English Trade with the East at a Time of Change: Captain Richard Etherington’s Voyages in the Late Seventeenth Century

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Introduction
This essay was prompted mainly by references to a ship’s captain, Richard Etherington, in the unpublished papers of Thomas Bowrey, who had spent nineteen years in the East as a private trader. Bowrey’s early travels and ongoing interests in trade after returning to England were first discussed by Sir Richard Carnac Temple and are the subject of the forthcoming biography written by Sue.¹ Etherington is also mentioned by Alexander Hamilton, whose detailed account of countries in the East Indies and his activities there for the English East India Company (EIC) and as a private ship’s captain and merchant was first published in 1727. He said that ‘Captain Ethrington’ in a ship called Resolution travelled to Gilolo in the Moluccas ‘about the Year 1692’ and obtained a cargo of spice. The Dutch officials in Batavia were said to be very curious as to where he had been, as the Moluccas lay within their sphere of interest and influence, and Etherington retorted that ‘the English were not quite ignorant of that navigation if they had a mind to follow it’.²

We have followed up these clues and put together English and Dutch archival sources to describe Etherington’s activities and to illustrate the various issues that influenced English trade, and also the small world of maritime and mercantile activities in the region at the time that features in Bowrey’s papers.³ We describe voyages to India and the East Indies between 1688 and 1699. Etherington first commanded a ship chartered by the EIC for a voyage to India, the outcome of which was shipwreck. After an interlude in England that remains unexplained but significantly affected the EIC’s future he then commanded a ship owned by private merchants, voyaging beyond the usual range of English trade in the region to Borneo, and then to Timor.

Historical Contexts: Overview
The establishment of the EIC at the end of 1600 was followed by gradual and uncertain development of its factories (trading bases) in the East. Towards the end of the century the EIC’s legal monopoly for trade between England and the East was increasingly challenged by unlicensed independent merchants who also sent ships – ‘interlopers’ in the eyes of the EIC. English mercantile trade in the region was greatly hampered during the period 1688-1697 by the war with the French that resulted in capture of both EIC and private ships. In India, EIC factories were subject to ongoing aggression by powerful Mughal forces. Other hazards included shipwrecks and attacks by pirates. English trade in the region was also influenced by other European

² Foster (ed.), New Account, vol. 2, 76. Foster was uncertain as to whether this was a different Richard Etherington (New Account, vol.2, 86) but this surely seems highly unlikely given the details considered here.
³ Paul, Jeopardy of Every Wind.
competitors, mainly the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie: VOC), which had its main base in Batavia, now Jakarta, and had considerable influence in the East Indies.\footnote{There is considerable literature that covers these events. John Keay’s The Honourable Company gives a very readable account of the history of the EIC and the attempts, eventually successful, of independent merchants to set up a rival company. Rupali Raj Mishra’s A Business of State gives much information about EIC interactions with the English regime at the time. Philip J. Stern’s The Company State covers the period dealt with here, focusing mainly on India. It touches on piracy in the region. Søren Mentz details private trade in the same period by EIC employees based in Madras (The English Gentleman at Work). However, there is still little coverage of voyages funded by private merchants.} Nearly all of these factors are relevant to Etherington’s voyages.

