

# C S FORESTER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Produced and edited by Dr C E Blogg for the C S Forester Society

Please send any contributions you wish to be included in the Newsletter by post or e-mail  
admin@csforester.org

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## NEW PUBLISHER FOR C S FORESTER BOOKS

The following books are now available from Simon Publications, Inc. (contact them at [www.simonpublications.com](http://www.simonpublications.com).)

**The Good Shepherd, \$29.95.** A book that describes dramatically a 48 hour ordeal on an American destroyer on the icy North Atlantic screening 37 Allied merchantmen during the time when German submarines had the upper hand.

**The Ship, \$29.95.** Forester worked at the British Information Services during WW2. To support the war effort, he wrote this book in 1943 on the Admiralty's invitation to visit a light cruiser in action. This is a memorial to the heroism of 500,000 men and women of the Royal Navy at war.

**Payment Deferred, \$25.95.** A masterpiece of suspense: a middle-aged bank clerk with a mountain of debts.

**Lord Nelson, \$35.95.** The biography of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson, victor of the naval battle of Trafalgar.

**The Gun, \$29.95.** Set in Napoleon's Peninsula War, this book became the basis of the movie *The Pride and the Passion*, starring Cary Grant, Sophia Loren and Frank Sinatra. Spanish guerillas led by a British officer salvage a monstrous gun and turn it on the French.

**Death to the French, \$25.95.** Separated from his regiment during a retreat, Rifleman Matthew Dodd of Wellington's army engages the French single-handedly and eventually causes their retreat. If you liked *The Gun*, you will enjoy this.

**Plain Murder, \$25.95.** Three advertising men decide to kill a colleague to avoid dismissal and the grim prospect of joblessness. Their leader acquires a taste for crime, but ultimately his comeuppance.

**Victor Emmanuel II, \$35.95.** The history of Italy, from the Congress of Vienna to the rise of Mussolini, is treated with the detail and clarity one comes to expect from the fine writing of Forester.

### Inside this issue:

*From the booksellers* 2

*An Annotation in The Peacemaker—Adrian Noble* 2

*H.M.S. Pepperpot—Adrian Noble* 3

*Simon Scarrow and Hornblower—Colin Blogg* 3

*From the Auctions—Colin Blogg* 3

*Correspondence* 4

**STOP PRESS** 4

## THE AFRICAN QUEEN, Channel 4, 29th April 2003

Described in *The Times* magazine section:

"Film: **The African Queen, 1951**

Oscar-winning romantic adventure set in Africa during the First World War, starring Humphrey Bogart as an 'alcoholic sea captain (!) who falls in love with the missionary's sister (Katharine Hepburn), who he is escorting back to civilisation. Directed by John Huston."

AND, on page 32: Humphrey Bogart won the only Oscar as a cynical sea captain who teams up with a prim missionary (Katharine Hepburn) to repel Nazi invaders (sic) in John Huston's much loved wartime adventure. The chemistry between the two

leads, making their only shared screen appearance, works superbly well despite legendary bouts of boozy on-screen friction. (...Wrong War!)

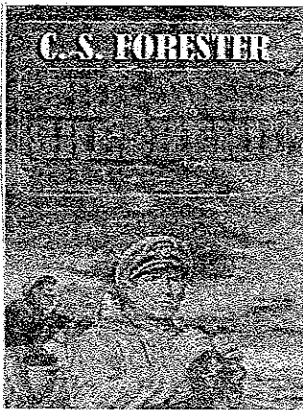
Purple prose in *The Sunday Times* culture section:

"The incongruous pairing of Humphrey Bogart's 'Scottish steamer skipper' and Katharine Hepburn's shrewish spinster-in-waiting seemed hokey way back when, as did their date with destiny on an East African river. However, the star's romantic chemistry shines through John Huston's buoyant adventure, like a beacon in the heart of darkness."

### Special points of interest:

- Bookcovers from Simon Publications, Inc.—see inside pages
- Correspondence from the website—see page 4
- STOP PRESS—on back page
- Insert page—Obituary for Lieutenant-Commander Tony Dixon

## FROM THE BOOKSELLERS



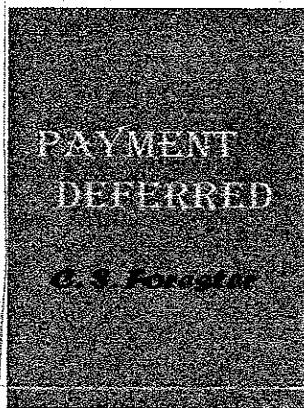
Peter Harrington, an antiquarian bookseller who specialises in modern leather-bound editions of sought-after books, has a set of ten Hornblower novels—a snip at £3,500. To put that into perspective, a single copy of Fleming's *Casino Royale* in original binding, is for sale at £17,500! See more of Peter Harrington's stock at the New York Book Fair, Stand C15, The Park Avenue, Armoury Park Avenue and 67th Street, New York City, from 10th-13th April 2003.

