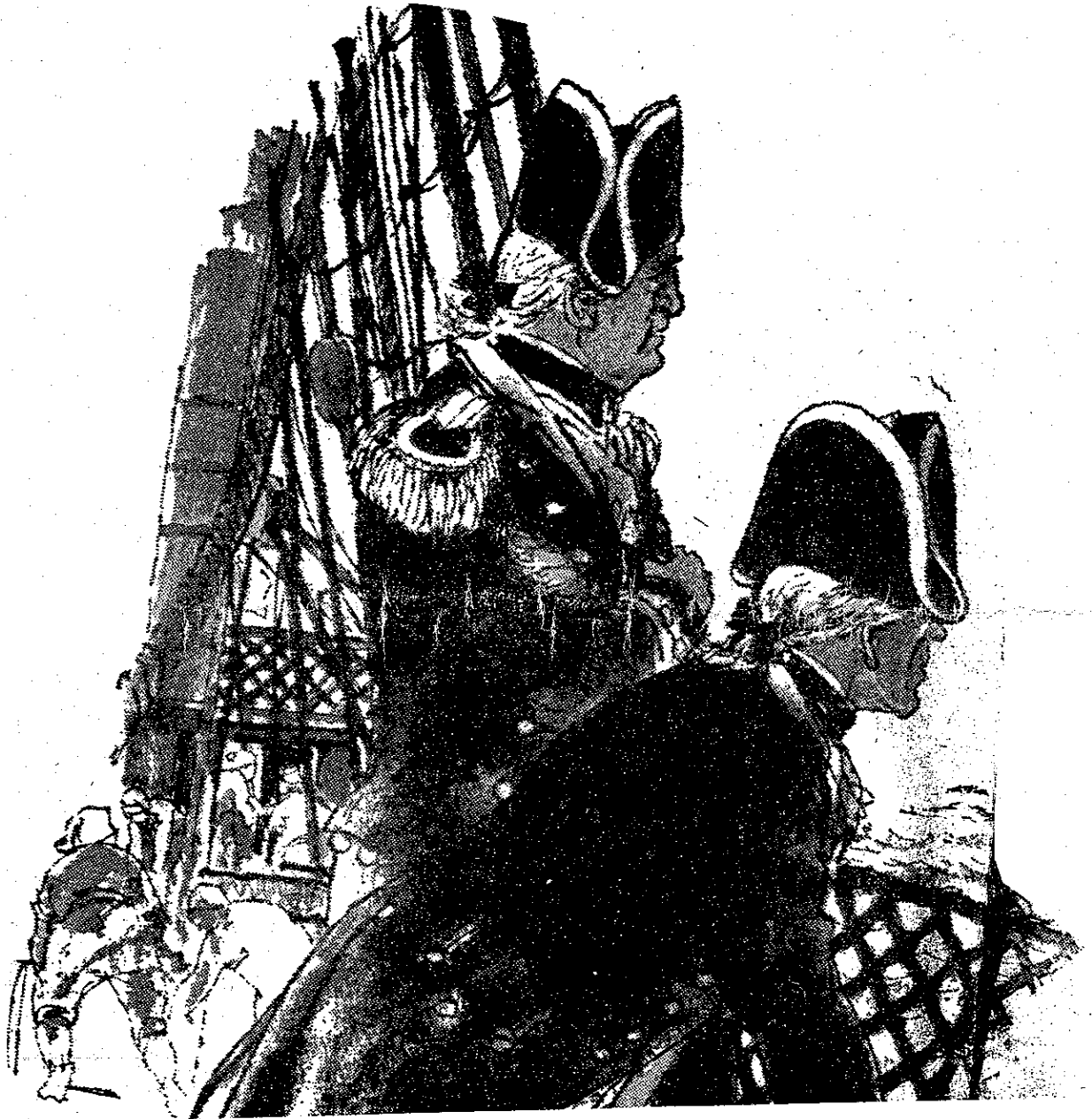


Reflections

A Literary Supplement to the C.S. Forester Society Newsletter



Number 4: May 2003

C.S. Forester: historian and strategist – a Symposium

❖ Don Beadle: *On Nelson and The Naval War of 1812*

❖ John Roberts: *Of ships and men*

PLUS *Sea Warriors*; a Storyteller unmasked; *Bismarck* leads new sortie!

Name of the Rose: Forester, O'Brian and the real star of the show

New fiction: *At the Parsonage*; *Comrades in Arms*

History, literature and *The Captain from Connecticut*

CORRESPONDENCE



Return of the Queen

Thank you very much for sending me *Reflections*. Congratulations, you did a very good editing job and the whole is extremely interesting.

I would be interested in reading about the debate generated by the different versions of the story and possibly making a further contribution to the literary history of *The African Queen*, a novel I really like, but for the moment I am a bit "overbooked".

Thanks again and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Isabelle Roblin.

There is a considerable amount of material about both The African Queen and The Sky and the Forest which it is hoped to publish soon.

Parallel courses

Many thanks indeed for the copy of *Reflections* with the two gratifying articles about my books, which I was very glad to see.

I am not a regular *Hornblower* reader, though I have read and enjoyed some of the series; but as your reviewer Christopher Smith pointed out, my interests are primarily in the 19th century literary world, and I had to do a lot of extra research for the maritime facts and descriptions in *The Wreck of the Abergavenny*. Nevertheless, I was interested by the parallels between John Wordsworth and Hornblower, and your ingenious surmise about the *Speedwell*.

With best wishes,

Alethea Hayter.

Cambronne at Waterloo

Your article on *The General and the Saint* (*Reflections* 2) was most interesting. I am aware of the Hornblower story, although I don't think I've read it. I seem to recall somebody telling me that Forester based his stories on reports and files in the Admiralty Papers, now in the PRO. Do you know anything about that?

By the way, my translation of the French *bougre* as 'bugger' was a little tongue in cheek. You have been the only person to notice this so far.

Peter (Hofschröer)

One of CS Forester's prime sources for the Hornblower stories was a set of bound volumes of the Naval Chronicle. But there is another story, which derives from C Northcote Parkinson's book The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower, published after the Hornblower series was all but finished and CSF was dead.

Parkinson's book purports to be a fuller biography than Forester had managed, based on archive sources about the real Hornblower of which Forester had been unaware. The truth, of course, is that there was no real Hornblower! Although Parkinson was a professional historian, Life and Times is as fictional as Forester's own work. Nevertheless, Parkinson's tongue in cheek assertion has been widely believed, and the National Maritime Museum claims (or at least claimed fairly recently) that it received more enquiries about Hornblower than about any other single subject.

Bismarck leads new breakout!

Further to the previous information (*Hunting the Bismarck*, *Reflections* 3) the *ibooks* edition of C. S. Forester's *Sink the Bismarck!* will be on sale in the United States and Canada in June 2003. (We do not have UK rights.) The price is \$11.95 U.S. and \$14.95 CAN. It will be available in bookstore chains, independent bookstores, and online (Amazon, Barnes and Noble Online, etc.).

This is a special updated edition of Forester's classic work about the greatest sea chase in naval history. It is the first book in the ongoing *John Gresham Military Library* series that identifies important works of military history. It contains a special introduction by John Gresham, the best-selling co-author (with Tom Clancy) of *Special Forces*, *Submarine*, and *Marine*. In his introduction Gresham discusses the latest deep-sea searches for the *Bismarck* that were conducted by

James Cameron and Robert Ballard. We are very excited about bringing this out-of-print classic back and are deeply grateful of any mention you can make.

Dwight John Zimmerman
Senior Editor/ Military History *ibooks*
14 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10010

Robert Ballard found the wreck of the Bismarck in 1988, and drew an important conclusion about her fate. The Bismarck was re-examined by a 2001 expedition, which also discovered the wreck of the Hood, on whose own end dramatic new light was shed. We eagerly await the new edition of Forester's book, and Gresham's analysis of this exciting new evidence.

Where Angles fear to tread

Further to the remarks about CSF in the article *Best of Three Worlds* in *Reflections* 3, I came across another anecdote in Professor Furbank's biography of EM Forster.

In June 1947, Forster was a guest at the Indian Embassy in Washington, which "gave him an experience – alarming to him – of the cocktail-party circuit... He was treated with much attention at Washington parties – but often on the assumption that he was C.S. Forester, and he grew hardened to being thanked by strangers for his immortal Captain Hornblower."¹

Paul Ellison Hunter, Philadelphia.

If you were ever frustrated at finding Forster when you were looking for Forester on the shelves, history has wrought a partial revenge. An internet search will now reveal dozens of items (including academic and reference works) about EM Forester!

Edward Morgan Forster was the real name of the author whose reputation was established by 1924, the year of his 6th great novel A Passage to India, well before CSF broke through to public notice.

How the current confusion came about is not clear. But it could, of course, be a case of "If you can't beat 'em..."