**Etherington’s First Known Voyage**

In April 1688 the EIC in London freighted a chartered ship, the *Shrewsbury*, and issued detailed instructions to its captain, Richard Etherington.\footnote{British Library (hereafter BL), IOR E/31/91, ff 266-267. At the end of 1684 the *Shrewsbury* had sailed to India and returned in 1687. The ship, of 350 tons, was commanded by William Talbot and departed from the Downs with a crew of 70 at the end of December 1684. It returned to England in July 1687 (BL IOR L/MAR records). Many references in the Fort St George (Madras) *Diary and Consultations* (hereafter D & C) mention that the ship went on to Amoy (now Xiamen) in China. Talbot died and command was taken up by Robert Alford, or Allford. The attractive possibility that Etherington was an officer is negated by the discovery that Talbot married in England in 1685 (see Appendix: Some Family History).} He would not have been appointed without considerable previous experience in the region. Etherington was instructed to proceed as quickly as possible to Bombay, to keep ‘the Worship of God’ and take good care of those on board, and return as soon as convenient via the Cape of Good Hope and St Helena, from where he should travel in convoy with other English ships that might be there. He should always be on guard against enemies that would include ‘the Turks of Sally’, and European nations with which England might be at war. Etherington was empowered capture their vessels on his passage to Bombay and take them there for judgement by the Court of Admiralty, but was warned against injuring those on board or removing anything of value from the vessels (not even ‘the value of a penny’). He was told that as the EIC was at war with Siam he should also capture any of their vessels that he might encounter and deliver them to Bombay. If time permitted he should call in at factories on the Malabar coast south of Bombay that had recently been established and take pepper that may have been bought to Bombay, and to seize any Portuguese vessels without bloodshed (which seems optimistic) because of ongoing EIC disputes with Portugal over the establishment of Bombay and its adjacent territories. Further, he was to capture interlopers and those without EIC passes. Etherington was provided with a packet that included correspondence for Bombay and other EIC factories, a list of ‘supernumaries’ and soldiers, details of the ship’s cargo, the charterparty (the owner’s contract with the EIC that the latter could hire the ship to transport cargo), and ‘treatises of the vindication’ of the EIC that would have been responses to criticisms in England. Significantly, these instructions emphasize warfare and privateering compared with trade, although the EIC Council finally prayed that he would have a prosperous voyage.\footnote{In 1686 King James II had renewed the EIC’s charter and authorized ships’ captains voyaging to the East to assist the EIC in its warfare against the Mughals and other rulers in the region. Hamilton commented that the EIC in London had mustered a large number of ships for a counter-offensive against Bantam (Banten) in Java, from where merchants other than those of the VOC were deported.}
The *Shrewsbury* departed from the Downs on 12 May 1688. It arrived in Bombay at the beginning of November according to Alexander Hamilton, who had been on board as a supernumerary seaman.\(^7\) The log of the *Royal James and Mary*, another EIC ship that had arrived some months previously, records arrival of the *Shrewsbury* in Bombay about a month later, but this may have been from a local cruise. The log also records that shortly afterwards some men of the two ships were attacked by a number of Frenchmen.\(^8\) It ends in February 1689, when most of Bombay island was occupied by forces allied to the Mughal emperor and the EIC fort was besieged. This was an escalation of disputes between the EIC and local Indian authorities over customs duties and other charges.

When Alexander Hamilton arrived in Bombay he found that in the harbour there were many Mughal vessels, captured by EIC ships that included the *Royal James and Mary*. When the fort was besieged all available men were pressed into EIC service, which probably accounts for the ending of the log. However, from September EIC vessels from Bombay went to sea and again captured Mughal vessels.\(^9\) The warfare, that also involved EIC bases in Madras and Bengal, ended in June 1690. The *Shrewsbury* was certainly involved in attacks on Mughal shipping. English Treasury records in 1693 state that a contribution of prize money from captured vessels was owed to the Crown. Etherington and the *Shrewsbury* are included in a long list with the *Royal James and Mary* and also many prominent EIC personnel in India who had obtained these or other benefits. In the end the payment by the EIC was waived.\(^10\)

Meanwhile the *Royal James and Mary* and the *Shrewsbury* had moved on to Madras and then to Bengal. Details of their movements in Indian waters are not uncovered, but in July 1690 the EIC officials in Bengal told those in Madras that they wanted both ships, and another ship, the *Josia*, to depart from Bengal to England before the end of the year, as otherwise the charterparty would expire. Accordingly, the ships left Bengal at the end of December, as learned by Madras in the middle of February 1691.\(^11\)

The *Shrewsbury* did not complete its return voyage. After leaving India it was lost on a sandbank in the Indian Ocean, probably in the Seychelles area. However, after nine days in the ship’s boats all on board arrived at Mauritius, from where they were taken to the Cape of Good Hope in a little vessel that was confusingly said to be French, but belonging to the Dutch. This information comes from a travel diary kept by an Englishman, Dr Brown or Browne, who met Etherington (named as ‘Etheringtonn’, with the ship ‘Shrosberrie’) in September 1691.\(^12\) The loss is mentioned in passing in published petitions to the English Privy Council and Parliament by merchants who were seeking to overcome the EIC’s official monopoly on trade with India. The *Shrewsbury* was said to be poorly loaded on its return voyage. The complaints against the EIC related to poor cargos sent from England and

