



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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STRIKE A LIGHT

"Hornblower awoke with a start, wondering what it was that had awakened him.... It was utterly maddening. He tried to light his candle, but his trembling fingers could do nothing with his flint and steel. He dashed the tinderbox to the floor, and, fumbling in the darkness, dragged on his coat and trousers and shoes...."

The quotation is, of course, from Chapter 2 of *Flying Colours*. Stirring adventures follow. But at this particular point Hornblower's predicament was one that was shared in reality by all his contemporaries. For thousands of years people literally had to strike a light. The process involved taking a flint and a steel, dashing them together and letting the sparks fall on to tinder. Generally this was linen rag or sometimes dried fungus (*Fomes fomentarius*). With careful blowing and a bit of luck, the tinder would burst into flame. The next step was lighting what then was called a match (in other words, a taper or prepared wooden splint).

Dexterity, practice and patience were called for. Hornblower was not alone in discovering that more haste meant less speed and more time in the dark. Producing a light in thirty seconds was reckoned good going. Three minutes was more like the average, and it was all too easy to gash a finger and drip blood on the tinder, which made everything that much harder. Once you had a light, it didn't do to waste

it, especially in damp conditions, so Hornblower's gunners took pains not to let their slow matches go out.

In *Tinderboxes* John Vince looks into this minor, but interesting, aspect of bygone everyday life. His short, illustrated book gives an account of the history of the subject. Design developed over the years into tinplate models that kept the tinder dry, and gunsmiths turned their expertise to flintlock lighters that looked rather like pistols.

By the accession of William IV, however, scientists were starting to find substitutes for the age-old technology of flint and steel. For a while they struggled with terminology as well as with the dangerous chemistry of sulphur and phosphorus. In the end, after experiments with "vestas", "prometheans" and "congreves" - named after the inventor of the rockets—matches, as we know and call them arrived. That was one problem solved, though not in time for Hornblower. He had to wait for his captors to appear, bearing torches.

John Vince, *Tinderboxes*, Sorbus Publications: Butler's Cross, 2002, 44 pages. £4.10

Christopher Smith

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of

The C S Forester Society
will take place in Oxford on
Saturday 4th October 2003

Full details attached to this Newsletter

THE MAN WHO RULED THE WAVES

Max Hastings celebrates the centenary of C S Forester, a great storyteller wrongly overlooked by literary critics. Extract from *The Spectator*, 18/25 December 1999 attached to this Newsletter

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Special points of interest:

- Next Meeting Saturday 4th October in Oxford—details attached
- The man who ruled the waves—attached
- Articles and correspondence—you write to us, for which many thanks

A HUNT FOR 'U97'

Initially a brief search on the internet established that there was a copy of *U97* by C S Forester in the library at Wayland Prison. Perhaps this was a hint that acquiring a copy might not be at all easy. Then I tried the library service more directly and a few months later Ayisham Library presented me with a small sheaf of papers which suggested that great efforts had been made to acquire *U97* - if Heaven and Earth had not actually been moved then their attempts seemed to be not very far short of this. One sheet stated somewhat cryptically—at least to me—'Returned to Bibs. in error?' and 'Reference locations only traced. Please see attached'. On another sheet there were all sorts of seeming

hieroglyphics: 'Newcastle QN/P2', '14/5 DIRECT NURL' and 'MA/U-1 sent 13/5', for instance. Another sheet was headed 'The British Library, Document Supply Centre', upon which was the note '+ Manchester University declines to lend'.

Presumably the latter's reluctance to lend *U97* is a hint that the volume is much coveted. And one can imagine the inmates at Wayland finding a degree of escapism in the fine prose of one of C S Forester's two plays. Perhaps some day I will happen across a copy of *U97* on some dusty shelf in a second-hand bookshop.

Adrian Taylor

A BOOKSHOP VISIT

The other day I went to 'Baron Books' in Holt, where some months ago I picked up an American first edition of *The Sky and the Forest*. Would this happy hunting ground yield another Forester volume of interest?