**FORESTER, C.S.** The Complete Hornblower. London, Michael Joseph, 1937-1962. [21160] 10 volumes, 8vo. Bound in recent full navy blue morocco, gilt titles and gilt ship decoration to spines, gilt rule on boards, marbled endpapers, top edges gilt. Signed on the half title page of "The Happy Return" by C. S. Forester. A fine set. **£3,500 (US\$5,600).**

## ALL FIRST EDITIONS

*Forester (real name Cecil Smith) was called to Hollywood to write a pirate film, working under Arthur Hornblower. However, before they had finished the script, another studio released Captain Blood, starring Errol Flynn, and using the same historical incidents that they had counted on. Rather than seeking another position, hounded by the prospect of a paternity suit, Forester jumped aboard a cargo boat bound for home. Another passenger was the photographer Barbara Sutro. In the voyage, he took a one-day cruise around the Gulf of Fonseca in the ship's motor lifeboat, and by the end of the voyage he had a new novel worked out, The Happy Return, with its characters Hornblower, Bush and Lady Barbara. Hornblower, with all his human indecisiveness and cross-grainedness, was Forester as he wished he had the courage to be, and Forester wrote about Hornblower again and again.*

*John Forester: A Very Short Biography of C S Forester*



## AN ANNOTATION

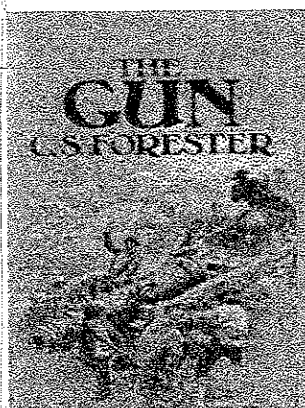
Recently I bought at *The Dormouse Bookshop* on Elm Hill in Norwich, a first edition of *The Peacemaker* by C S Forester for £4.50. Although the volume is a former library book—one or two of the pages are stamped *Cadbury Bros. Ltd.*, though I am not sure why—it is in quite reasonable condition, though there is no dust-wrapper, and I would have thought that it may be valued at somewhat more than the amount for which it was sold.

On page 16 of the volume a previous reader has written in pencil '1933'. To quote from this page and the previous one:

*"God bless my soul, yes," said Mr Laxton. "He's (Dr Pethwick) not much older than you are (Dorothy Laxton). I see his name on the honours board every time I take prayers in hall. He got his degree—B.Sc.—in 1921, and I know he was nineteen at the time. He's thirty-one. Got his doctorate at twenty-four. Runciman was talking to me about his thesis at the same time as the other things."*

And so the unknown annotator is, of course, quite correct. *The Peacemaker* is set in the year 1933.

**Adrian Taylor**



## SURVIVOR FROM 'SINK THE BISMARCK' DIES

### From The Times, March 2003

As a Swordfish pilot in 818 Squadron, Tony Dixon was one of the Fleet Air Arm flyers who carried out the historic attack on the battleship *Bismarck* on May 26, 1941. The attack, launched by 15 Swordfish drawn from four squadrons embarked in the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*, scored two hits on the German ship which decisively damaged her steering gear, slowed her down and rendered her an easy prey to the capital ships of the Home Fleet. Closing in on her the next day, the battleships *King George V* and *Rodney* pounded her to a flaming wreck, after which the torpedoes of the cruiser *Dorsetshire* administered the coup de grace.

It was the end of what had been an anxious time for the forces of Admiral Tovey as they attempted to bring this dangerous adversary to book. On May 24 the *Bismarck* had struck a devastating blow at her pursuers in the Denmark Strait, sinking the battlecruiser *Hood*, darling of the Fleet, and badly damaging the battleship *Prince of Wales*. That night, a strike by Swordfish launched from the *Victorious* had achieved one hit, but it was on her armoured belt and caused no damage.