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7 *New Account*, vol. 1, xiii. This was when Hamilton first travelled to the East, although he does not name the *Shrewsbury*.
8 Khan, *Sources for the History of British India*, 160.
9 *New Account*, vol. 1, 125-31.
10 Shaw (ed.), *Calendar of Treasury Books*, 1693.
11 D & C 1690, 81; 1691, 15.
12 Raven-Hart, *Cape of Good Hope 1652-1702*, 386. How long Etherington and the crew spent at the Cape has not been established.
others bought by the EIC in India. These attempts were aimed at setting up a new company that the EIC was doing its best to prevent.13

**Interlude: Etherington, Bowrey and the Redbridge**

Thomas Bowrey’s unpublished papers include an agreement with Etherington dated 10 October 1693 for a voyage to Borneo and other places in the East Indies as ‘captain or commander’ of the *Redbridge*, a private ship. It was witnessed by Phillip Gardiner, Bowrey’s father-in law and occasional attorney, and George Etherington, probably Richard’s brother.14 The document notes that Bowrey had visited Borneo several times and was ‘well skilled in the Ports, Creeks, and Havens … and also in the Goods and Merchandizes, Trade and Traffick of those Parts’. Bowrey provided maps and charts of Borneo and information about trade there in return for a share of profits.

The outcome of this agreement is problematic. A permit had been requested from the Admiralty and granted in April for a voyage by a ship *Redbridge* to Alicante in Spain, but this was (correctly) regarded by the EIC as a pretext for a voyage to the East Indies. The EIC succeeded in delaying its departure, planned for the end of October, for three weeks but the owners successfully persuaded the authorities that Alicante was indeed the furthest destination. The ship missed a rendezvous in the Downs with four other ships also said to be bound for Alicante and so voided a covenant of £2000 taken out by each of the ships to sail together. Final departure from England was delayed until the end of 1693, when the ship left for Spain with a large convoy of ships bound for the Mediterranean.15 In January 1694 the episode was discussed in Parliament. Gilbert Heathcote, an influential London merchant who was one of the owners, was called to the Bar of the House and testified that the destination was indeed to be the East. He said that trade should be available for all and a decision was made by Parliament to free up trade.16 Although the EIC continued to obstruct private merchants for a few years the episode was influential with respect to the formation of the New (English) EIC in 1698 as a rival company.17

The complication as regards Etherington is that the captain of the *Redbridge* was named repeatedly in the depositions as Edward Smith. It is inconceivable that there were two private ships with the same name set to depart for the East at the same time. Possibly the agreement with Bowrey lapsed at the last minute, or Etherington might have been on board to take over command for the stages of the voyage after leaving Spain. This might have been hidden from the EIC as it would have increased their suspicion of the real intended destination, given Etherington’s previous experience in the East. Nothing has been found about a subsequent voyage of *Redbridge* to the East, but the episode establishes Etherington’s business association with Thomas Bowrey.

**Etherington and the Resolution**

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13 Anonymous, *A Journal of Several Remarkable Passages*, 18, 35. The merchants said that trade could be much better. In fact the interruptions in trade caused by the Mughal war in India and the war with France had been a major factor in the large decrease in EIC profits.

14 Bowrey, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) CLC/427/MS24176/0936. There is also an incomplete version in poor writing with the name of the ship left blank and the last page missing (LMA CLC/427/MS24176/1112).


16 *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 11, 8 & 19 January 1694.

Etherington’s later voyages were in command of the Resolution, a private vessel, so an interloper. Information comes initially not from EIC sources but from the VOC Dagh-Register in Batavia; it was the equivalent of D & C in Madras. Thus, on 26 June 1695 the English freguat (frigate) Resolution arrived in the Batavia roadstead for water, having departed from Cadiz in March. The captain was ‘Richart Etherington’. The vessel departed only three days later, said to be bound for Tonkin. It returned from Banjarmasin, Borneo, about six months later in need of water and firewood and departed on 16 January 1696 for England via Cadiz.