The Name of the Rose

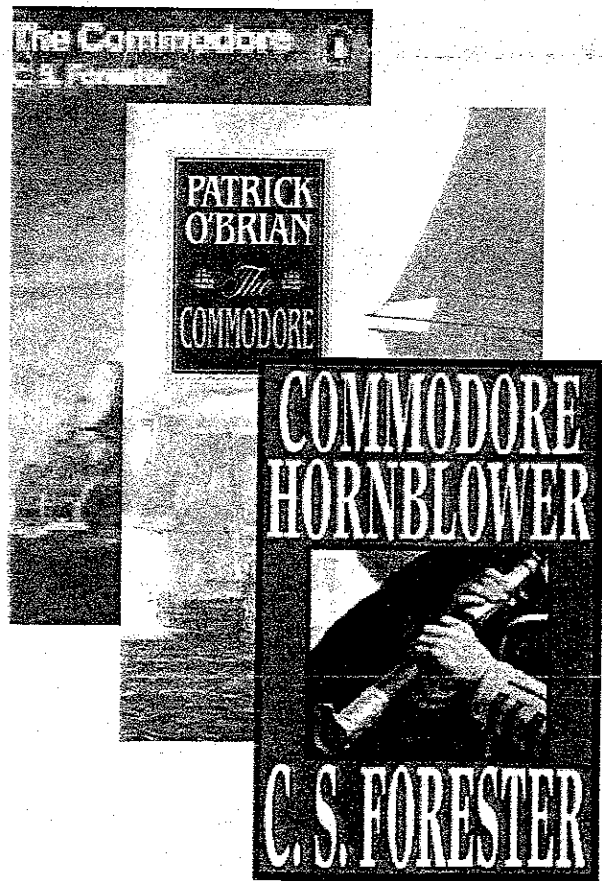
Thank you very much for sending me the two numbers of the *C.S. Forester Society* journal. Though I obviously have a certain prejudice in favour of my stepfather Patrick O'Brian's work, I remain a staunch Hornblower fan as well! In any case, it is very interesting to compare the two. But what is far more remarkable is the succession of parallels between two authors who were in many respects very different, to which I intend to draw

attention in my book. Both changed their names, altered their family backgrounds, concealed their schooling, falsely claimed to have operated for British Intelligence, etc. It is very strange, and hard to see what there is in the combination which might lead to fascination with the Royal Navy in Nelson's day. But quite possibly it is no more than coincidence.²

I was very grateful to my old friend Colin Blagg for letting me have copies of Forester's autobiography and his son's lengthy memoir. Without them I would never have been aware of the parallels between Forester's and Patrick's lives, to which I intend to draw attention in my book. On the other hand I see no point in comparing the merits of Hornblower and Jack Aubrey (they are different), and will merely quote Patrick's few impressions he recorded on reading Hornblower in 1945, long before he contemplated writing his own naval tales.

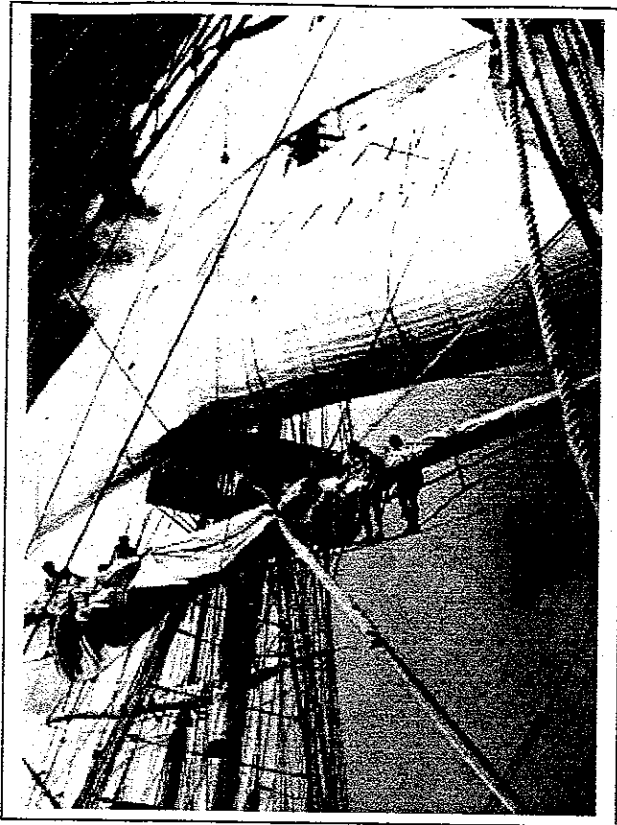
Apparently the Russell Crowe film of my stepfather's *Master and Commander* is now at not being shown until November - I understand because some unexpected extra filming was required.

Nikolai Tolstoy.



¹ P.N. Furbank, *E.M. Forster: a Life*, Cardinal (1988), page 275.

² Further details are given by Colin Blagg, *CS Forester and Patrick O'Brian*, *CS Forester Society* newsletter supplement, March 2000.



"For O'Brian's millions of passionate worldwide fans, who for decades have debated both the wisdom and the possibility of transforming his work to film, what's happening here is a constant subject both of hope and of horror. The fear has been that no film project could ever do justice to O'Brian's novels, whose mischievous erudition resembles an improbable blend of Jane Austen, C.S. Forester, Charles Dickens and Marcel Proust."

Thus a web page. But who is the real star of the show? Step forward, Rosie, old girl!

The original HMS Rose was a sixth-rate frigate built in Hull in 1757, and saw service in home waters and in the West Indies during the Seven Years War. She was then transferred to the North American station, and apparently played a little-documented part of her own in precipitating the War of Independence.

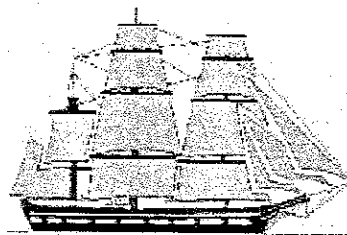
In 1774 her captain, James Wallace, was sent to Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island to put an end to the lucrative smuggling which had made Newport the fourth wealthiest city in America. Rhode Island's 17th-century charter of self-government permitted the colony, uniquely, to appoint its own customs agents. The combination of this laxity and the natural protection of Narragansett Bay allowed Rhode Island merchants to

broker the best trade deals in the Colonies. During the Seven Years War, goods from the French West Indies flowed through Newport.

Wallace (who to the Islanders was a brutal pirate!) carried out his orders so thoroughly that smuggling soon came to a relative standstill. When the War of Independence began, the Island's merchants petitioned their legislature to create a local naval force, and outfitted a vessel then commissioned as the Sloop of War Providence, which became the first naval command of John Paul Jones. Rhode Island also proclaimed its own independence from Britain in May 1776, two months before Jefferson's better-known Declaration.

Captain Wallace was knighted for his part in the operations which drove George Washington and his troops out of New York in the opening rounds of the war. In 1779, the Rose was scuttled in the approaches to Savannah, Georgia, to bar a French fleet from the city. After the war, she was destroyed in situ.

The replica Rose was built in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia in 1970 by Newport Historian John Fitzhugh Millar, using the plans of 1757, obtained from the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. The project was designed for the 1976 Bicentennial, but failed to attract funding. After ten years in Newport, largely as a dockside attraction, Rose was sold, moved to Connecticut and refurbished. In 1990 she toured the Great Lakes and in 1991 sailed the East Coast from Maine to Florida with Rhode Island's original draft of the Bill of Rights. She was then certified as a Sailing School Vessel by the Coast Guard.



The Rose is currently owned by 20th Century Fox, and stars in the forthcoming Master and Commander – The Far Side of the World film. But she had already starred in Patrice Leconte's film of The Widow of St Pierre, with Juliette Binoche and Daniel Auteuil.

The original Rose also provides the inspiration for a series of novels about the naval history of the War of Independence. Author James Nelson was a sailor and then Mate on the replica Rose in the 1990s, when he began the Revolution at Sea series, with five volumes about Rhode Island Captain Isaac Biddlecombe.

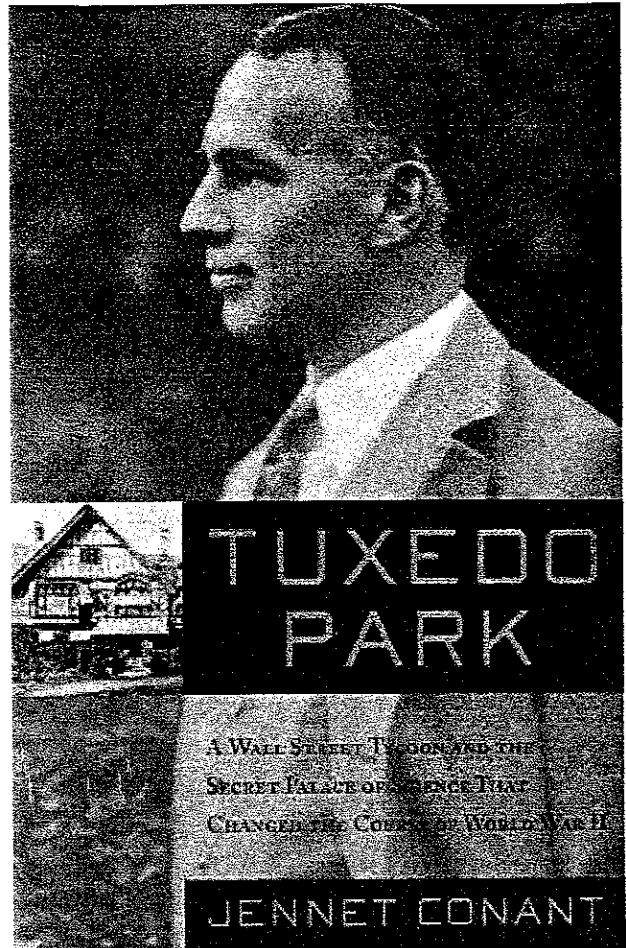
A Storyteller unmasked

One of the accounts of his activities in WW2 that CSF told me several times concerned the magnetron tube and airborne radar. For background, early radar used meter-length radio waves. Since the precision of the beam depended on the *antenna size:wavelength* ratio, the antennas had to be very large. The stations that detected the *Luftwaffe* during the Battle of Britain used antennas that looked like arrays of commercial radio towers. This radar was sufficiently accurate for its information to be radioed to pilots who could then be directed within visual range of the German aircraft. When Germany switched from day- to night bombing, the radar could still direct interceptors to the vicinity of the enemy aircraft, but not to within the night-time visual range, as required for gunnery. What was needed was a set small enough to fit into a fighter aircraft. Such a set required small antennas, and hence very short -length radio waves, of the order of centimetres, with corresponding high frequency. And that demanded vacuum tubes smaller than could be built. Just at this time, British scientists invented the multiple-cavity magnetron tube that was capable of producing sufficiently powerful, sufficiently short waves, which made possible the night-fighter interceptor.

