

not receiving his proper allowance. He decided to offer to enlist in the French navy, as all non-English prisoners were allowed to do, and find some way to escape from there. His Spanish pseudonym served him well, and he was despatched to Lorient, but not, as he had hoped, a free man; he marched under guard and occasionally chained to a band of French 'desarters'. He took ill of fever and had his share of being dragged along on the chain. He had to fight for his life one night against French prisoners at Châlons, spent one night in a charnel house, and a day and two nights in the company of a man who had died shortly after Choyce had joined him in the jail. At last he reached Lorient, having walked some 708 miles, and was taken aboard a French ship in the harbour.

As this was 1808, the English fleet was in command of the high seas and blockading the harbour of Lorient, standing some distance from the harbour entrance which was guarded by three French ships. Being set ashore to live in tents while the ships were being cleaned in preparation for Napoleon's visit to the place, Choyce devised a means of escape along an arm of the harbour running parallel to the shore, and with one companion paddled out to the British men of war. He was taken aboard the *HMS Theseus* where his detailed knowledge of the harbour and disposition of the French ships was considered valuable. He was present at and took part in the Battle of Aix Roads, April 1809. In this battle Lord Cochrane experimented with fire ships – without much success – and was later court-martialled for disobeying orders not to follow up the battle by destroying the stranded French ships. Choyce gives detailed and fairly accurate accounts of the battle and mentions the fact of Cochrane's misdemeanour.

His ship was shortly sent back to England with French prisoners. On being allowed twenty-four hours' leave in England, Choyce decided not to return, as chances of advancement seemed poor. As soon as he reached London, however, he was impressed and again sent to sea aboard a whaler. On this voyage he went around Cape Horn to the Galapagos Islands (1810), Peru, and back to England (1811). He was impressed again, but managed to raise the £80 required to supply two substitutes.

The last few pages of the memoirs recount later whaling voyages he undertook; so that he must have returned to sea almost immediately. These later voyages can be summarized fairly quickly:

1) On the *Inspector*, 1812, to Timor and other islands in the Indian Seas, Straits of Panther (descriptions of natives), Malacca Passage, Island of Celebes (descriptions of people and houses), Philippine Islands, Spice Islands, St Helena, where they ran into bad storms which damaged the ship and for days they were supplied by passing vessels; England was reached on Christmas Day 1814.