The EIC in India had been aware of Etherington’s arrival in the East. In response to a request from Bombay about his whereabouts, Madras replied on 14 October that they had not heard anything concerning him since his being at Batavia. By then the Resolution had returned to Europe. In mid-June 1696 the Admiralty in London received news from Corunna that the ship had arrived at Cadiz with pepper from Borneo. Etherington had reported that a pirate named Ben Long, in a ship with 40 guns, had earlier captured a Mughal ship, raped a princess and so enraged the people at Surat, north of Bombay, that they had imprisoned Englishmen, raping English women, and had gone to attack Bombay. The name Ben Long reflects Long Ben, one of several aliases for the notorious Henry Every. He had been a commander in a pirate fleet that in August-September 1695 plundered a large Mughal convoy of pilgrims from Surat bound for Mecca, with torture, rape and murder of pilgrims. Although the EIC had not been involved, the Mughals were so enraged against the English that there was rioting in Surat and arrest of EIC personnel there, forced closure of several other EIC factories, and threatened attacks on Bombay. The EIC in India had to work hard to pay compensation and restore good relations. Despite a worldwide manhunt by England, Every disappeared.

Etherington’s voyage was obviously profitable enough for there to be a second one. He wrote a will dated 20 April 1697 in which he said he intended to proceed on a

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18 There had been earlier voyages to India and beyond by a large, well-armed ship called Resolution (sometimes called Loyal Resolution) chartered by the EIC, as summarized in D & C and other sources. This ship was part of the convoy returning from India that was captured off Galway by the French late in 1694, with severe financial effects for the EIC. See Bruce, Annals of the Honorable East-India Company, vol. 3, 179-181.

19 Dagh-Register Gehouden van ’t Casteel Batavia, www.sejarah-nusantara.anri.go.id/daily_journals (hereafter DR). European names and ships’ names in marginal summaries can be searched online, allowing for spelling inconsistencies. They lead on to the full folios, although reading these is a challenge, given early Dutch spelling and often faded text.

20 Dates for DR entries are given new-style, as in the original Dutch calendar. A frigate, as used at the time, was a fast-moving vessel, but not necessarily a naval one. Carnac Temple, Papers of Thomas Bowrey, 153, notes that Thomas Bowrey was part-owner of this ship, at least in 1702, as made clear later.

21 DR 2514, ff 404, 411.

22 DR 2515, f 21. Cadiz and other Spanish ports may have been a useful port of call for private vessels to pick up and discharge cargo so as to thwart EIC control of shipping to the East. See above concerning Redbridge.

23 Fort St George, Letters 1696, 98.

24 The National Archives of the UK (hereafter TNA), ADM 106/487/267. The summary of the file says incorrectly that Every had called in at Batavia.

25 A lot has been written about him. He became a folk hero in England, with several versions of his later life. One was that he had carried off and married a Mughal princess and that they lived happily ever after in Madagascar. Burgess, ‘Piracy in the Public Sphere’, gives a detailed analysis from English sources.
voyage ‘beyond the Seas’. Thomas Bowrey and Silvanus Landon (sometimes ‘Landen’), who was later a Governor at the New EIC’s short-lived settlement at Banjarmasin, Borneo were two of the four witnesses. It has an undated codicil written in case Etherington’s wife Jane was pregnant and it can be assumed that the will was prepared shortly before departure. In late October the Resolution (said to be 300 tons) arrived in the Batavia roadstead from Cadiz via the Cape of Good Hope to take in water; it was said to be bound for Borneo. Subsequent VOC dispatches to Batavia confirm that the ship cruised around the Moluccas (Maluku). They include a letter from Ambon that arrived in mid-May, followed by instructions from Batavia sent to Banda that the ship should be made to surrender, and a report from Ambon about the suspected smuggling of cloves.

