

Basque Roads - from "Cochrane" ①
8 battleships + frigates

144. Gambier let the French fleet slip past his blockade at Brest. Feb 21
Cochrane ~~ordered back~~ to in England early 1809
145. Admiralty bought C. to London to devise a strategy. 3 more battle ships with 5 frigates escaped from L'Orient
All 11 battle ships with frigates headed for the Bay of Biscay.
147. Feb 23 Rear Ad Stopped spotted French heading for Basque Roads off La Rochelle. Sent a frigate to London with the news.
Cochrane had much experience in these treacherous area and Lord Mulgrave sent for him to help.
(as a last resort)
148. Mulgrave was not a young man, and wanted to "destroy forthwith" the French ships but no one could figure out how, other than an attack with fire ships. However Gambier was opposed to such warfare on religious grounds as a "horrible mode of warfare" but the Lords of the Ad wanted to do it.
149. No other officer would accept the opportunity & Cochrane was offered the command of the fire ships and of the attack on the French fleet. ^{politically} If it succeeded they would be heroes, if it failed Lord C would be the scapegoat, but Cochrane could not refuse. He said conventional fire ships would not work and suggested a different method; the use of specially constructed "explosion vessels".
150. Mulgrave & the Lords unanimously approved and forced Cochrane to accept command knowing he would ~~excite~~ excite jealousy & vindictiveness from the senior officers at Basque Roads. Gambier was prepared to avoid attacking the French.
151. Although Gambier was 9 miles out at sea Cochrane's orders were (for pacifying Gambier) to conduct the attack under Gambier's direction. Cochrane was the junior of all Captains in the British fleet - see RADM Harcourt's Despatch.
152. and ^{his} court-martial ~~and~~ and cashiered. RAR
153. and cashiered.