Then the pursuing forces lost touch with their quarry for a period of more than 24 hours, and it was not until 10.30 am on May 26 that a lone Catalina of Coastal Command located her in a position some 700 miles west of Land's End, steering on a westerly course. It transpired that in her fight with the *Hood* and *Prince of Wales* she had received a hit from the latter's shells which had caused a fuel leak, and she was heading for the haven of Brest for repairs.

With the *Victorious* returned to Iceland, it was for the aircraft of the *Ark Royal*—newly arrived on the scene from Gibraltar—to try to stop the German commerce raider before she could come within range of land-based air cover. Dixon was involved in both the airstrikes which were launched against the *Bismarck* that day, the first of which so nearly ended in disaster. In ap-

palling weather, with winds up to 50 knots, visibility a matter of yards and with mountainous seas breaking over the flight deck, the "Ark" launched 14 aircraft at 2.50 pm.

Unknown to the strike's leader, Lieutenant-Commander Stewart-Moore, who had been assured that the *Bismarck* was alone in the target area, the cruiser *Sheffield* had been ordered by Vice-Admiral Somerville to shadow the German battleship as closely as she dared. When, therefore, the strike group found a contact on their radar they took it for their quarry, although it was 20 miles closer than they expected. And when the attacking aircraft burst out of the bottom of thick cloud cover to launch their torpedoes they gleefully attributed the lack of anti-aircraft fire to the fact that they had achieved complete surprise.

Realising that he was the victim of mistaken identity, *Sheffield's* captain had ordered his AA guns on no account to fire and now set about skilfully evading the rain of torpedoes released against him. Mercifully, the newly fitted magnetic pistols on the torpedoes malfunctioned, causing most of them to explode when they hit the water—to the chagrin of the airmen, who had no idea they were attacking their own side.

When the Swordfish crews returned crestfallen to *Ark Royal* at 5pm they were undecieved—and delighted not to have sunk the British cruiser. A second strike was ordered just as soon as the aircraft could be refuelled and rearmed. For this it was resolved to revert to the older, yet proven, contact pistol for the torpedoes.

From 7.10pm onwards 15 Swordfish, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander T. P. Coode, took off for their second attempt to halt the foe. The crews were now well aware that they alone could stop the *Bismarck* from reaching Brest. Sub-Lieutenant Dixon, commanding the second aircraft of the six subflights, was the last man to take off with his observer, Sub-Lieutenant

## LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER TONY DIXON

Swordfish pilot who took part in the decisive attack in the historic operation to sink the *Bismarck*

Turner, and his air gunner, Leading Airman Shields.

Orders this time were to steer for the *Sheffield*, lurking a dozen miles astern of *Bismarck*; the cruiser would then vector the Swordfish to the target. With the cloud base now down to only 700ft many of the Swordfish lost each other in the murk, but they pressed on singly or in pairs.

Dixon and his sub-flight leader, Sub-Lieutenant Willcocks, both missed the target on their first approach, but having returned to *Sheffield* to obtain a new bearing they returned to the attack. Diving down on the starboard side they were both exposed to the fire of *Bismarck's* entire AA battery of 105mm, 37mm and 20mm guns on that side of the ship.

Confronted by this wall of fire, Willcocks retained his torpedo with the aim of going round again, though in the event the continuing accuracy of the AA fire prevented him from doing so. Dixon got his torpedo away at 2,000 yards but saw no evidence of a hit. Hits, however, had been obtained by two torpedoes, possibly of 820 and 810 Squadron aircraft. One of these, like the attack from *Victorious*, burst harmlessly against the armour belt, but the second hit *Bismarck's* stern, wrecking her steering gear and jamming her rudders. At that moment her fate was sealed.

Thus, as they had done the previous year when they mauled the Italian fleet at Taranto, a small force of slow and vulnerable biplanes, which looked for all the world like relics from the First World War, had struck a major naval blow at the enemy. On the morning of May 27 the torpedoes of the *Dorsetshire* completed the work the Swordfish had begun and at 10.36am the *Bismarck* slipped beneath the waves of the Atlantic.

Anthony Neville Dixon (always known as Tony) was born in Stamford in 1917, the

son of a Conservative Party agent. He was educated at Oundle, from where he went into insurance. But the life did not appeal to him and in 1938 he entered the Royal Navy, determined on flying.