An account by ‘Robbert Bon’, a deserter from Resolution, that was given to the VOC appears in translation by Hans Hägerdal in his history of early colonial Timor. The ship was said to have departed from London in 1697 with a cargo of wine, spirits, weapons, textiles and mirrors, and Spanish currency. After leaving Batavia the ship went on to Flores where there was an unsuccessful search for nutmegs, which were normally restricted by a Dutch monopoly. A month later it went on to the Belu coast of Timor, where gold and wax was obtained in exchange for guns, hats and textiles. By then the ship was short of supplies and eight of the crew jumped overboard. The ship left them behind and apparently returned to Ende on Flores to take on cinnamon and sandalwood. The deserters went to Lifau (now in Timor Leste), where half of them died of disease, but Bon was picked up by Dutch visitors. The account does not mention the Moluccas which, not Flores, were the source of nutmeg (and cloves), and the ‘visitors’ to Lifau were probably officials who had a base there despite the strong Portuguese influence. Bon was taken to Batavia in October 1698 in a Portuguese vessel and questioned again about the Resolution and his desertion.

The Resolution then proceeded in June to the east coast of India, calling first at St Thomé, then at least partly controlled by Portuguese despite its close proximity to Madras, and needing wood and water. The Portuguese were told that the ship came from ‘Battavia and the South Seas’ and reported to the EIC in Madras that it was suspected to be a pirate ship. The EIC promptly sent ‘peons and spies’ to bring in intelligence. It was duly reported that Etherington wished to sell sugar for saltpetre. He remained on board, but the ships’ doctor and purser went ashore with presents. Letters from the Portuguese again said they were suspected to be pirates and had offered 30 ‘great guns’ for sale, presumably cargo rather than the ship’s main armament. The EIC warned the Portuguese to have no dealings with them because they were interlopers; however, the Portuguese officials said that they were offering hospitality ‘to a nation in friendship’ and denied that the local ‘Natives’ had traded for saltpetre. They promised that such trade would not be carried out by the Portuguese. It

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26 Will of Richard Etherington, Mariner of Saint Mary Whitechapel, Middlesex, TNA PROB 11/45/104.
27 DR 2517, f 831.
28 DR 2518, ff 337-8.
29 These latter VOC records are in the Dutch National Archive (Nationale Archief, The Hague; refs VOC 1608 Banda ff 65-6 and VOC 1602 Amboon ff 208-12. Only catalogue titles have been seen.
30 Hans Hägerdal, Lords of the Land, Lords of the Sea, 314-5. His citation reads VOC 1609 (1698), ff 42, 95-7, probably from the Timor file in the Dutch National Archives: 1.04.02 1609 Timor ff 6-42 and 44 89-103. These are long reports by Willem Moerman, a VOC merchant and chief (‘opperhoofden’) in Lifau. The first is dated 9 May and the second 25 August 1698.
31 The wine, spirits and Spanish currency were probably picked up at Cadiz.
32 DR 2518, ff 609, 639-42.
was also reported that some merchants from Madras had made contact at St Thomé in order to conduct trade, which they denied to the EIC when questioned. The ship left for the north after a few days.\footnote{D & C 1698, 65-8; Penny, Fort St. George, a Short History of our First Possession in India, 91-92.}

Soon afterwards Madras received assurances from merchants at Pulicat, about 25 km north of Madras, that they did not allow any trade. They reported that the ship had a ‘King’s commission’ with two seals.\footnote{Ibid., 90.} Next, the EIC at Machilipatnam, about 200 km north of Madras, reported that the Resolution, Capt. Etherington, arrived there and produced a commission from the Admiralty dated 7 June 1697 that allowed them to trade in all parts. However, they were made to pay customs duties and buy goods ‘at unreasonable rates’, so they departed for Bengal on 12 July.\footnote{Anonymous, A New List of Fifty Two Ships Gone to the East-Indies in less than Two Years Last Past.} Clearly what was happening was that Etherington was trying to take advantage of the loosening up of trade that had been permitted earlier by Parliament in England and the EIC in India was resisting this, which they did for some years even after a rival company, usually called the New English East India Company, was formally established in 1698. How long the Resolution spent in Bengal has not been uncovered but on its return journey to England the ship was at the Cape of Good Hope from 31 March until 8 April 1699, as mentioned in a diary kept by Sir William Norris, who was on his way to India as an ambassador to the Mughal emperor from the New EIC.\footnote{Ibid., 70.}

