounded; the *Joaquina* lost eight dead and six wounded. Mortlock's reputation as a feared privateer is best shown in the testimonial given to Ugalde: " .. [you] have saved the merchants of Lima from the disasters the *Antelope* would have visited on Callao, judging by what it perpetrated in the Rio de la Plata."

This *Diario de Mexico* account was later echoed by the *Gazeta de Madrid*, which like that narrative is decked out with no little Latin bombast.

The loss of the *Antelope* and the death of Mortlock were baldly and briefly reported in the London *Morning Chronicle* of July 16<sup>th</sup> 1806, which two days later reported that James was Lewis' brother, and, wrongly, that the action had been off the coast of Chile. James' grandson John Lewis Saxton was told by his father that James was murdered near Lima, so perhaps James was actually and perfidiously killed after his ship had struck *Antelope* as a prize was valued at 100,000 pesos, equivalent to about £20,000. She cannot have been too badly knocked about as she was brought into service as a commercial vessel on the Spanish Pacific coast. This would seem to be the *Antelope* ('pierced for 10m guns, 70 tons') captured when the island of St Thomas in the then Danish Virgin Islands capitulated to Lord Cochrane on 21st December 1807.

James Mortlock emerges from these glimpses of his life as a thoroughly competent commander, adept in all the arts of seamanship and leadership. He also seems to have been a good manager, adept at sailing close-hauled along the line of legality in an ethically somewhat ambivalent age. Whatever he may have been up to on the shady side, surely he is redeemed after, like his brother, giving his life in war against his King's enemies.

It is an elegant irony that the Mortlock name owes its most prominent geographical memorial to someone who was not born Mortlock at all! This conundrum I have attempted to solve in a separate article.

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\* D'Auvergne, a Jerseyman, was the adopted son of the Duc de Bouillon, and on the latter's death in 1792 took to styling himself Prince with the honorific 'Serene Highness'. Later, as an admiral in the Royal Navy, he was involved in all sorts of intrigue against Napoleon. For more of this, see *General Sir George Don*, Sam Benady, Gibraltar Books 2006, pp 34 & 43, and Benady's references to p.43, and for his career and particularly *Rattlesnake*'s Trindade grounding etc., see *The Naval Chronicle*, volume 13, pp169-191.

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