CSF told me that a planeload of British radar and night-fighting pilots and equipment had been flown from Britain, intending (after refuelling at Gander, New York, and such places) to reach Los Angeles. Aircraft designers there were producing prototype night-fighting interceptors, and would benefit from the passengers' expertise. But the plane was delayed by mechanical problems somewhere in mid-America, say at Tulsa (which was the mid-continent refuelling stop for the between New York-San Francisco planes of the time). CSF was instructed to get there immediately to produce cover for this planeload of unusual passengers. The cover story was that these pilots had to be kept in the dark, because they were adapted to night-time vision, and had to be fed large quantities of carrots, because vitamin A was good for night vision. So off he hurried to set up the cover story until the plane could be repaired. He moved the men with dark bandages over their eyes into darkened hotel rooms and purchased a truckload of carrots, thus keeping the press away for what appeared to be good reasons that did not disclose the existence of the plane-borne radar.

There is another story about the other application of this type of radar, to be used for precision bombing through clouds or at night: The Germans, naturally, examined all the bombers that they shot down. They discovered various pieces of electronic equipment that they did not

understand. Once they had pieced together a complete set of parts and turned it on, they were amazed to see on the scope the pattern of the buildings around them. That story (if true) indicates that the secrecy of the magnetron tube was maintained for two years or so.



So what really happened? In August 1940, Churchill decided that the USA could have full access to British war-fighting science, in return for such science as the Americans possessed and for use of the industrial capacity that America certainly had. A large crate of information and material was sent, with a scientific committee under Henry Tizard. There were bits of the science underlying the future atomic bomb, but the crown jewel was the magnetron tube, of which the first twelve production items had just been produced. On September 11, 1940, the operation of the magnetron was displayed to the Americans. Among the observers was the millionaire and physicist Alfred Loomis, a remarkable man who had recently set up the MIT Radiation Laboratory to investigate radar as a weapon in the war that he felt America could not avoid. (I have just read his biography, *Tuxedo Park*, by Jennet Conant) The subsequent development of the airborne radar set was done at the MIT Rad Lab, and from there sent to the largely American manufacturers for production for use by the various militaries.

There was thus never any need to send a planeload of radar experts from Britain to Los Angeles. The Tizard Mission occurred in August-September 1940. CSF was then in Berkeley, writing *The Captain from Connecticut*, and he did not return to New York and the British Information Service until about the turn of the year. He may have heard about the Tizard Mission at that time or later, as a story circulating among those who had been in the know, or he may have invented all of his fictional account to me. Certainly, the germ of the story is the British invention of the magnetron resonant cavity tube at the time much needed, which is undoubtedly correct.

CSF's story of his connection with the magnetron and the airborne radar was nothing to do with his projected writing for publication. It was, entirely, another of his lies told to me to impress me with his importance and reputation in the world. He was telling me, falsely, that he was so important, so capable, and so trusted that the British government employed him to assist in preserving its most important technological secret. Its importance is hard to imagine after the development of the nuclear bomb. Conant quotes what was often said by those in the know: "Radar won the war. The bomb just finished it." Of course, CSF told me his story only after it was publicly known, and he knew that I knew it, that the British had invented the resonant cavity magnetron tube that made airborne radar possible. CSF used his knowledge that I knew that the British had invented the magnetron to create a completely false story about how great he was, recognising that I would not be likely to learn the truth during his lifetime. As it happened, I did not bother to chase down the facts, but came upon them only this week because I was reading Conant's biography of Alfred Loomis, *Tuxedo Park*.

John Forester MS, PE, Lemon Grove, California

Tuxedo Park, by Jennet Conant, will be published by Simon & Schuster in the UK in July 2003. Meanwhile, internet searches will reveal interesting material. An earlier account of these events, without the vital clue from Tuxedo Park, is to be found in John Forester's biography of his father, where it accompanies another tale – already exposed as false – about CSF and the Anglophobic editor of an influential US newspaper.³ It is hoped to return to discussion of CSF's wartime work, and his postwar professional writing, at a future date.

³ John Forester, *Novelist and storyteller: the life of CS Forester* (2000), pages 383-387.

Heads and halliards

The notes on *Gold from Crete* (*Reflections 3*, page 3) reminded me of correspondence I had with Pan Books, after buying the paperback in 1973. Their cover was a dashing painting of a destroyer fighting off *Stukas* – but the ship was definitely not *Apache* – she was an *M* or an *N* class destroyer, possibly even modelled on HMAS *Napier*, as the painting has the additional 4-inch AA (it replaced one set of torpedo tubes) firing away forward of *X* turret. Clearly the painter had not read the book, as *Apache* and her sisters are definitely *Tribals*, with four twin turrets – they even have imaginary tribal names. Pan Books acknowledged the error.

Cornucopia's problems with loo paper (*Behind the Headlines*, page 4) also reminded me of a personal experience. In 1982 I was Supply Officer of the Type 12 frigate HMS *Plymouth* (which incidentally carried a range of 28,000 spares). We took part in Exercise *Springtrain* off Gibraltar; I had planned, as programmed, a major replenishment from a Royal Fleet Auxiliary stores ship. This was cancelled – we didn't know it, but she was conserving her stores. No problem, we were due to visit Gib at the end of the exercise. Three hours before we entered harbour, we were diverted and sailed direct for South Georgia and the Falklands. This left me with several shortages – including loo paper. I mentioned this in a letter to my wife, who discussed it with a friend. Their solution (in an air dropped reply) was duly read out by me in the Wardroom: USE BOTH SIDES. I was fined a round of port. Luckily another stores ship caught up and we didn't have to use such extreme methods.

Modern warships actually have quite sophisticated loos, which convert the waste and appropriate soft loo paper into pure drinking water! In HMS *Edinburgh* in the Gulf during the Iran -Iraq war (1987), our PO Medical chap didn't know this and ditched a lot of out of date pills down his sink - which promptly killed off all the expensive bugs which were converting the waste, in the sewage treatment plants. This involved difficult cleaning out, sterilising, and then restarting with fresh bugs - expensive and unpleasant. In the Falklands War proper, in San Carlos, I fear we just peed over the side as you couldn't leave your action station easily and we are at action stations for up to 12 hours. More serious loo requirements were dealt with during quiet spells.

Ken Napier, Lt-CDr MBE RN Rtd, France.

The topic of military defecation appears to have been largely neglected by authors from modern times back to the Iliad. Even though flush toilets were used in Minoan Crete. Limitations of space preclude further discussion.

Hornblower and the Crisis

Thank you very much for the recent issue of *Reflections*, which I read with interest. *In the Wake of the Witch of Endor* by Richard Miller linked well with my story *The Truth about the Letter*. Please find enclosed a continuation of the latter, *At the Parsonage*.

Another instalment could have Hornblower meeting Marsden and Dorsey and Barrow at the Admiralty – thus reverting for a space to the two final chapters of the uncompleted *Hornblower and the Crisis* – and they discuss the Reverend Clive's letter about Wilson – his connection with Dr Claudius and Shaver could come to the fore some time. Another strand could well refer to the letter Hornblower received, which was supposedly from Maria, as outlined in *A Crisis of Indecision...* Thus a couple of possibilities to play with, both of which seem to home in on Wilson and his confederates.

One wonders how Miranda will fit into this – if at all – perhaps it is best to keep the story-line as straightforward as possible. How to send a message to Villeneuve at Ferrol as from Bonaparte may be a problem...

Adrian Taylor, Norfolk

At the Parsonage...

Adrian Taylor

"May I have another cup of coffee, please, Martha?"

The prim housekeeper took the empty vessel to the sideboard and filled it from the coffeepot which stood upon it. She replaced the cosy – she had embroidered it herself with a pleasing pattern of flowers during one of the innumerable moments at the parsonage in which there seemed little else to do – and then she carried the cup back to the table with the carefulness born of long practice.