Details of trade carried out during the voyage appear in a financial account in Thomas Bowrey’s papers, suggesting that he had a business interest.\footnote{Ibid., 92.} A summary at the end mentions 40,000 Spanish dollars obtained at Cadiz. Details start with costs of purchases and expenditure in Flores in June 1697, so the first page(s) must be missing. The ship went on to Ambo and Timor (details unfortunately not included), then back to Flores (March-April 1698), Jepara in NE Java (May) and then on to India, from where it eventually left for the Cape of Good Hope, as mentioned above. The main goods bought in the islands were cubeb (small dried fruit rather similar to peppercorns), cassia lignea (dried tree bark, rather similar to cinnamon but less pungent), rattans, and (at Timor) bees’ wax. Trade goods included textiles, gunpowder, looking-glasses, knives, spoons, and hats ‘edged with gold’. Ports in India mentioned were Pulicat, Machilipatnam and in Bengal, with purchase of textiles and saltpetre. A final summary mentions sale of lead, four ‘great guns’ and four small ones, but not where these sales were made. The details agree well with the information provided to the VOC by Robert Bon when he deserted and references afterwards in D & C.

Although incomplete, the financial account is a valuable record of private trade in the East at this time. It was completed at sea in January 1699. At the end it mentions 460 Spanish dollars due to Mrs Etherington and a comment that Etherington’s chest was opened, with some money found there, indicating that he had died. The Resolution arrived back in England between May and September 1699, according to a pamphlet published in London that listed departures and arrivals of ships at the time.\footnote{LMA, CLC/427/MS24176/282.}

His will went to probate on 13 June 1699 (for details see Appendix).

\textit{Conclusions}

\footnote{Raven-Hart, Cape of Good Hope 1652-1702, 454. Etherington’s name is not given.}
In his voyages, first on behalf of the EIC and then for private merchants, Etherington encountered all of the issues summarized at the beginning of this contribution except (fortunately) piracy. In that context, however, his mention of the notorious Every is interesting, as are the concerns in India when he arrived there in 1698 that the Resolution was a pirate vessel. Piracy in the Indian Ocean was common at the time after pirates moved on from the Caribbean, hence the mention in the instructions for the first voyage. In 1698 the Adventure, a private ship bound for Borneo that was partly owned by Gilbert Heathcote, was taken from Sumatra to America by mutinous crew members. Heathcote’s influence in London enabled its captain Thomas Gullock, who had been left behind and along with a few others survived to return to England, to pursue the pirates, some of whom were captured, transferred to London, and hanged. This episode has been described previously, along with other piracies. There are many references in D & C to piracy in the region in the 1690s.

Alexander Hamilton’s mention of a voyage by Etherington to Gilolo to buy spices is rather problematic. Etherington apparently did not visit Gilolo, although he did trade at Ambon, not far away. Also, DR does not record a visit to Batavia on his way back to England, contrary to Hamilton’s comment, although he did call at Jepara. However, the Dutch in Batavia were certainly interested in the voyage from the reports that they received. There is a possibility that Hamilton was referring to the voyage in 1695-1696 about which nothing seems to be known other than that he went to Java and Borneo but Hamilton’s wording suggests that he obtained the information from Etherington himself. If so, that can only have been in India, where Hamilton was based at the time and must refer to the visit in 1698 on the way back from the Moluccas and Timor. This is not an important issue, and Hamilton can be forgiven for possible errors in the detail and in the date (‘about the Year 1692’), given that his book appeared in 1727, well after these events.

Etherington seems to have developed a close business relationship with Thomas Bowrey, judging by the agreement concerning the mysterious Redbridge episode and Bowrey’s witnessing Etherington’s will. The same applies to Silvanus (sometimes Sylvanus) Landon. We are investigating his career before he left England in 1699 to take up his post in Banjarmasin and afterwards.

As for the well-travelled Resolution, it made more voyages under new command. A ship called Resolution departed at the end of August or beginning of September 1702 for Mocha in the Red Sea, commanded by Capt. William Daly, elsewhere Doyley, and safely arrived back in 1705. Mocha was a major hub for coffee trade. As the ship was 300 tons and had 26 guns it seems safe to conclude that this was the same ship as that previously commanded by Etherington. The name is included in a list of private ships and one of the early Lloyd’s Lists, both in Bowrey’s unpublished papers. In the period 1706-8 there are several references in DR to a ship Resolution in voyages to and from Banjarmasin. These may refer to the same ship, as in some of the entries the tonnage is given in lasten, a Dutch unit, and approximating to 260 tons.

