

Return To Ronoake

John White (1590)

From Richard Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations, Voyages of the English Nation*, III (1600).

The 15 of August towards Euening we came to an anker at Hatorask, in 36 degr. and one third, in fiue fadom water, three leagues from the shore. At our first comming to anker on this shore we saw a great smoke rise in the Ile Roanoak neere the place where I left our Colony in the yeere 1587, which smoake put vs in good hope that some of the Colony were there expecting my returne out of England.

The 16 and next morning our 2 boates went a shore, & Captaine Cooke, & Captain Spicer, & their company with me, with intent to passe to the place at Roanoak where our countrey men were left. At our putting from the ship we commanded our Master gunner to make readie 2 Minions and a Falkon well loden, and to shoot them off with reasonable space betweene euery shot, to the ende that their reportes might bee heard to the place where wee hoped to finde some of our people. This was accordingly performed, & our twoe boats put off vnto the shore, in the Admirals boat we sounded all the way and found from our shippe vntill we came within a mile of the shore nine, eight, and seuen fadome: but before we were halfe way betweene our ships and the shore we saw another great smoke to the Southwest of Kindrikers mountes: we therefore thought good to goe to that second smoke first: but it was much further from the harbour where we landed, then we supposed it to be, so that we were very sore tired before wee came to the smoke. But that which griued vs more was that when we came to the smoke, we found no man nor signe that any had bene there lately, nor yet any fresh water in all this way to drinke. Being thus wearied with this iourney we returned to the harbour where we left our boates, who in our absence had brought their caske a shore for fresh water, so we deferred our going to Roanoak vntill the next morning, and caused some of those saylers to digge in those sandie hilles for fresh water whereof we found very sufficient. That night wee returned aboard with our boates and our whole company in safety.

The next morning being the 17 of August, our boates and company were prepared

again to goe vp to Roanoak, but Captaine Spicer had then sent his boat ashore for fresh water, by meanes whereof it was ten of the clocke aforenoone before we put from our ships which were then come to an anker within two miles of the shore. The Admirals boat was halfe way toward the shore, when Captaine Spicer put off from his ship. The Admirals boat first passed the breach, but not without some danger of sinking, for we had a sea brake into our boat which filled vs halfe full of water, but by the will of God and carefull styrage of Captaine Cooke we came safe ashore, sauing onely that our furniture, victuals match and powder were much wet and spoyled. For at this time the winde blew at Northeast and direct into the harbour so great a gale, that the Sea brake extremely on the barre, and the tide went very forcibly at the entrance. By that time our Admirals boate was halled ashore, and most of our things taken out to dry, Captaine Spicer came to the entrance of the breach with his mast standing vp, and was halfe passed ouer, but by the rash and vndiscreet styrage of Ralph Skinner his Masters mate, a very dangerous Sea brake into their boate and ouerset them quite, the men kept the boat some in it, and some hanging on it, but the next sea set the boat on ground, where it beat so, that some of them were forced to let goe their hold, hoping to wade ashore, but the Sea still beat them downe, so that they could neither stand nor swimme, and the boat twice or thrise was turned the keele vpward; whereon Captaine Spicer and Skinner hung vntill they sunke, & seene no more. But foure that could swimme a litle kept themselues in deeper water and were saued by Captain Cookes meanes, who so soone as he saw their ouersetting, stripped himselfe, and foure other that could swimme very well, & with all haste possible rowed vnto them, & saued foure. They were a 11 in all, & 7 of the chiefest were drowned, whose names were Edward Spicer, Ralph Skinner, Edward Kelley, Thomas Beuis, Hance the Surgion, Edward Kelborne, Robert Coleman. This mischance did so much discomfort the saylers, that they were all of one mind not to goe any further to seeke the planters. But in the end by the commandement & perswasion of me and Captaine Cooke, they prepared the boates: and seeing the Captaine and me so resolute, they seemed much more willing. Our boates and all things fitted againe, we put off from Hatorask, being the number of 19 persons in both boates: but before we could get to the place, where our planters were left, it was so exceeding darke, that we ouershot the place a quarter of a mile: there we espied towards the North end of the Iland ye light of a great fire thorow the woods, to the which we presently rowed: when wee came right ouer