The Reverend Thomas Clive, the parson of the church of St Thomas à Becket in Portsmouth, looked up from behind his *pince-nez*. He had been reading that day's copy of *The Morning Post*. And an engrossing read it had proved to be. There was a lengthy article which related to the present naval situation in the Atlantic. Recently Admiral Calder had failed to defeat Villeneuve's fleet of more than twenty ships of the line at Cape Finisterre and the French Admiral had found refuge at Ferrol. He had earlier given Lord Nelson the slip in a headlong flight from the West Indies. And so

Admiral Sir Robert Calder had been found wanting. The article speculated as to how Lord Nelson would have dealt with Villeneuve had he been in Calder's place. It was perhaps inevitable that the ill-fated Admiral Byng was alluded to on two occasions. And it was interesting to see that Lord Barham, who was First Lord of the Admiralty, was dragged into the discussion; it was almost as if he were to blame for Calder's shortcomings.

"Thank you, Martha," said the white-haired reverend. He took a sip from the cup; the hot coffee was grateful even at this relatively late hour of the morning. He replaced the cup in its saucer.

"Martha?"

"Yes, sir?"

He studied once again the somewhat careworn features of his servant and he wondered, yet again, why she had decided to devote what were, presumably, the best years of her womanhood to the care of the old fuddy-duddy that he sometimes considered himself to be. Surely she was good marriage material if ever such a commodity could be said to exist. He took another sip from his coffee. And he suspected that he was the greatest pedant ever to sit at this mahogany dining table to devour a breakfast egg and two slices of toast and marmalade; the length of time which he devoted to the composition of his Sunday sermon was perhaps ample evidence of this weakness of his; surely never had the most inoffensive split infinitive received more attention in its eradication. His thoughts now seemed to have come full circle: why had the good Lord seen fit to rob him of his dear wife? He cleared his throat in an attempt to rid himself of this uncomfortable reflection. His thoughts returned to Calder's disappointing efforts against Villeneuve. And then with a jolt he realised that his housekeeper was still standing there before him, her hands clasped demurely.

"I'm sorry, Martha. I was miles away. Somewhere on the Spanish Biscay coast to be more precise. Now, what was I going to say?"

"Oh, yes." He took another sip of his coffee. "Do you recall that gentleman who came to visit last week? William Wilson was his name."

"Indeed I do, sir." Perhaps that was about all a housekeeper was expected to say.

"Did you notice that he had a slight accent?"

"I cannot quite recall, sir."

"I suspect that it was French." The Reverend Clive allowed his attention to drift to an oil painting near the sideboard; it was a landscape, a flint church adorning the scene, a leafy country lane disappearing into the middle distance. He had never really liked the picture — the square tower of the church seemed somehow not to be perpendicular. However, he had shared so many meals with it over the years that he suspected that his toast and marmalade and the excellent steak-and-kidney pie which Martha cooked would not be the same without it. It was a stable element in his world and Bonaparte would desecrate it at his peril, he decided with an unlikely determination. He went on:

"Fancy a government employee having a French accent. And that Horatio Hornblower about whom he enquired is — or was, if Boney has put paid to him in the last week — a naval captain. As far as I recall the gentleman was somewhat gangling, a little like a scarecrow despite his uniform. He seemed an unlikely naval officer, I remember thinking at his wedding. And his wife seemed rather a lack-lustre creature." The parson took a small bite of his toast and marmalade. "Perhaps there's something fishy here."

"I'm sorry, sir. My mother made that marmalade. I don't think that she's to blame."

"No, Martha." And the Reverend Clive gave vent to a subdued chuckle. "There's something distinctly suspicious about that Wilson character." He drained his cup of coffee and drummed his long, thin fingers on the tablecloth. "I think I'll go to my study now. I don't want to be disturbed for half-an-hour at least."

Soon the parson had installed himself at his desk. The room may have been described as a study in browns. Even the dreary wallpaper had an overlay of brown — perhaps a previous incumbent had been a pipe-smoker — and the almost inevitable oil painting over the fireplace was an autumnal scene comprising largely of browns — perhaps that, too, had been stained by that pipe-smoke. There was a cheery log fire burning away in the grate despite the warmth of the summer weather. The parson took up his pen and began to write:

Dear Sir,

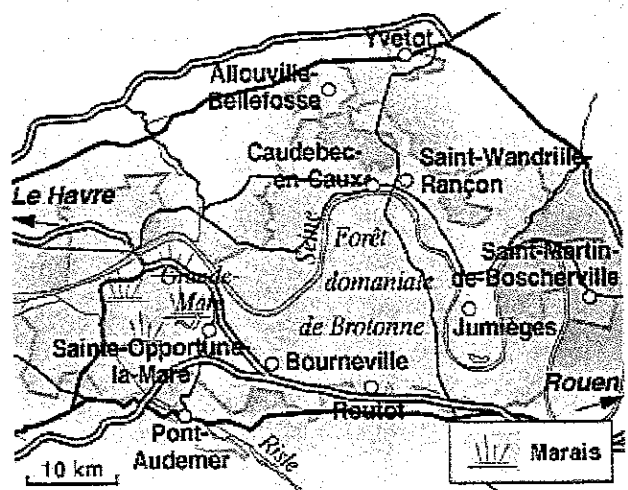
I have been inspired to place pen to paper by my recent reading of reports of our Royal Navy's undistinguished exploits in the war against the French. Surely Admiral Calder deserves a similar fate to that of the ill-reputed Byng. When I contemplate the evil nature of Bonaparte I sometimes doubt my calling as a servant of the Good Lord such are the unworthy thoughts that enter my mind. I shall now come to the main point of this letter. Perhaps

it shall prove of assistance in our great nation's good fight against Boney and his hordes.

It was last week that we were visited at the parsonage by one William Wilson. He seemed a pleasant enough gentleman but...

And so he wrote on in the cosy study, outlining the sparse information that was in his possession about William Wilson, Captain Horatio Hornblower and Maria Ellen Hornblower, *née* Mason. It is to be hoped that for the sake of those who were going to read it that the letter proved to be not quite so long-winded as some of the Reverend Thomas Clive's sermons over which he had expended so much midnight oil.

But it was not so very long at all before the letter, suitably sealed and addressed, was despatched to the Admiralty. It remained to be seen what fruit would grow forth after its arrival at that august institution.



Between Le Havre and Rouen, the Seine winds in enormous loops through great woods and marshes, providing the only effective route for a seige train — or a raiding party.

Comrades in Arms

Richard Miller

The fortunate meeting of Lieutenant Horatio Hornblower and Lieutenant William Bush on board HMS *Renown* at anchor in the Hamoaze was the laying of a valuable friendship which was of profound use to the Royal Navy and to England.

The last "Goodbye" as Bush swung himself down into *Nonsuch's* boat on his way to the assault upon the French siege-train at Caudebec was the closing of a story behind which much loyalty and humanity lies.

William, the only son of Ezekiel Bush, lived near Portsmouth, close to Chichester, where his father attended to his duties as land agent to a local nobleman. To his mother and three sisters, well, he was the apple of the eyes, and to his father, he was the son upon whom much hopes were cherished. However, Portsmouth, Spithead and the colourful men who manned the King's ships beckoned and, ruefully, Ezekiel remarked to his friends, "My young William has decided not to plough the land like his neighbours, but to plough the sea."

"Much doubloons may his plough turn up!" laughingly remarked a gay young dandy.

William's mother and sisters looked with admiration at the twelve-year-old boy who proudly paraded before them in his midshipman's uniform, mercifully seeing only glory and glamour, with no place for agony or fear – William blissfully ignorant of the scrimping and saving on the part of his father in his desire to set his son afloat upon the Sea of Life adequately provided.

His father's gift was a really gorgeous telescope. "To help you see, my boy. By seeing you can prepare and by preparing you can plan and by planning you can conquer. But William, remember this! The telescope helps you see others, your mother's gift – the mirror, with her picture on the back – helps you to see yourself. Whenever you look at it and see your face, never have reason for shame, feel able always to look squarely in your face and know that you have behaved honourably."

Years passed. William Bush served faithfully and well on board a sloop and a succession of frigates, until that day in the Hamoaze when his path crossed that of Hornblower. An ideal subordinate – as one of his captains remarked, "When I tell you to do something you do not rest till it's done!" – Bush was a really superb seaman, as was to be expected of a man capable of organising the hauling of a nine-pounder up a cliff! A real sea officer, who gained respect by his ability to perform a jack tar's sort of job.

On return to England, William Bush wended his way home to Chichester, to the family who now eked out their lives on his half-pay. His mother and his sisters – Priscilla, Elspeth and Nancy – lived in a tiny cottage and studied their adored William's comfort, for their father, now dead, had not been able to garner any wealth. His legacy was honour, love and caring, and with this his beloved ones had been adequately bestowed.

William had told of his meeting with Hornblower and of his acquaintance with the formidable Mrs Mason and her

daughter Maria, of Hornblower and Maria's marriage, and of his own taking service under him in HMS *Hotspur*. These tales had been recounted as he hoed the cabbage patch – assuredly his ploughing of the sea had not turned up a crop of doubloons.

HMS *Hotspur*, HMS *Lydia*, much adventure and then HMS *Sutherland*. His loss of a leg, his captivity and the audacious escape in the *Witch of Endor*. The one-legged William kept a brave face. His mother bewailed his misfortune, his sisters admired his courage. And then, at last, its reward – command of HMS *Nonsuch*, with his hero Hornblower.

News at last reached Chichester of the affair at Caudebec. The brilliant flash of the exploding powder barges had thwarted William's return, and now his sisters would tend the cabbage patch.

