

Southern off Torrol  
17<sup>th</sup> October 1803

Sir Edward Pellew to Lord Hobart

My Lord

Since my return upon the Coast, I have employ'd much of my time, in examining, and enquiring into the State of Torrol, and its' vicinity, with a view to the Objects upon which Your Lordship order'd yourself, when I had the honor of seeing you, and I have also endeavour'd to procure a knowledge of the different Roads, by which the Town can be approach'd - I will endeavour to arrange my information under distinct heads, so that you may see before you a separate statement of each of the Points which to me appear available, if from the whole Your Lordship's Opinion and Plans derive any aid from my Observations, I shall be very happy; and as Betanzos Bay was mention'd to you by a military Man, and was indeed at the time of the last attack, considered in that view by Sir James Pulteney, I will commence my Observations with it, begging Your Lordship to lay before you the Spanish Chart of Toffino, which will render you Master of the subject.

### Betanzos Bay.

I have carefully sound'd and examined this Bay, having in view two important points, the security of the Fleet,

The Right Hon<sup>ble</sup>

Lord Hobart

in

in any weather, and the situation of the ground and Coast for landing and embarking an Army; on the first I pronounce decidedly, as to its perfect safety for ships of every description, and in any number, and that they can lie out of insult from the shore; they can also approach in Frigates within Musquet shot all round the Bay, nor can any Wind so affect the small Bay of Arrec, as to impede, for a moment, the embarkation of Troops or Stores.

If a landing is made here by an Army, having in view a serious attack upon the Town of Terrot, I think it right to offer for your consideration, a few more particular Observations. The impediments to landing in Arrec Bay are two small Sea Batteries for six Guns each, having only three mounted, Frigates can approach within a hundred Yards of them. The ground between Arrec and Terrot Harbour is open, moderately high, and level, and seems favorable for forming a large body of Troops, the distance across rather above three Miles, wood and water abundant for a Camp, but no regular road, the soil sandy.

The Land on the west side of Terrot Harbour opposite the Arsenal Batteries (on which are mounted fifty two pieces of Cannon) is commanded by them, and not so high, in my Opinion, as to prevent Ships from acting against any works thrown up to bombard the Arsenal, the distance of which is rather

rather above two thousand Yards, the Ships could be moved two thousand Yards more, should that be requisite, but I should rather think they would be placed close to the shore in the first instance, in order to oblige you to break ground at a greater distance. I deduce from this, that a bombardment would not effect the purpose of destroying the Arsenal, but after such a length of time as would afford the means of assembling all the Troops in Galicia; one part of them would always be able to pass across the Harbour from St Philip's Castle on your left flank, while another would press upon your right on a limited space of ground. These observations apply only to the bombardment of the Arsenal, but if the Army takes this position, with a view of marching upon the land defences of Herrol, other observations arise; it would be necessary to blow up and destroy the two Bridges of Habanos and Betanzos, which could easily be done, by placing a Boat with Powder under the arches, this would oblige any force from Corunna & Compostella to make a very large circuit on their march to Herrol; on the other hand, our Troops would have a march of nine or ten miles to the Bridge of Subia, and on the road would have to cross a Bridge at Vedda, the roads heavy deep sand, and narrow enclosed, over which it would be extremely difficult

to draw Cannon, and supposing the Bridge of  
Nedda to be neither defended, nor broke  
down, and that the Army, <sup>reached</sup> Subia Bridge,  
which is near a mile long over a rapid  
River, we cannot expect to be equally  
fortunate in passing that, or believe  
the Governor of Terrol so ignorant, as not  
to defend it, or destroy it, the consequences  
would be, a detour, even to the Mountains,  
of many Miles, but granting the Army  
to reach the defences of the Town, I think  
it would be impossible to keep an open  
communication for their support from  
the Fleet in Betanzos Bay; my opinion  
therefore of any attack on this side, with  
a view to the possession of the Town, is  
obvious, and it naturally results there-  
from, that I consider the only approachable  
side to be from the Eastward, & although  
since the former landing in Donnenoo  
Bay the Spaniards have thrown up  
Works on the Pass over the Mountain,  
yet I think that Bay, and Cape Prior Bay,  
adjoining, afford opportunity for approach,  
from the latter there is a road which  
leads to the land defences of Terrol, not  
more than four or five Miles in distance,  
and by which you have the Mountain  
of Donnenoo on your right; the disadvantages  
in landing here are danger to the Shipping  
in a change of Wind, so in that case they  
must seek safety, either in Betanzos,  
or the mouth of Terrol Harbour. If a  
debarkation on this point should be  
thought eligible, I should propose,  
while the Army is landing under the  
protection of Frigates, the Line of Battle  
ships should proceed to the Harbour's  
mouth, and, with their Marines &c.,  
take

Take possession of the Sea Batteries, by which they would have a safe anchorage, a detach'd force of small ships should occupy Betanzos Bay, and destroy the Bridge as before directed - The Fort of Donnenos might be made a secure Depot, in case the Transports should be oblig'd to quit their anchorage for a day or two, and one of the first Objects of the Army should be, the destruction of Subia Bridge, by which means all the force to the South East of Ferrol would be cut off, and the only military station left to guard against, at a moderate distance in Galicia, would be Lugo.