He served during the Norwegian campaign and was subsequently flying Swordfish from *Ark Royal* in the Mediterranean before the *Bismarck* operation. He returned when it was over, and was on board when she was torpedoed by two U-boats on November 13, 1941. Fortunately, it was a further 15 hours after the torpedoes struck before the aircraft carrier sank, and her aircraft could all be flown off. Only one of her crew was killed. After further operational duties, Dixon became a flying instructor, ending his war as a lieutenant-commander.

After the war he returned to civilian life. In the general election of 1945 he stood unsuccessfully as a Conservative for Brigg in Lincolnshire. He was offered a safe seat after that, but he had a fast-growing family and industry beckoned. He became managing director of a tractor dealership in Spalding, where he worked until his retirement in 1975.

In that time he succumbed to, and conquered, alcoholism, which made him highly aware of alcohol problems in others, and led him to become a tireless worker for Alcoholics Anonymous. He retired to Branscombe in Devon, where he became a leading figure in the life of the local church. He was also a keen fisherman.

Two of Dixon's sons predeceased him. He is survived by his wife, Hazel, whom he married in 1940, and by two sons and two daughters.

**Lieutenant-Commander Tony Dixon, naval aviator, was born on November 28, 1917. He died on January 22, 2003, aged 85.**

## H.M.S. PEPPERPOT

In *The Times* of Friday 14th February there appeared the obituary of Lieutenant Commander Innes Hamilton, who served on board the cruiser H.M.S. *Penelope* at the Second Battle of Sirte, on 22nd March 1942. This was, of course, the naval battle upon which C S Forester based his novel, *The Ship*, having carried out his researches on board *Penelope* when she had sailed to the Philadelphia Navy Yard for repair and refit. To quote from the aforesaid obituary in *The Times*:

*Attacks from German aircraft continued, however, after the convoy reached Malta (after the Second Battle of Sirte). In harbour 'Penelope' suffered such damage over successive days in early April from shrapnel and shell splinters that she was soon nicknamed 'H.M.S. Pepperpot'. In the meantime she put up a terrific barrage against her attackers.*

**Adrian Taylor**

## SIMON SCARROW AND HORNBLOWER

The featured contemporary and popular author, in the current April 2003 (No. 229) issue of *Book and Magazine Collector*, gave this reply to the question: Who or what do you read for your own pleasure?

"I am fairly eclectic in my reading. Recently I've really enjoyed Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* (though you can keep the rather

poor sequel), Steven Pressfield's *Gates of Fire*, *Stalingrad*, a Hemingway biography, and **anything by C S Forester.**" Perhaps to emphasize this predilection, a whole page was given over to a display of nine Hornblower dust-jackets.

**Colin Blogg**

## FROM THE AUCTIONS

As reported in *Book and Magazine Collector*, by Crispin Jackson, January 2, 2003, No. 226

From the Bloomsbury Book Auctions:

The big names attracted big money (eg. Agatha Christie's *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (£940) and *Death in the Clouds* (£541). Leading prices were paid for some books by Arthur Conan Doyle, eg. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (£1,293) and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (£1,053). As has become usual, James Bond first editions creamed off the top money (*Casino Royale* £1,645). Graham Greene's *Journey without Maps* realised £1,763.

Contemporary authors such as P D James and Terry Pratchett sold for successful bids of £223 and £470 for *Unnatural Causes* and *The Dark Side of the Sun* respectively.

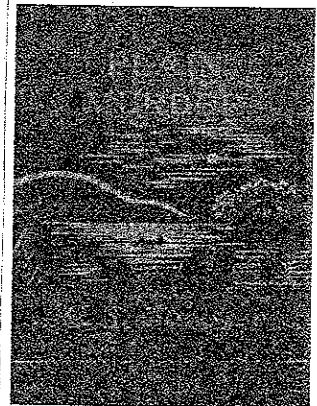
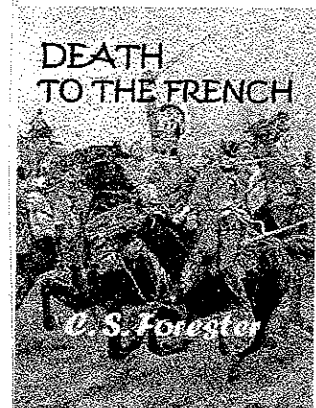
The phenomenal success of J K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series continues, with £3,525

being paid for a copy of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. But even these considerable prices were exceeded by the £7,050 paid for a first edition of J R R Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. John Fowles' *The Collector* did well to attract a bid of £705. Ian Banks' *The Wasp Factory* was sold for £235.

