

Appendix 11.3: Lightning Strikes

Note: all incidents mentioned below took place at Whampoa unless otherwise stated

1733, Aug 10: French ship *Triton* 'Yesterday at 3 in the afternoon the *Tryton* a French ship that arrived last did not lay above two ships lengths to the Eastward of us had the misfortune by lightning to loose the mizon topmast shivered her mizon mast knocked the Captain and Cheif mate down and much brused and killed one man and left two speechless sett fire to their gunroom the man that was killed happened to have a key and a brass buckle in his pocket the buckle was melted about the key the Captain and cheif mate are black and blue as if brused or beat' (BL: IOR L/MAR/B/230B *Windham*. See also BL: IOR L/MAR/B/665D and L/MAR/B/666C).

1741, Aug 30: EIC ship *Duke of Dorsetts* 'The first part hard squalls with much rain, ab^t 4 PM had an exceeding hard clap of Thunder and a Flash of Lightening, which took the *Duke of Dorsetts* Foremast, and shiver'd the Top mast to peices, but by good fortune no other damage to the people' (BL: IOR G/12/50, pp. 14-5, L/MAR/B/198A *Northampton*. See also BL: IOR L/MAR/B/237A).

1742, Jul 9: EIC ship *Defence* near Macao: 'At 9 AM it looking very black in the W[est]ern board, hauld up the main sail & clew'd up the Topsails. At ½ past D^o [Ditto] our people went up in order to hand the Topsails, D^o a hard gust of wind came on, wth a terrable clap of Thunder & Violent Lightning w^{ch} distroy'd five of our men on the main top sail yard Viz^t John Philpot, Rich. Facy & John Gray went overboard, Windom Prince & Rob. Newington were found dead in the top, there was several more wounded, but not Mortall, it shiverd the M[ain] T[op] Mast & T[op] C[entre] Mast, likewise bursted the main mast a little above the Barracadoe & blew off the starboard cheek, and melted the copper funnel of the foremast pinnacle, had it not been for violent showers of rain, the ship would inevitably been burnt every soul perrish'd' (BL: IOR G/12/51, p. 144, L/MAR/B/647C *Defence*. See also BL: IOR L/MAR/B/164C).

1764, Aug 18: A Chinese junk anchored in front of the factories in Canton was struck by lightning, but did not sustain much damage (CMD 1764, p. 174).

1775, Aug 21: EIC ship *Morse* 'from 6 to 8 PM squally with a great deal of thunder, lightning and rain the lightning struck and damaged our main mast, main top mast & flagstaff'. The next day they found that 'the lightning yesterday afternoon, has split the Larb[er]^d Cheek cut the uper hoop in two & damaged the main mast in three other places above the uper deck' (BL: IOR L/MAR/B/480B). The crew aboard the EIC ship *Rochford* witnessed the strike and recorded the following. 'About 7 saw the Lig[htning] strike the head of the Morse's main mast several people on board of us were struck but thank god none of them rec^d any hurt'. The next day they recorded: 'The Morses mainmast is found to have been damaged by the Lig^g [Lightning] last night' (BL: IOR L/MAR/B/470B).

- 1788, Aug 27: SOIC ship *Cron Prins Gustaf*, 'Thunder, Lightning & Rain . . . At 8 AM The First Sweed [*Cron Prins Gustaf*] who arrived was struck with Lightning at her Fore Topmast head & Head of the ship but was fortunately soon got the better of' (BL: IOR L/MAR/B/14A *Minerva*).
- 1790, Sep 14: 2 men on the river in Canton 'Yesterday in the night very severe thunder & light[ning]. Opposite Canton on the River 2 men were kill'd by the lightning'. (BL: IOR L/MAR/B/400J).
- 1793, Jul 15: Private ship *King George*, on July 22: 'Reports were this day circulated among the Chinese that the *King George* Country Ship, which arrived on the 15th Instant, had taken fire on her passage up the River, & was totally burnt'. On July 24: 'This day accounts were received from Canton, confirming the Report of the unfortunate accident abovementioned. The manner in which it happened is said to be as follows, about 8 O'Clock in the evening of the 18th Instant, the Fore Top mast or Foremast of the ship was struck with Lightening, by which 5 men were instantly killed, & 30 more dangerously wounded, & some part of the Sails & rigging set on fire which was immediately extinguished without appearance or suspicion of further Consequence, but about 7 O'Clock on the ensuing morning when they were getting under way a smoke & strong stench was observed to issue from the Partners of the Foremast & shortly after, when they were endeavouring to clear away some of the Cotton for the purpose of skuttling the ship, a flame burst out with such violence, that the Crew were immediately compelled to quit her to save their lives. The ship was burnt to the water's edge when the Captain & her Crew left the place they landed at, & it was suppose no part of the Property could be saved—the whole loss including ship and cargo is estimated at no less a sum than 500,000 Dollars as she had on board besides Cotton, a Considerable Quantity of Sandal wood Myrrh, Opium, & other valuable articles' (BL: IOR G/12/105, pp. 20-1). The Dutch reported that the ship was laden with 3,000 bales of cotton, 100 chests of opium, and 2,000 piculs of Malabar sandalwood, all of which was lost in the fire (NAH: VOC 4577 DR p. 17).
- 1796, May 2: EIC ship *Northumberland* 'At 5 PM came on a hard squall at NW with thunder, lightening and heavy rain at 1/2 past 5 a flash of Lightening Struck the Ship and Shivered the Fore Top Mast & Top Gallant Mast & Splintered the Fore Mast. Struck the Fore Top Mast & got the top gallant mast down upon the deck, struck also the main & mizen top gallant masts' (BL: IOR L/MAR/B/141M).