against it, we let fall our Grapnel neere the shore, & sounded with a trumpet a Call, & afterwarde many familiar English tunes of Songs, and called to them friendly; but we had no answere, we therefore landed at day-breake, and comming to the fire, we found the grasse & sundry rotten trees burning about the place. From hence we went thorow the woods to that part of the Iland directly ouer against Dasamongwepeuk, & from thence we returned by the water side, round about the Northpoint of the Iland, vntill we came to the place where I left our Colony in the yeere 1586. In all this way we saw in the sand the print of the Saluages feet of 2 or 3 sorts troaden yt night, and as we entred vp the sandy banke vpon a tree, in the very browe thereof were curiously carued these faire Romane letters C R O: which letters presently we knew to signifie the place, where I should find the planters seated, according to a secret token agreed vpon betweene them & me at my last departure from them, which was, that in any wayes they should not faile to write or carue on the trees or posts of the doores the name of the place where they should be seated; for at my comming away they were prepared to remoue from Roanoak 50 miles into the maine. Therefore at my departure from them in Anno 1587 I willed them, that if they should happen to be distressed in any of those places, that then they should carue ouer the letters or name, a Crosse in this forme, but we found no such signe of distresse. And hauing well considered of this, we passed toward the place where they were left in sundry houses, but we found the houses taken downe, and the place very strongly enclosed with a high palisado of great trees, with cortynes and flankers very Fort-like, and one of the chiefe trees or postes at the right side of the entrance had the barke taken off, and 5. foote from the ground in fayre Capitall letters was grauen CROATOAN without any crosse or signe of distresse; this done, we entred into the palisado, where we found many barres of Iron, two pigges of Lead, foure yron fowlers, Iron sacker-shotte, and such like heaue things, throwen here and there, almost ouergrown with grasse and weedes. From thence wee went along by the water side, towards the poynt of the Creeke to see if we could find any of their botes or Pinnisse, but we could perceiue no signe of them, nor any of the last Falkons and small Ordinance which were left with them, at my departure from them. At our returne from the Creeke, some of our Saylers meeting vs, tolde vs that they had found where diuers chests had bene hidden, and long sithence digged vp againe and broken vp, and much of the goods in them spoyled and scattered about, but nothing left, of such things as the Sauages knew any vse of, vndefaced. Presently Captaine Cooke and I went

to the place, which was in the ende of an olde trench, made two yeeres past by Captaine Amadas: where wee found fiue Chests, that had been carefully hidden of the Planters, and of the same chests three were my owne, and about the place many of my things spoyled and broken, and my bookes torne from the couers, the frames of some of my pictures and Mappes rotten and spoyled with rayne, and my armour almost eaten through with rust; this could bee no other but the deede of the Sauages our enemies at Dasamongwepeuk, who had watched the departure of our men to Croatoan; and assoone as they were departed, digged vp euery place where they suspected any thing to be buried: but although it much grieued me to see such spoyle of my goods, yet on the other side I greatly ioyed that I had safely found a certaine token of their safe being at Croatoan, which is the place where Manteo was borne, and the Sauages of the Iland our friends.

When we had seene in this place so much as we could, we returned to our Boates, and departed from the shoare towards our Shippes, with as much speede as we could: For the weather beganne to ouercast, and very likely that a foule and stormie night would ensue. Therefore the same Euening with much danger and labour, we got our selues aboard, by which time the winde and seas were so greatly risen, that wee doubted our Cables and Anchors would scarcely holde vntill Morning; wherefore the Captaine caused the Boate to be manned with fiue lusty men, who could swimme all well, and sent them to the little Iland on the right hand of the Harbour, to bring aboard sixe of our men, who had filled our caske with fresh water: the Boate the same night returned aboard with our men, but all our Caske ready filled they left behinde, vnpossible to bee had aboard without danger of casting away both men and Boates; for this night prooued very stormie and foule.

The next Morning it was agreed by the Captaine and my selfe, with the Master and others, to wey anchor, and goe for the place at Croatoan, where our planters were: for that then the winde was good for that place, and also to leaue that Caske with fresh water on shoare in the Iland vntill our returne. So then they brought the cable to the Capston, but when the anchor was almost apeecke, the Cable broke, by meanes whereof we lost another Anchor, wherewith we droue so fast into the shoare, that wee were forced to let fall a third Anchor; which came so fast home that the Shippe was almost aground by Kenricks mounts: so that wee were forced to let slippe the Cable ende for ende. And if it had not chanced that wee had fallen into a chanell of deeper water, closer by the shoare then wee

accompted of, wee could neuer have gone cleare of the poynt that lyeth to the Southwardes of Kenricks mounts. Being thus cleare of some dangers, and gotten into deeper waters, but not without some losse; for wee had but one Cable and Anchor left vs of foure, and the weather grew to be fouler and fouler; our victuals scarce, and our caske and fresh water lost: it was therefore determind that we should goe for Saint Iohn or some other Iland to the Southward for fresh water. And it was further purposed, that if wee could any wayes supply our wants of victuals and other necessaries, either at Hispaniola, Sant Iohn, or Trynidad, that then wee should continue in the Indies all the Winter following, with hope to make 2. rich voyages of one, and at our returne to visit our countrymen at Virginia. The captaine and the whole company in the Admirall (with my earnest petitions) thereunto agreed, so that it rested onely to knowe what the Master of the Moonelight our consort would doe herein. But when we demanded them if they would accompany vs in that new determination, they alleged that their weake and leake Shippe was not able to continue it; wherefore the same night we parted, leauing the Moone-light to goe directly for England, and the Admirall set his course for Trynidad, which course we kept two dayes.

On the 28. the winde changed, and it was sette on foule weather euery way: but this storme brought the winde West and Northwest, and blewe so forcibly, that wee were able to beare no sayle, but our forecourse halfe mast high, wherewith wee ranne vpon the winde perforce, the due course for England, for that wee were dryuen to change our first determination for Trynidad, and stooode for the Ilands of Acores, where wee purposed to take in fresh water, and also there hoped to meete with some English men of warre about those Ilands, at whose hands wee might obtaine some supply of our wants. . . .

The 2. of October in the Morning we saw S. Michaels Iland on our Starre board quarter.

The 23. at 10. of the clocke afore noone, we saw Vshant in Britaigne.

On Saturday the 24. we came in safetie, God be thanked, to an anker at Plymmouth.