

# Thomas Boyle Carries On 13



Modern depiction of *Comet* by Baltimore artist Patrick O'Brien  
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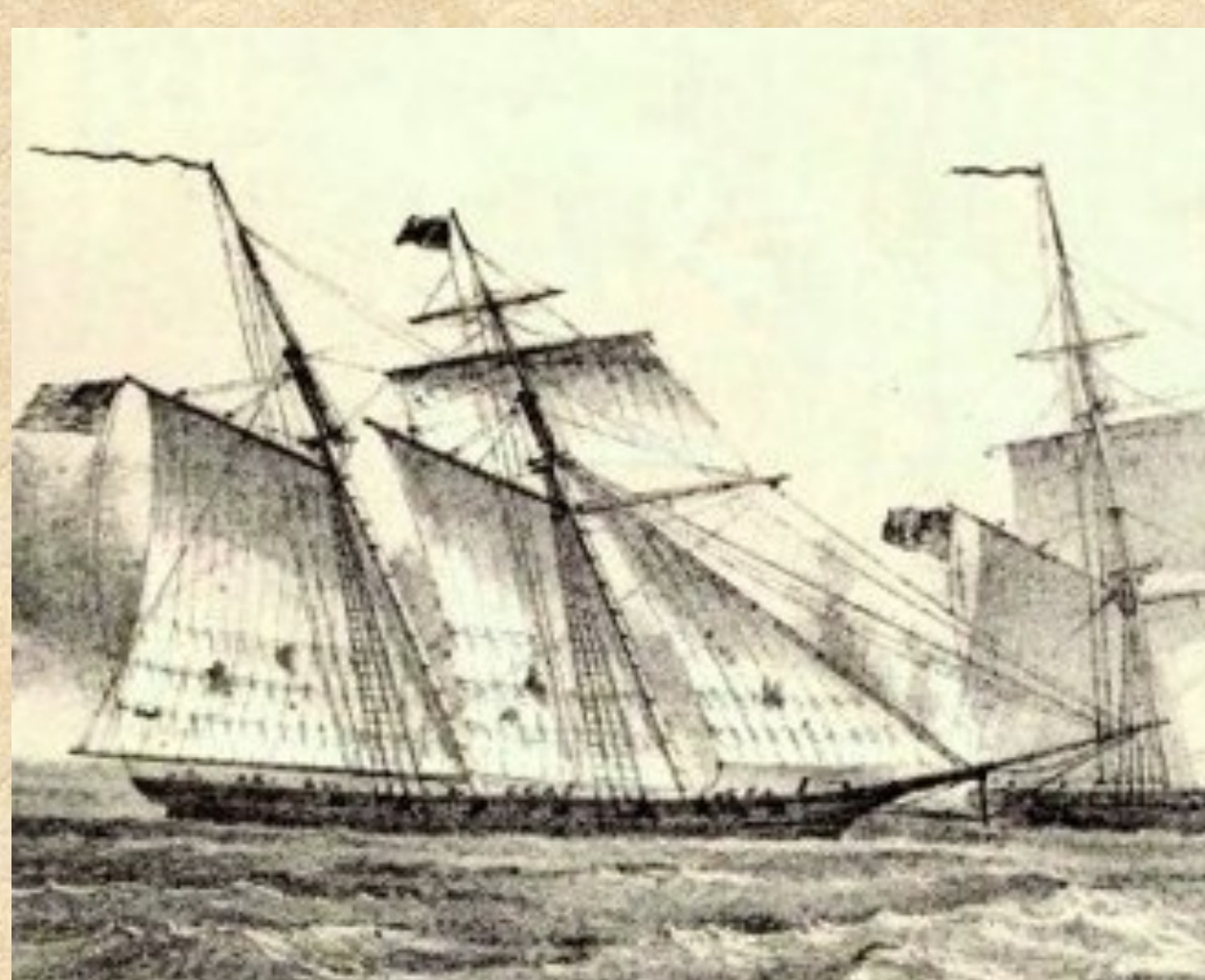
On October 29, Boyle and *Comet* slipped through the British blockade in heavy weather and set a course for the West Indies. Over the next few months Boyle evaded British patrols, pursued a convoy of 60 ships and captured 10 prizes. On January 11, he had his first close call, engaging *Hibernia*, which

proved to be a 22-gun British Letter of Marque. After a 6-hour running battle, both ships had serious damage, and both captains withdrew from the pursuit. *Comet* had three men killed and 16 injured, including Boyle. But *Comet* was back in action just two days later, cutting-out three vessels from the harbor at Virgin Gorda. After refitting in Puerto Rico, Boyle continued to take prizes and outrun every man-of-war he saw. On March 19, 1814, after five months at sea and taking 20 prizes, *Comet* arrived at Beaufort, North Carolina. After transferring command to his lieutenant, Clement Cathell, Boyle returned to Baltimore.

The cruise was not as profitable as Boyle and his partners had hoped: all but 3 of the 20 prizes had been recaptured. British authorities in the West Indies also had intensified the hunt for *Comet*, and the merchants of St. Thomas had posted a sizable cash reward for her capture. Boyle needed a new area to cruise and a less recognizable ship - one more suitable for a new plan he had in mind.

**The Weekly Register,  
March 26, 1814:**

***“The privateers Comet and Chasseur of Baltimore, along with other ships of this port, are doing great business in the West Indies.”***



## Boyle and *Chasseur* - 1814

*Chasseur*, commanded by William Wade, was refitting in New York after a successful cruise. On June 13, 1814, the Baltimore syndicate purchased her and sent Boyle to New York to take command. *Chasseur* had been built by Thomas Kemp in 1813. At 85'8" length, 26' beam and 356 tons, she was the second largest privateer built in Baltimore. Boyle made two significant changes to *Chasseur*. He replaced her eight carronades with 10 long 12-pounders, giving her the ability to fight heavier armed ships at a longer range. He also ordered extra spars and sails so he could easily re-rig her as a brig, a brigantine or single topsail schooner. Finally, Boyle recruited more men to bring her crew strength up to 150. On July 24, 1814, Boyle took *Chasseur* to sea, sailing north to the Grand Banks.

By mid-August, Boyle had cruised along the Newfoundland coast and crossed the Atlantic, holding gun drills and capturing five prizes on the way.

On August 24, 1814, *Chasseur* cruised off the Scilly Isles, near the coast of Cornwall and the entrance to the English Channel. Thomas Boyle was ready to create a stir among the merchant shipping in Britain's home waters.



Chart of Approaches to the English Channel

**Next: Target: Baltimore!**