A rapid scan of the relevant shelf answered the question. There was merely a modern edition of *Nelson*. The proprietor was most apologetic and he spun some tale about his brother-in-law coming down from the Lake District and stealing all his

Hornblowers. For my part I uttered the commonplace comment that had that copy of *Nelson* been a first edition, then it would be a worthy find indeed.

I shall perhaps leave it a month or two before I darken the doors of 'Baron Books' once again, in the hope that the brother-in-law has tamed his urge for Foresters by then.

Adrian Taylor

The C S Forester Society would like to acknowledge with enormous gratitude the generous donations provided by Lawrie Brewer and Donald Hines, which will be of benefit to all members

BOOK REVIEW

Horatio Hornblower, upon joining his first ship, *HMS Justinian*, very soon encountered a totally new world, the world of the wooden wall, England's oak bastion ready for the foe. New sights, new sounds, intriguing equipment, in fact a fascinating world.

Members of the C S Forester Society now have the opportunity of sharing the sights and savouring the delights of the daily life of a ship of war. *Heart of Oak*, a sailor's life in Nelson's Navy, is the key to opening the door. The author, James P. McGuane, presents us with lavish coloured photographs and immensely absorbing details. Whet your appetite upon the following: Nelson and HMS Victory, food and drink, rope,

sails, medicine, dress, gunpowder, ship construction and repair, small arms and, oh, so many more.

My friendly postman delivered my copy of this gorgeous book at the amazing hour of 6.50 one morning, naturally ushering in a most enjoyable day. A friend, having viewed my copy and caring for and loving books, considers *Hearts of Oak* deserving of the highest praise for superb pictures and text.

Heart of Oak, by James P McGuane, Maritime Books, Lodgehill, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 4EL, price £35.00

Richard Miller

ANNIE MARBLE

REPLY FROM JOHN FORESTER TO THE ARTICLE ON DAUGHTER OF THE HAWK/SHADOW OF THE HAWK— Newsletter No. 12

Just a slight correction to your statement: "The Hawk was written in 1926-28 between *The Voyage of the Annie Marble* and *Plain Murder*.....Forester and his bride explored the waterways in England in a small punt ("The Annie Marble")."

The Annie Marble was a flat-bottomed, square-sterned, outboard-powered skiff, equipped with a camping cover (see the photo in *Novelist and Storyteller*). The Annie Marble took two voyages under the command of CSF and Kitty. She was shipped untested to Rouen for her first voyage on the Seine and Loire rivers in the summer of 1928. In the summer of 1929 she sailed the German lakes and rivers and attended the world's speedboat races (at Potsdam?). What happened to her after that is unknown to me. When CSF and Kitty and I (as a baby) toured the canals of England, it was in a different boat entirely, with a different engine (a Turner-Bray about the size of a two-pound can of coffee), so I was told by CSF.

The cabin cruiser that Dawkins (in *Hawk*) purchased was the fictional embodiment of the more luxurious boat that CSF had been trying to promote from manufacturers in return for articles on its use. That sailing, CSF and Kitty had to be content with a boat that they could just barely purchase for themselves (the Evinrude motor

for the French voyage was advanced by Evinrude). This was the Annie Marble.

The folding kayak described in *Hawk* was taken from real life. The Klepper Faltboote Company had been started in 1907, and by the early 1920s foldboating was a popular way of weekend recreation. The boaters took the train to some upstream river point, cruised downriver for the weekend to a different town, and returned home by train. The faltboote folded into two packages, one like a golf bag, one like a haversack. Many boaters used a little two-wheeled folding carriage to manoeuvre the boat packages and camping gear up to the rail stations, just as we do our baggage around airports. More so in Germany than in England, maybe because the German river system was better suited to the one-way downriver trip, maybe because in England the faltboote was more often carried in a car. In England, as I remember this, kayaking (we never called it that; it was canoeing and what Americans call a canoe was a Canadian canoe) was from a fixed campsite, up and down the rivers and streams, returning home from the same base as the start.