Even children's books could attract high prices—for instance, *The Cat in the Hat* sold for £470.

Books by C S Forester, Patrick O'Brian and Bernard Cornwell are regarded as popular enough to deserve special mention. And finally, *The Happy Return* sold for £200 despite a torn dust-jacket. This may encourage our members to take even more care of their collections in case hard times persuade them to auction their precious volumes.

**Colin Blogg**



Please send any contributions you wish to be included in the Newsletter by post or e-mail  
admin@csforester.org

11 Park Town  
Oxford OX2 6SN

admin@csforester.org

### STOP PRESS

- AandE have produced a film 'Napoleon', adapted by Didier Decoin from Max Gallo's best-selling novel.
- ibooks are publishing "Sink the Bismarck" by C S Forester, the tale of Hitler's fastest battleship, \$11.95, [www.ibooks.net](http://www.ibooks.net)

## CORRESPONDENCE

From Claire Daughtry

I grew up in Berkeley, California, in the fifties and have some nice memories of C S Forester. Around 1958, when I was 9 years old, I sold Christmas cards door to door. Mr Forester was in my neighbourhood and I always stopped by his very interesting and somewhat intimidating house. I stopped by every year for several years as he was a kind and generous buyer. I remember he seemed elderly to me and appeared to live alone.

I have no way of knowing whether or not he ever actually used the Christmas cards I sold him, but I always appreciated the fact that he was very nice and I knew I had a sale.

At the time my Father told me who he was, but I think it only partially impressed me. I loved to read, but at that age it was mostly Nancy Drew. I had yet to experience *The African Queen* or any others. However, I think I did like the idea that he was a famous man and I've never forgotten him.

It's a nice memory that stays with me and I have a picture of him in my mind looking through my Christmas card offerings. I believe he was always in a suit and tie.

*Editor's reply:* It was a great treat to receive your e-mail with your fascinating memory of C S Forester. I have twice visited his old homes in Berkeley and wonder which of them is was to which you refer.

From Bill Allen

Please let me know where can I find a photograph of C S Forester? He must have been a very camera-shy man.

*Editor's reply:* You are right in believing that CSF was camera-shy. He had one photograph taken in California, which largely sufficed for many years and you will find it on Penguin-paperbacks and on the back cover of many Michael Joseph-published dust wrappers (*Midshipman*, *Lieutenant, H & the Atropos*, *Young H*, *H in the West Indies*, *Lord H and Long Before Forty*) and in Little Brown editions.

You will find other photos in John Forester's biography (*Novelist and Storyteller: The Life of C S Forester*). There are also some older photos on the dust wrapper of *To the Indies* and *Lord H*.

From Junko Salmon

I found a discrepancy in the Hornblower series. Could someone help? I'm so distressed! The year H came on board the *Justinian* was 1774, according to *Midshipman*, but later in *Ship of the Line* he tells Bolton he joined the Navy in 73.

*Editor's reply:* I usually revert to Parkinson's *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower* who has HH joining the Navy as a midshipman in 1794 when he was 17 years old (he was born 4th July 1776).

From Eric Sheldon

I think the website is great...lots of very interesting information about Forester and his beloved Hornblower!

I would very much like to download the entire text (11 books?) on to my palm pilot so that I can take the series with me when I'm away from home. I have downloaded lots of classics (like *Moby Dick* and *Old Man in the Sea*) and the Hornblower series would be a wonderful addition. I would greatly appreciate any information about this.

*Editor's comment:* There must be a member somewhere who can help. Kindly reply to [ericsheldon@hotmail.com](mailto:ericsheldon@hotmail.com)

From P.L. Fort Lauderdale

My husband has been a fan of C S Forester books for the past 40 years. I was looking to see if I could purchase a picture of

Horatio's ship or perhaps a video of the series. He has suffered a stroke and this would be a wonderful gift for him.

*Editor's reply:* Hornblower 'sailed' in numerous ships, most of which were fictitious. However, there is a lavishly illustrated book 'The Making of Hornblower' by Tom McGregor, published in 1998 by Boxtree, ISBN 07522 1189 7, £11.00. You may also enjoy 'Hornblower's Navy' by Steve Pope, published by Orion at £15.99 in 1998, ISBN 0 75281 774 4. They are both out of print and you could probably find them through [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com).

You can probably find the videos in bookstores. Otherwise contact the A&E TV channel via their website, [www.AandE.com](http://www.AandE.com)