The last point by which an attack can be made lies farther to the North East, than the Bays above described, and is called Ceydwa; this is a small Harbour, in which about 30 sail of Transports and six Frigates can lay land lock'd, and always afloat, and 40, or 50 more may haul upon the sand which is very fine - The Road from thence to Ferrol has been in part walk'd by two of my Officers, a report of which is enclosed - The distance is about fourteen Miles, the first four from Ceydwa are hilly, and narrow, hard, firm bottom, and capable of great improvement, about half of this bad road can be avoided by Boats passing up the arm of a River at high Water; when these Officers attained the Heights they could see the Road over an extensive Plain, like an English Race Ground, for six or seven Miles to the Hill immediately over the Town of Ferrol - Ceydwa contains about three hundred Inhabitants,

and

and a march to Terrot would take five or six hours, how far this distance may be consistent with surprize, or convenient as a Depot, from whence Artillery and Provisions could be forwarded for a siege, is not for me to determine; as I have hitherto considered Terrot, as thought of in no other manner than by a Coup de main, but still I think the situation of Heydwa makes it important as a Post to be secured, in the event of retreat, when the Army could not from the Wind embark from Cape Prior or Donneno, which are almost equally inconvenient with respect to carrying heavy Artillery for a siege; and unless the Fort S. Philip could be possessed, so as to open the Harbour for supplies by heavy Guns and Stones from Cape Prior Bay. Water from the Squadron, I fear the dragging heavy Cannon would be extremely difficult

\* refers to the last page, as to the capability of the Roads for supplying the Army with heavy Guns and Stones from Cape Prior Bay.

I have reason to hope I shall be able to gain some material information from the Master of a merchant ship waiting the event of a law suit for many months past in Terrot.

From observation, the sea Batteries are in a very bad state, with only one half of their Guns mounted, the land Defences have been left as they were, so that it appears as favorable for an assault now, as it was when last visited, except that the jealousy of the Spaniards may have induced them to have increased their Garrison. The French Squadron whilst there can always land two thousand men.

The latter end of August a friend of mine vent me the following disposition

- disposition of the force in Galicia
- At Corunna - Two Battalions of Leon & Buena Guerra of seven hundred each, part of a Battalion of Artillery of 400.
- At Ferrol - One Battalion of Altona, one Hibernia one Americaine, 700 each & 250 Artillery.
- At Lugo - Two Battalions of Infantry 700 each.
- At Compostella - Two Battalions of Infantry 700 each - one of Cavalry.
- At Vigo - one Battalion Zamora.
- At Pontevedra & Oca - one Battalion of Infantry.

Cannon are daily arriving by Water at Ferrol from Fontarabia, Bilbao &c, not less than five hundred pieces of different sizes have passed, in vessels examined since our arrival here. I believe they are intended to new mount all the Batteries, at least I know of no other purpose, for which they can be applied.

Just when I was closing my letter, the two Officers I had landed in Cape Prior Bay, to walk the road until they gained the sight of the Town of Ferrol returned onboard. They make a very favorable report of the Road the whole of the way, they met several four wheel'd Waggon on it, drawn by 6 Oxen, in pairs, coming from Ferrol, where they had been laden; they measured the distance the wheels were so under, and found it full six feet, the Waggon appearing nearly as large as English, and the road no where less than eight, & unenclosed.

The first half mile from the landing was sandy, the remainder hard

Hard, rocky bottom, covered with soil, about six inches deep, and every step towards Ferrrol improved. They judged the distance from landing to the top of the Hill to be between four and five Miles, and about one and half more down to the Gate of Ferrrol. I am happy to have this report to add to my favorable Opinion of this landing, and I am sure, if any precaution is taken, to collect the Cattle of these two contiguous Bays upon first landing by a specific Detachment, that a thousand head of draft Oxen may be secured, I will remember that four or five hundred head were brought down to Donnenoa Reach, when we landed, in less than one hour, by the Seamen, without any previous arrangement being made for seizing them, on landing by a Detachment of Troops.