One sparkling June day, a smart chaise driven by Brown conveyed Hornblower and Barbara to Chichester. Verily he must seek to comfort his friend's loved ones. But never had Hornblower met any of Bush's relations. Such things were not spoken of on shipboard.

A tiny cottage, a patch of garden and – without doubt – Bush's sisters having tea. The splendid chaise, two assured persons of obvious position, a liveried driver – such company. "Your servant, ladies," announced Hornblower. "I take it this is the home of my late much-esteemed friend, William Bush?"

Kindly conversation ensued. Barbara immediately took to Bush's sisters – like her brothers, they had such honest, trusting, totally confident English faces. At last bidding farewell, having been assured that they had all that they required in the form of their darling William's captain's pension, Hornblower, Barbara and Brown departed.

William had not ploughed up doubloons, but the loud explosion at Caudebec had reaped him a pension from King George.

"If I had not ordered him to go in charge of the boats," said Hornblower to Barbara, "he might still be hoeing his cabbages!" "Forget the might-have-been," Barbara wisely said. "He obeyed his orders. The best legacy his sisters can have is pride."

Hornblower had a little monument erected at Caudebec where Bush had died. It merely said:

A TRUE ENGLISHMAN
MY FRIEND
HE DID HIS DUTY

Sea Warriors

The Royal Navy In the Age of Sail

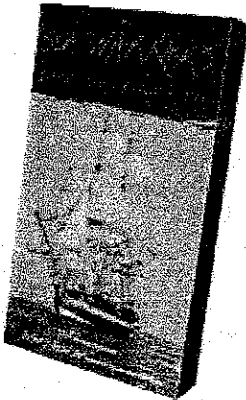
"Man's task is simple. He should cease letting his existence be a thoughtless accident."

Friedrich Nietzsche

Chip Richie formally conceived the project for *Sea Warriors* over a year ago. But he had been mulling the idea over for years, as he read novels by half-a-dozen authors.

"With over 50 million books in print today, there definitely is a loyal audience for this heroic subject," he says. "It is a romantic idea, to be at sea, facing danger from weather and predator, free to roam the oceans of the world." But the range and speed of today's travel and communications, which we all take for granted, means that the sheer solitude experienced by voyagers in the Age of Sail is almost beyond our comprehension. "I wanted to bring to life the reality of what life was like in 'Nelson's Navy'."

He began with a 15-minute demonstration for 20th Century Fox. It matched their ideas for a documentary to accompany the forthcoming Jack Aubrey epic.



Sea Warriors
The Royal Navy
in the Age of Sail

The Companion Video to
the Great Seafaring Novels

Coming Soon

Chip Richie now set seriously to work. He first engaged the novelist and historian Richard Woodman as co-writer. Woodman is the author of 23 historical and fictional works, including *The Sea Warriors*, with which the forthcoming documentary shares its name, and the

Nathaniel Drinkwater series. He has also served from apprentice to captain in a range of powered and sailing vessels.

Richie also consulted and interviewed four other nautical writers: Alexander Kent, who began the *Bolitho* family saga in the 1960s as well as writing World War II thrillers under the name Douglas Reeman; Julian Stockwin, whose series about Thomas Paine Kydd, an impressed man who rises to the quarterdeck, started appearing just a few years ago; and historians Andrew Lambert and Tom Pocock.

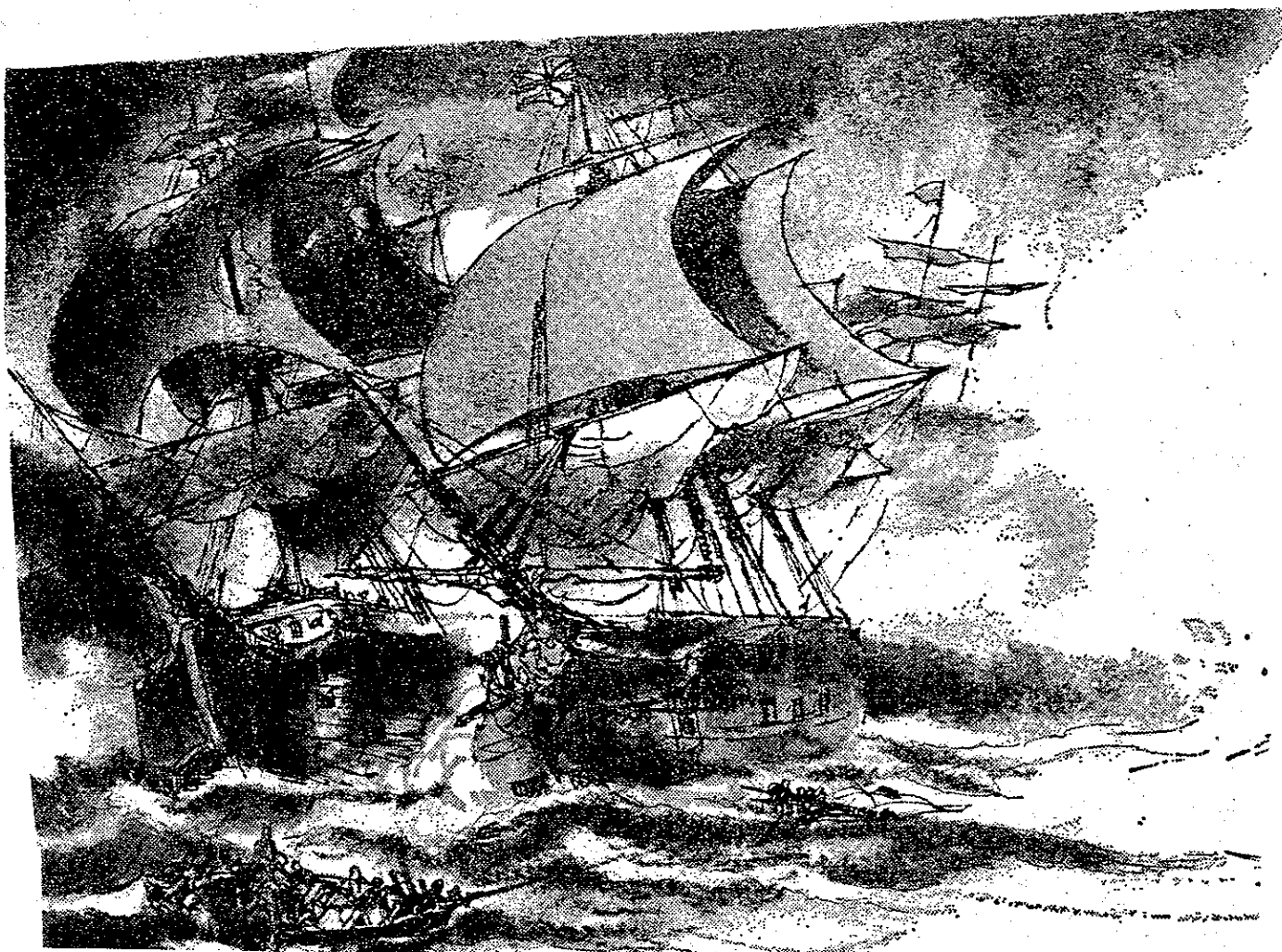
Filming then began aboard HMS *Trincomalee*, a teak frigate built in Sri Lanka in 1817, which saw extensive service in the 19th century before becoming a training ship and, finally, being restored as the prime attraction on Hartlepool's historic quay. Though a 38-gun frigate – and thus comparable to the famous *Shannon* of the War of 1812 – the *Trincomalee* and its adjacent museums offer what may well be the best insight into Hornblower's *Lydia* on earth. It was the ideal location in which to explain the sailor's life.

Not that other locations were neglected. Filming took place in the Admiralty Boardroom, with its weathervane on the wall to warn their Lordships if the wind was from the west and a French sortie possible. At Falmouth, where the replica of Cook's *Endeavour* just happened to be in port, *en route* from Botany Bay to berth in Whitby. At Beaulieu, near Lymington, where the New Forest still supplied the oak for frigates and ships of the line, and at Buckler's Hard where they were built. At Portsmouth, on board the *Victory*, and at the spectacular Chatham Dockyard.

Altogether, the film crew travelled 1500 miles around Great Britain, and shot 11,000 feet of film. Release of *Sea Warriors* is scheduled imminently.

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes."

Marcel Proust



C.S. Forester – historian and strategist

After the Annual General Meeting of the *CS Forester Society*, which was held in the National Maritime Museum on 12 April 2003, Captains Don Beadle and John Roberts combined to lead a discussion on the merits of Forester as an historian and strategist, as well as a great fictional writer. It was agreed that their contributions should be recorded for the benefit of members not able to be present.

Don Beadle began by contending that Forester, who is known primarily for his *Hornblower* stories, deserves recognition as a naval historian who had a keen interest in the strategic aspects of modern history, as well as the more tactical issues that mainly featured in his fiction. He concentrated on two non-fiction works: the biography *Nelson* and *The Naval War of 1812*.

John Roberts then extended the discussion, to look at Forester's less conventional - or rather less formal - contribution to Naval History. He fleshed out his case by re-crossing the boundary between fiction and non-fiction, as well as adducing evidence from Forester's work on 20th-century naval history...

Nelson in a nutshell

Don Beadle

Nelson was first published in 1929 when Forester was just 30 years old. At that stage in his writing career he wrote five biographies of which only the last - on Nelson - was a real success.