John Forester

Please send any contributions to the Newsletter to Colin Blogg (details on back page), and contributions to Reflections (the literary review supplement of the C S Forester Society) to David Stead, 151 Walkley Crescent Road, Sheffield S6 5BA, or david-stead@lineone.net

CORRESPONDENCE

CLAIRE DAUGHTRY'S EMAILS ON CSF'S HOMES

I grew up in Berkeley, California in the 50s and have some nice memories of CSF. Around 1958 when I was 9 years old I sold Christmas cards door to door. Mr Forester was in my neighborhood and I always stopped by his very interesting and intimidating house. He was a kind and generous buyer. 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. I liked the idea that he was famous and I've never forgotten him. I believe he was always in a suit and tie.

Editor's reply: I have twice visited his old homes in Berkeley and wonder to which of them you refer. Claire Daughtry replies:

The house I'm referring to was on the corner of Overlook Road and Muir Way, but more accurately was probably on the corner of Overlook and Park Hills Road. Overlook and Park Hills Road merge just before Muir Way, a short street one block long. I lived on Woodside Road, which was down the hill a block. My father was a real estate broker in Berkeley from 1948 until 1991. He is fairly certain that CSF paid \$40,000 for this house and plans to check the county records. Next time I am in Berkeley I shall go see Forester's home and see if it looks the way I remember it.

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

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**C S FORESTER
SOCIETY**

**The Society for all those
interested in the works of
C S Forester. Membership
£10/\$15 a year
admin@csforester.org**

BOOK FAIRS

PBFA— 01763 249212, www.pbfa.com, email info@pbfa.org,
and The Old Coach House, 16 Melbourn Street, Royston, Herts.,
SG8 7BZ

Sunday 24th August EXETER Matthews Hall, Topsham

Saturday 6th September DROITWICH Community Hall, Heritage
Way

Sunday 7th September DARTMOOR Town Hall Tavistock

Sunday 21st September MONMOUTH Monmouth Leisure Cen-
tre, Old Dixton Road

Saturday 4th October SHERBORNE (Dorset) Church Hall, Digby
Road

Friday 17th and Saturday 18th October BIRMINGHAM Birming-
ham Medical Institute, Harborne Road, Edgbaston

Sunday 26th October CIRENCESTER Bingham Hall, King Street

Saturday 1st November LYME REGIS Uplyme Village Hall, Lyme
Road

Sunday 30th November NORTHAMPTON Moat House, Silver
Street

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

From Allen Treadway

I am in a group that is reading *The African Queen* this month. I am curious as to what river or rivers and what lake in Africa it is based on. I've been unable to find a Ulango-Bora on any map or website.

There is evidently a Bora in Botswana, but it hardly qualifies as a "great river" as Forester described it in his book. I'd be interested to hear from anyone who knows the history of the book.

Editor's reply: I think you will find most of what you want to know in a recent copy of *Reflections*, our literary magazine.

From John Service

I am keen to buy *Novelist and Storyteller: The Life of C S Forester* by John Forester.

Editor's reply: The best way to obtain a copy of this book is to contact John Forester direct on forester@johnforester.com

From Dr Gwyneth Lewis

I'd be grateful for any biographical information you have about C S Forester and the Hornblower books in particular.

Editor's reply: CSF's autobiography is:

- *Long before Forty*, C S Forester, Little Brown & Co., Boston/1967. London, Michael Joseph
- *C S Forester, Novelist and Storyteller*, John Forester, 2000 obtainable from CSF's son forester@johnforester.com
- *C S Forester and the Hornblower saga*, Sanford Sternlicht, 1999, a literary biography/Syracuse University Press
- *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower*, C Northcote Parkinson, a fictional biography of a fictional character! Penguin, London

From Dr Gwyneth Lewis

Thank you very much for this. It is most helpful. I'd be grateful for any other material you might have, but I'm currently living on a boat with my husband cruising for a few years. We are now in Gibraltar. Would it be possible to send anything to us here by, say, the end of next week, by airmail as otherwise the mail gets 'lost' politically in Spain and you never see it. Gibraltar is like being in Hornblower city—very interesting indeed.