(signed) J. W. Pelletier.

### Ceydora

The entrance to this Harbour is about a mile and half or two Miles wide. Off Pointe de Pantin lies a reef of Rocks, above Water, the extreme of which bears about north, by Compass, distant a quarter of a Mile, very bold, having 14 fathoms not a cables length off; from these Rocks you steer about S. by E. and S. by E. keeping the larboard shore on board, it being very bold - after running near two Miles you haul to the Eastward round a bold rocky point (on which is a Battery of two 24 P<sup>rs</sup>) leaving a Rock on the starboard hand, that



that lies nearly in the middle of the entrance and is covered at high water - This rocky point may be approached very close, carrying 4 fathoms at half tide, within half cable's length of the surf; a little to the Eastward of this Point is an old ruinous looking Battery (called by the Inhabitants a Castle) it has six embrasures, but only two guns mounted 24<sup>lb</sup> and 25 soldiers to attend it; the best anchorage is to the entrance of the Castle, abreast of a small sandy Bay to the Northward of you, where water may be had, and you there be land lock'd, having 3 fathoms at low water spring tides & good ground, ooze and sand. The Eastern part of the Harbour is very flat and sandy, tho' firm enough for keels to ground without any injury - about 25 sail of merchantmen could lay afloat, completely land lock'd, many more could anchor without the entrance open, but they would be so exposed to northerly winds as to be hazardous in riding.

To the Southward of the anchorage is an extensive sandy Beach, whence branch two small Rivers, one running to the S.E, the other to the S.W. both at the foot of the Mountains, and are nearly dry at low water - The S.E River at high water would admit Boats almost high enough to cut off all the bad road leading to Herrol from Seydwa.

(signed) George Bell Lieut<sup>t</sup>  
of the Torment off Cape Prior  
10<sup>th</sup> October 1703.

Thomas Fitzgerald Purser.

Remarks from Ceydara towards Terrol.

Ceydara is a Village situated N.W. from Terrol, distant from thence fourteen miles - garrisoned by a Commandant and 25 Privates, the former named Patrick O'Dugher, a native of Ireland & a Lieutenant in a Regiment called Hibernia - on proceeding towards Terrol you meet with a very indifferent road of two Miles, rugged and narrow, but of such gravel ground that we are of opinion no rain will otherwise make it heavy. You then arrive at the foot of a Hill, through which you have another of a like description, two and a half miles in length, which brings you to the summit, then appears to your view a most beautiful prospect of six miles, inviting the eye towards a height which deprives you of a sight of the Town, from which it is four Miles - Open only in this Country draw the Cart, or Wagon, & through this road carry very heavy loads, from which we conclude that any Cannon or Artillery required for an expedition may be transported even by this description of Cattle, but we apprehend it will be a work of some time. The rest of the ground to Terrol is principally level, in so much that it resembles a race course, and appears as if formed by nature for encampments. There is an arm or branch of a River bearing S.E. of the Village that in our opinion Troops and Artillery may be landed at High Water, to this spot we paid particular attention, but being accompanied by the Commandant, who

who it seems had particular Orders to prevent Foreigners from going into the Country without having the Governors concurrence, prevented our being satisfied in this particular, at least without bringing upon ourselves suspicion, for it was not without art & circumspection that we were granted permission to penetrate so far; nevertheless we are of opinion that there is sufficient Water to accomplish this Object, which is of importance, when considered that it will cut off two Miles and a half of the bad road - independent of this, we have, to our satisfaction, been enabled to gain sufficient knowledge of the ground and road to Herrol, two thirds of which has most amply answered our most sanguine expectation, for there is nothing to impede your progress, and the Town being situated in a Valley, may be approached from this quarter to great advantage.

Tonnant off Cape Prior  
10<sup>th</sup> October 1803.

signed George Bell Lewis

Thos. Fitzgerald Pursers

Tonnant off Ferrol  
10<sup>th</sup> October 1803.

My Lord,

Agreeable to my promise upon leaving Mr Sullivan, who expressed it as your Lordship's wish, that I would state, upon the best information that I could procure, my thoughts upon the probability of succeeding in any attempt upon Ferrol, I have forwarded the accompanying Memoir, I fear, you my Lord, may think it tedious and minute, but in military matters, a little detail upon the how, and which way, things are to be effected, is not always amiss - and I think a successful Coup made upon Ferrol, might be instantly followed up by another upon Corunna, and that next for French Privateers, &c - nothing would sooner break the charm of their French Connexions.

I am

My Lord, with high  
Consideration

Your most obedient &  
most devoted servant  
(signed) Edw Pellew.

The Right Honble  
Lord Hobart  
H. H.