Why did he choose Nelson? One clue is in the *Personal Notes* appended to *The Hornblower Companion*. He says that in 1927 he by chance found - in a bookshop - three volumes of *The Naval Chronicle* covering 1790 to 1820, and that he bought them for reading while he was in a small boat for some months. He says he read and re-read them absorbing their atmosphere and the special mental attitudes of naval officers of that period. The volumes also included the Treaty of Ghent that ended the war with America in 1814.

He also read Charles Oman's *History of the Peninsular War*. This he considered one of the best military histories ever written, and it gave him a fascination for the character of Wellington and the whole Napoleonic period. He might have written a biography of Wellington, but fortunately he chose Nelson, and this decision probably affected the whole of his subsequent career. Indeed, Sandford Sternlicht contends that "Nelson is the unacknowledged prototype for Hornblower providing him with 27 incidents used in the Hornblower saga". He must also have been reading Nelson's letters as he says he based his biography upon them. But the biography is no dreary scholarly account of the letters, rather a vivid, gripping account of Nelson, warts and all. The promotional material on the cover of the latest edition says, "This is real-life Hornblower".⁴

Strategy and leadership

For me, one chapter stands out, although it is not directly about Nelson. Chapter V - entitled *The Enemy* - is a most perceptive discussion of many aspects behind the strategy of the Napoleonic War. It shows a deep understanding that was, perhaps surprising in someone who was not yet thirty and whose writing to date had not indicated any deep interest in military subjects.

The chapter starts with the strategy of blockade, which is categorised as "the mightiest weapon of sea power that could cause a nation an enormous amount of immediate inconvenience". "A seaboard town without inland water connections," he explains, "would be hard put to keep

itself supplied if the use of the sea were denied to it. The revolution which railways were to make was as yet undreamed of." But he then points out that a close blockade by sailing ships was no easy matter. "At the height of the blockade of France there was still a certain amount of coastwise traffic by small vessels creeping, largely by night, from one fortified inlet to another".

Forester then digresses away from Nelson to reflect his Peninsular War reading and point out that "in 1813, when the British navy was at the height of its power, we find Wellington complaining of the frequency with which French ships ran into and out of the harbour of the beleaguered San Sebastian despite the presence of a powerful British squadron".

He digresses again to compare this situation with that of the First World War. Events then barely ten years past would have been fresh in his own mind and in those of his readers. It had been rail transport that had enabled German battleships in Pola in 1915 to be repaired with materials sent from Germany. This is contrasted with the problems of maintaining the Franco-Spanish fleet in Cadiz, and with the pressures that forced Villeneuve to come out and face Nelson at Trafalgar. So Forester shows a breadth of understanding in comparing the advantages and difficulties of blockade across much of modern history.

He next points to the need for convoys to counter weaker naval powers who diverted their energies "to commerce destruction rather than to attempts against the military navy of their opponents". In Napoleonic times the French seaboard lacked Channel harbours for a fleet but they provided good bases for privateers which could escape to a French port after a blow at English shipping. Furthermore, large rowboats full of men often had an advantage over sailing ships. He compares these raiders with submarines in the First World War, to explain how both led to the introduction of convoys to protect the shipping of the stronger naval power.

The difficulties of protecting convoys with adequate escorts are then referred to, with examples of a single French ship of the line in Cadiz disturbing Nelson's arrangements for convoys to the Mediterranean, and similar difficulties with convoys in the First World War.

Finally he compares the difficulties of the French in manning their ships with trained seamen when their Revolutionary leaders were primarily landmen and the best seamen were attracted to privateers. An English ship could therefore be expected to defeat a French ship of equal size and armament. Again he contrasts this with the First World War saying that the German Fleet was "a

⁴ CS Forester, *Nelson*, Chatham Publishing (2001).

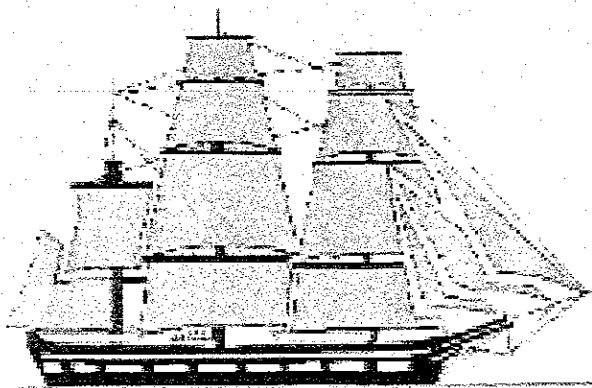
highly trained and well-organised body, directed by men of distinguished talents and force of character”.

He sums up by saying “Command of the sea is demonstrated as much by the use of the ocean highways as by their denial to the enemy, and the responsibility for the protection of merchant shipping was usually the greatest part of the burden of the English naval officer, and, although a victory at sea might lighten it, it could not remove it altogether”.

There is a lot more that could be said about Forester’s *Nelson*, and the Chairman has drawn my attention to John Forester’s biography on his father, which deals with Nelson’s qualities as a great leader in more depth. I was particularly impressed by the weight put on one quotation in *Nelson*. It is about the Memorandum that Nelson wrote just before Trafalgar. Forester says that it was “proof sufficient of Nelson’s clearness of mind, of his originality of thought and of his greatness of heart; he realises almost alone among his contemporaries the evil of over-centralised command; he is prepared to entrust some part of his reputation and achievement to subordinates”. That puts Nelson in a nutshell.

History or literature?

The Chairman also drew my attention to the Sandford Sternlicht book that I have already referred to. I have to admit that, in Sternlicht’s view, *Nelson* is more like a novel than a work of history, and he quotes the *Times Literary Supplement* as noting: “this book is contribution to literature rather than to history”. However, while understanding these views about Forester, who was above all, a superb story teller I still contend that in the chapter I have drawn attention to, he shows a remarkable appreciation of the strategic aspects affecting the employment of sea power. It introduces realism and credibility, to provide the essential background to so much of his military fiction. Beyond that it lays the foundation for what was his primary historical book - *The Naval War of 1812*.



The Naval War of 1812 Don Beadle

This book was, like so many Forester books, published under different titles and the one I have here is entitled *The Age of Fighting Sail*, first published in Britain in 1957. It was however earlier published in America under the same title and only later was it changed to *The Naval War of 1812*. Neither title does justice to the book. It is not just about the Naval War or just about sailing warships as it covers the military campaign during which the United States tried to capture Canada. Nor is it just about 1812 as it is an excellent account of the whole of the war that lasted for two years from June 1812 until the summer of 1814.

Although Forester does not specify his sources, Sandford Sternlicht believes he relied heavily on two books: Theodore Roosevelt’s *The Naval War of 1812* published in 1882 and Mahan’s *Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812* published in 1905 - both American books. Perhaps other British historians have written about this war that tends to be ignored, as it was not a glorious episode in our history. But Forester tackles it with a good understanding and sympathy with both nations.

Origins of the war

The first chapter of 17 pages is a most readable analysis of the complex reasons and events that led to President Madison declaring war on Great Britain on 18 June 1812. Forester rightly sets out the wider implications of the great Napoleonic wars in Europe that were reaching a crisis point. Napoleon was at the gates of Moscow. Wellington was becoming the master of the Peninsula. America was being pressed by Napoleon to believe that he would prevail.

Forester explains how the United States’ economy much depended on free trade and they resented the embargoes placed on this by the British blockade of Europe. They also resented ships of the British Navy making free use of their territorial waters and impressing any American seamen they could find – and flogging deserters around the fleet as a deterrent to others.

With Napoleon being the main pre-occupation after nearly twenty years of war, Britain was in no mood to mollify the United States. Forester says “after years of argument with Jefferson and Madison the British

Government had come to believe that America would not fight under any circumstances". Furthermore, the British Navy, although stretched by the need to blockade Europe and to protect convoys to Portugal, was reckless about the prospect of war with America "having won victories over every major naval power often against serious numerical odds". There was also the prospect of more prize money.

United States' strategy

Having declared war against such a superior power, America hoped that Britain's primary pre-occupation with Europe would persuade it to make peace on terms favourable to America. Meanwhile, as Forester explains, America saw the need to "make such a nuisance of itself that her demands would be listened to".

Obviously the next step was to attack British commerce and as well as privateers they had some large frigates that possessed greater firepower than British frigates. Forester of course revelled in the detailed description of single ship actions – just like so many Hornblower fictional stories - but these were based on fact.

The first and most famous action was the defeat and capture of the British frigate HMS *Guerrière* by the USS *Constitution*. Forester describes it in graphic detail showing that the result was not just a matter of superior firepower but better ship handling by the American captain. It was this aspect that made the defeat difficult to accept in Britain and the Royal Navy. Forester dwells on the horrified reaction that was out of all proportion to the defeat of one frigate. Further similar defeats followed and it was not until later in the war that British naval strength diverted across the Atlantic began to prevail.

Forester's interest in maritime strategy is evidenced by his praise of the American Commodore John Rodgers who at the beginning of the war immediately sailed with his two large frigates and three other ships to threaten British convoys in the Atlantic. He sailed before orders from Congress requiring him to split his squadron could be received. Although he achieved little in the way of prizes Forester explains how this constrained British naval forces based in Halifax from making best use of their limited ships in blockading American ports. Forester well explains the strategy of concentrating forces to pose a threat that could not be ignored.