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39 Smith, ‘Misfortunes in English Trade with Sukadana at the End of the Seventeenth Century’; Smith and Paul, ‘More Light on Thomas Gullock’s Ambitions for Trade with Borneo’.
40 LMA, CLC/427/MS24176/282.
41 Carnac Temple, Papers of Thomas Bowrey, 153.
42 Edward Lloyd, A List of What Ships are Sail’d from England, for East-India and China, .., 5 Oct 1702, LMA, CLC/427/MS0341/11; A List of Ships in the Service of the Separate Traders, 1706, LMA, CLC/427/MS24176, f. 1583.
The following Appendix gives some details of Etherington’s family history, but much remains unknown about his life and activities as a mariner, even in the period covered here. It would be nice to fill in the gap between loss of the Shrewsbury and his appointment as commander of the Resolution, and help clear up the Redbridge issue that greatly influenced parliamentary opinion about the EIC’s theoretical trade monopoly. If Etherington had been blamed by the EIC for the loss of the Shrewsbury it would help explain why he transferred from EIC service to command of a private vessel, and the EIC’s strong disapproval when he arrived in Indian waters in 1698.

The voyage of the Resolution to Timor was an ambitious venture that understandably alarmed the VOC in the East Indies and it is a pity that Etherington did not survive it. Despite the gaps and uncertainties, information described in this contribution is a useful addition to the rather sparse information about the activities of the private traders in the region before the turn of the century, compared with those of the EIC and, after its establishment, the New EIC.

Appendix: Some Family History

Although Etherington’s life and career before the 1680s remain obscure, he may have been born into a seafaring family. There is an original parish record of the christening of Richard Etherington, aged three days, son of Richard Etherington, mariner, and Katherine at St Dunstan’s, Stepney, in September 1643. On 15 September 1685 a licence was issued by the Vicar-General in Canterbury for the marriage of Richard Etherington of Stepney, mariner and bachelor, aged about 30, to Jane Bradnam of Wapping, spinster, aged about 16. Consent was given by her mother, named as Mrs Bradnam (no initial), a widow, the marriage to be at ‘Layton’ (i.e. Leyton), Essex. There is also an original parish record of the marriage, two days later at Wanstead, close to Leyton. Jane Bradnam was described as a widow, presumably a misreading of the licence. Although such genealogical evidence needs to be treated with caution without corroboration by other evidence there can be little doubt that the marriage was that of the future Captain Etherington. The timing shows that he could not have been an officer on the Shrewsbury in the earlier voyage that commenced at the end of 1684. Parish registers commonly used ‘Captain’ when appropriate, so the voyage of the Shrewsbury may have been Etherington’s first in command.

 Etherington died when he was aged only 55. His will made provision for his wife Jane and a daughter, also Jane, with bequests to his brothers John and George and sister Mary. Provision was also made in the codicil for a new child, if his wife was pregnant when he departed England. Details for Etherington’s wife, daughter and (possibly) a further child depended as usual on future marriages or deaths.

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43 LMA, Church of England Parish Registers, 1538-1812, via ancestry.co.uk. Grissell, daughter of the same parents, was christened at St Dunstan’s in April 1637 but died after about two weeks. No records of the births of siblings George, John and Mary have been found.
44 Armytage, Allegations of Marriage Licences, 212. Jane is the name of Etherington’s wife on his will. Such licences removed the need for banns and allowed marriages to take place in parishes where neither party resided. The age does not fit with the christening above, but it may be an abbreviation of a standard original entry ‘upwards of 30’, i.e. older than 30.
45 Essex Record Office, Parish Records, via ancestry.co.uk. Wanstead is now part of the London borough of Redbridge, and it is where Sir Josiah Child, Governor of the EIC and an inveterate opponent of the private merchants, had a residence. This is all presumably geographical coincidence.
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