While the book is only 221 pages long, it is a very full account of many aspects of the war. His knowledgeable interest in Wellington and the effect of the war on the

Peninsula campaign are well covered. Surprisingly that campaign depended heavily on the importation of American flour in American ships. Wellington is quoted as saying in one of his despatches "All this part of the peninsula has been living this year on American flour".

President Madison was faced with either prohibiting the lucrative trade with British allies who were fighting France or turning a blind eye to it. He chose the latter and the British Admiral in Halifax issued licences to American ship owners trading with Portugal making them free from capture. An odd circumstance of war!

Britain's response

Forester covers the threat to Canada in considerable detail. Wellington's opinion was sought by the British Government over the conduct of the defence of Canada. The Duke perceptively highlighted the importance of establishing naval control over the Great Lakes. Forester tells the history of the frantic building of ships on the Lakes by both sides and the battles that ensued, which went mainly in favour of America. In the end it was the despatch of many of Wellington's regiments to Canada that saved the day for Britain but that was possible only after Napoleon's defeat and exile to Elba in 1814.

Meanwhile the Royal Navy had built up its strength and, under Admiral Cochrane, had entered Chesapeake Bay and instituted many amphibious attacks. Including the burning of Washington. America realised that they could not continue to be an effective nuisance to a Britain that was no longer threatened by Napoleon. Even though they had shaken the prestige of the Royal Navy the war was now going against them.

Negotiations led to peace being agreed by the end of 1814 and it is notable that they failed to gain any concession about the impressment of Americans by the Royal Navy. And that had been a primary public opinion cause of the war. The other grievance about the blockade of trade with Europe had however ceased with the end of the European War. The United States did not therefore gain much from the war but it did establish their reputation and tradition of having highly able and effective fighting seamen - a tradition that lives on to the present day.

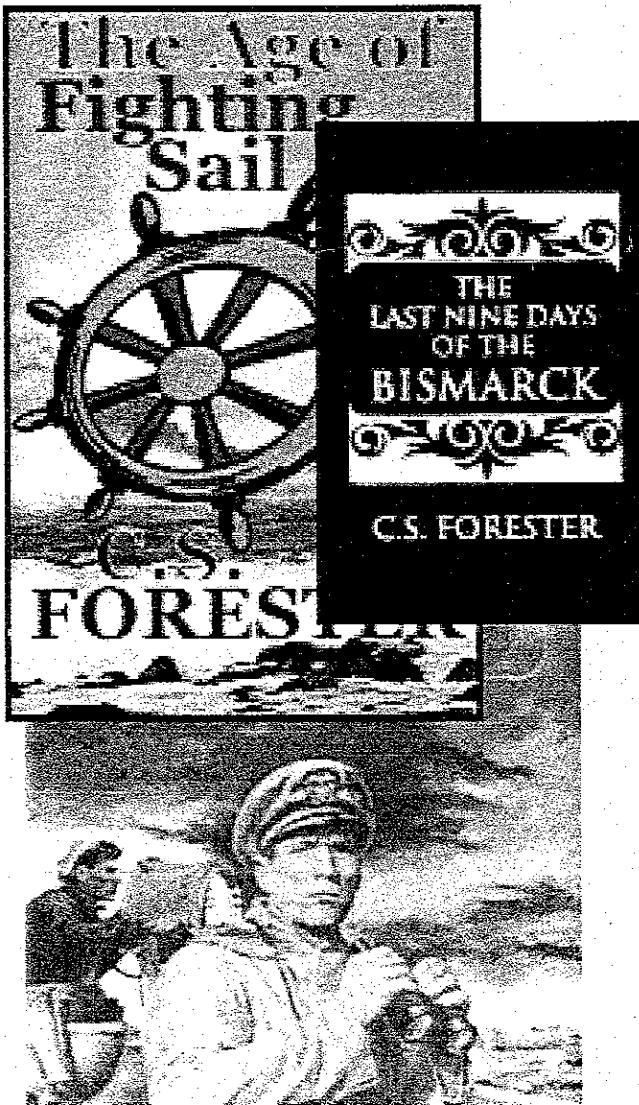
Even so, we in Britain like World War II story of when a Royal Navy ship and a USN ship were alongside each other. An American sailor shouted across "What is it like to be in the second biggest Navy?" to which a British Jack Tar shouted back "Fine. What is it like to be in the second best?"

Assessing Forester's work

I suggest that this book is a brilliant account of the history of the 1812-14 war and very readable as it is told by a master of story telling. It is a good deal about the people and the tactics involved but what impressed me is Forester's understanding and explanation of the world-wide political and strategic aspects.

My view is backed by Stanford Sternlicht who writes about this book as follows: "It combined good history and good narrative. It is a felicitous book because it presented Forester with an opportunity to do everything he did best as a writer; describe naval life and combat in the Age of Sail, deal with sea power and maritime strategy, and write a history of the Napoleonic period."

I think that is a good summary of the whole case for saying that Forester was an able historian and strategist.



Of ships and men John Roberts

The period in which Forester had his greatest interest, knowledge and sheer expertise was undoubtedly that of the French Wars of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era (1793-1815), - twenty years of almost continuous land struggle and naval warfare. It was the time when sea power had its greatest influence on World History. It was the period of the Royal Navy's greatest triumphs when it took on the main navies of the world and decisively beat them all, establishing an unchallengeable supremacy, which was the basis of the *Pax Britannica* for the next hundred years. Forester wrote more books about this dramatic and romantic period than any other and possibly more than all the rest of the books he wrote put together. This needs to be checked, but I know that he wrote at the very least eighteen books on this period.⁵ So I have looked outside this period and considered in particular the two World Wars. Before that however I would like to make a general observation about Forester as a writer. When we think of Forester at least four things spring to mind.

The first of course is "*Hornblower*". In the bibliography of this country the names "Forester" and "Hornblower" are almost synonymous. Those ten books he wrote on Hornblower (eleven if you include the unfinished *Hornblower and the Crisis*) created Britain's greatest fictional naval hero. Forester made Hornblower famous and in his turn Hornblower made Forester famous, or at least a celebrity in his own lifetime, as he tells us in the *Companion*. Hornblower established Forester's enduring reputation as an expert on Nelson's Navy. But Hornblower himself is larger than life and almost a living legend. He is referred to in serious books by such naval historians as Oliver Warner, James George, and Richard Woodman. The Naval Staff produced a detailed Compendium of Reference on Naval History (*The Navy Day by Day*), which refers to both Forester and Hornblower. Anthony Price wrote an excellent history of the frigates of the Napoleonic era ("*The Eyes of the Fleet*"), in the course of which he analyses six case studies of famous frigate captains and one of the six is Hornblower. As Price says, "Hornblower is probably the best known of them all (and therefore the most real?). His omission from the *Dictionary of National Biography* is henceforth a matter of surprise and outrage..."

⁵ 10 or 11 Hornblowers + *The Captain from Connecticut*, *Nelson + War of 1812* + *Barbary Pirates* (for children) 2 Peninsular War novels + *A Pawn among Kings*; biographies of *Napoleon* and *Josephine*; *The Hornblower Companion* + *The adventures of John Wetherall* (edited by CSF). Maximum (depending on what you include) 21-22.

The second thing about Forester is that he was a great storyteller - splendid plots, great characterisation and very authentic period setting, but his ability as a storyteller is outside the scope of this discussion.

Thirdly he was a master of technical detail. He knew absolutely everything there was to know about the warships of the period. He knew all the finer points about ship handling and sailing those complex and intricate vessels, which were the high tech weapon systems of the day. He was fascinated by naval artillery and was so knowledgeable he could have taught on the Directing Staff of Larkhill or Woolwich.

Finally he was an expert on authentic period settings with his very extensive detailed knowledge of background naval and military history. This comes through very clearly in all the relevant books.

Now if you take those attributes and roll them together the end product should be a popular naval, or military historian of some distinction. But sadly Forester is not really rated as an historian. The *National Dictionary of Biography* lists him as a *writer* who created Hornblower and won the *James Tait Black Memorial Prize*. He himself in the opening chapter of his biography on Nelson admits only to "*a biography of a seaman by a professional novelist whose work consists in the study much more of human beings than of maritime affairs*"

It makes one wonder why he was not the accomplished naval historian he so easily could have been. Possibly it was because he had such a creative spirit, which made him first and foremost a creative writer. Great writers are seldom great historians and *vice versa*. An historian researches, collates, analyses, synthesises and regurgitates existing material, often from primary sources. Whilst he needs skills to communicate his findings he does not really *create* his material. Forester had great skills in creating his own material, not limited by the constraints of academic research.

In looking at his books set in the two World Wars there are clearly four areas, which fascinated him.

The first which by his own admission intrigued him was what, in the *Companion* he called "*The Man Alone*". It is this of course, which led him ultimately to the creation of Hornblower. He was greatly interested in the man entirely on his own, often in a dramatic setting, who is forced to survive on his wits, rely solely on his own judgement and take full responsibility for his actions. Men as Wellington in the Peninsular Campaign or the Naval Captain in independent command.

Secondly his great understanding, and sympathy for the basic, ordinary fighting man or sailor (Nobby, Styles, Ginger, Bert, Paddy ...etc) again nearly always in a dramatic setting making history. As he says in his biography of Nelson - he is more interested in the man. He portrays the "man" superbly well as anybody who has served alongside the "fighting man" will tell you. He did of course go to sea with both the Royal Navy and the American Navy.

Thirdly, he is interested in the seemingly trivial incident which has dramatic and unforeseen consequences out of all proportion (the butterfly which flaps its wings in the Far East). A classic example from *Mr Midshipman Hornblower* is the taking of the *Marie Galante*, when a stray shot on the waterline leads to Hornblower losing his first command when the cargo of rice swells.

Finally, there is Forester's fascination with the "what ifs?". These are continually cast up by his lively questioning mind, explored, developed and stored away for future possible use. His writings on the period of the First World War (*U97*, *The General*, *Randal and the River of Time*, *The African Queen*, and *Brown on Resolution*) are all fiction. The only piece of non-fiction that I have seen is the excellent and lengthy introduction he wrote to Richard Hough's book on the *Dreadnought*.⁶ The introduction is full of "what ifs" indeed it starts with a trivial incident when the very first *Dreadnought* was on trials and experienced a steering gear breakdown in the narrow Bonifacio Strait. It could so easily have been a disaster if she had foundered and the consequences if the whole concept of the revolutionary *Dreadnought* battleship had collapsed would have changed the course of history. The piece has many fascinating "what ifs" such as the German heavy ships *Goeben* and the *Breslau* being chased by the British battle cruisers *Invincible* and *Indefatigable* in the Mediterranean. Forester speculates on what would have happened if the Royal Navy had caught up with the German ships particularly as the *Von der Tann* (which was smaller and less powerful than the *Goeben*) took less than 14 minutes to sink the *Indefatigable* at Jutland. There are many more.

The General illustrates the man alone concept, as do also both Allnut in *The African Queen* and Albert Brown in *Brown on Resolution*. The latter two, as well as being timeless classics, show the fortitude and character of the "ordinary man" in dramatic situations. *Brown* reveals Forester's sound grasp of naval strategy and the full extent of the difficult problem posed the Royal Navy by

⁶ See Note at the end of this article.

the dispersed German commerce raiders. It contains a dramatic example of the trivial incident, the delay caused by Brown leading to the destruction of the *Ziethen*. Forester so aptly quotes Nelson: "five minutes makes the difference between victory and defeat".

Forester set his only other non-fiction book on naval history in World War II. But *Hunting the Bismarck* is not really a naval history book; it is much more a rattling good story of an exciting search, hunt, sea chase and violent battle, ending with the sinking of the *Bismarck*. It is written in dialogue between the senior officers involved and imaginary ratings on both sides (including the ubiquitous "Ginger" who also starred with Brown onboard the *Ziethen*). Some say it was written as the script for the film *Sink the Bismarck* by 20th Century-Fox, but the book for that film seems to have been *Sink the Bismarck* written by Frank Brennand and published in 1960⁷. Still, having read both books it is remarkable how similar they are in parts, and Forester's book was published in 1959!

During the war Forester went to sea with both the Royal Navy, onboard a light cruiser and with the American Navy. That resulted in two fine books on naval warfare. The first was *The Ship*, which is the story of the Second Battle of Sirte, a David and Goliath action between Admiral Vian's 14th Light Cruiser Squadron and the Italian Battle Fleet on 22 March 1942. The story is superbly told through the eyes of different members of the ship's company of HMS *Artemis*. It is not a fictional story but a clinical description of a real naval battle and a vivid portrayal of life onboard a British light cruiser. As names of men and ships are changed it cannot of course be considered as true naval history. It is in fact a drama documentary - a style which nowadays is popular in books, plays, films and television. *The Ship* has to be one of his best books and remains one of the finest accounts of life at sea in the Royal Navy at war.

The Good Shepherd, not written until 1955, is similarly an excellent book on naval warfare as experienced by the Americans during the Battle of the Atlantic. It only covers a short period of time and is full of dialogue but is extremely accurate in its description of anti-submarine warfare. It is almost a Convoy Commodore's textbook and certainly could be used as an Escort Commander's book of reference. Again because it does not name actual people or ships it cannot be called non-fiction. The point is that because Forester wanted to portray the ordinary man in the heat of battle he cannot of course quote actual people and so falls back on the drama documentary, the style that he was so very good at.

Forester's contribution to naval history therefore is firstly in popularising it with many of his books, which encouraged and stimulated general interest. He also produced an accurate portrait and authentic feel of real life at sea at war as very few other writers have managed to do. Formal naval history is a study of admirals, battles and campaigns and though Forester wrote one book on each of those topics he wrote far more about the "man" and created the forerunners of today's popular drama documentaries about history. Forester's own description of himself as a writer much more concerned with the study of human beings than of maritime affairs is therefore a perceptive and accurate one.

Notes

1. The Dreadnought

The book mentioned is *Dreadnought: a history of the modern battleship*, by Richard Hough, and the introduction by CS Forester is contained in the first edition of Michael Joseph (year unspecified).

It seems however that the book has appeared in other editions, at least some without the CSF introduction.

Moreover, it tends to be listed indiscriminately with *Buller's Dreadnought*, another book by the same author.

So, prospective purchasers need to check whether any copy on offer contains the introduction or not. The Editor regrets that he cannot be more helpful at this stage.

2. *Sink the Bismarck!* - the film

Frank Brennand is or was, an Australian who served in the army in North Africa in World War II and in occupied Germany afterwards. His book is based on 10 official and unofficial published sources and an *impromptu* discussion about the Battle of the Denmark Strait with a *Prinz Eugen* veteran. He also acknowledges help from the Chief of Naval Information at the Admiralty, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Philip Vian and Esmond Knight - who fought the above battle twice!

Published by Four Square Books/Landsborough Publications (1960), the book is very interesting, but hard to find. The cover artwork, and 4 of 11 photographs, relate to the 20th-century Fox film starring Kenneth More and Dana Wynter, produced by John Braboume and directed by Lewis Gilbert. But the book nowhere claims any link with the film, nor mentions it in the text. The book contains good drama-documentary material, which does not seem related to the screenplay. It may be that the film provided an opportunity for the book. The one other identified book by Brennand is *Young Churchill* (1972). This suggests a link with the film *Young Winston*, but that film was based directly on *My Early Life*, according to Penguin Books who brought out a paperback edition on the strength of it.

There is a further problem, of course, with CSF. The film credits his book as its source, and the book is clearly written as if for a film - but there seem few points of contact, and there are obvious differences, between the two.

It is hoped to return to this discussion at a future date.

⁷ See Note at the end.

History, literature and *The Captain from Connecticut*

David Stead

CS Forester wrote *The Captain* in the United States in late 1940, using two American standard histories of the War of 1812 as sources. Public opinion still remembered that war as "the Second War of Independence", and FD Roosevelt - sensitive to the implications of German and Japanese policy since 1937 - faced isolationist pressure from within his own party and a difficult election: nobody had ever won a third term. But the winner of the *James Tait Black Memorial Prize* had already clearly aligned himself with FDR in a mass-circulation magazine. "One of [Hornblower's] guiltiest secrets was the fact that he fancied himself a democrat and radical..." Commanding the Royal Yacht, at the start of the 1812 War, the story goes, Hornblower lost contact with its escort, and came dangerously close to an American warship, in a Channel fog. His thoughts ran riot on the King's probable capture, and its likely effect upon the foolish and unnecessary conflict, until the fog lifted and the escort intervened.⁸

The Captain was published in the summer of 1941, with FDR home and dry. The first printing sold out at once; a third was needed by spring 1942, with America in the war and its content no longer controversial. As the 1812 War nears its climax, the frigate *USS Delaware*, Captain Josiah Peabody, leaves New York by the back door, in a snowstorm, to break the blockade that is choking the Union to death. After a narrow escape from a ship of the line, Peabody heads for the West Indies - to fight a battle and a duel, and just avoid two more encounters, with Captain Davenant of HM Frigate *Calypso*, leading a small squadron on convoy duty. But both men soon find their wings clipped - by the new governor of French Martinique with his rigorously enforced neutrality, and by his sister and daughter, the one finally betrothed to Davenant, the other soon married to Peabody.

Josiah Peabody is the son of a failing Connecticut farmer, driven by despair to drink and by bottle and Bible to violence. Alcohol also fuelled his mother's affection - with Peabody himself sorely tempted by the demon, until salvation arrived. An elegant and sophisticated uncle opened a door to the Coastguards, the joys of algebra and the big wide world. His uncle then found him a lieutenant's berth at 16, just before he fell in a duel over fitting out privateers for war with France. Josiah was now already bound for glory with Truxtun against *Insurgente* and *Vengeance*, and would blush under Decatur's praise aboard the captured *Khaid-ed-Din* at Tripoli.

Four duels and a wedding

Sandford Sternlicht links *The Captain* with *The Earthly Paradise*, and with *Hornblower*.⁹ They share the West Indian location, and were surely tangible results of Forester's 1938 visit. And Peabody could have featured in a saga of his own, had not *The Captain* proved a disappointment. But *Hornblower* himself was not at first intended for a series, and *The Captain*'s inadequacy is debatable. Its perceived failure is put down to several factors. First of all (and surprisingly so!), the Jonathan Peabody subplot is unresolved. When the story reaches Martinique it loses credibility, even as romantic fiction. A joint sortie against Haitian pirate Lerouge is gratuitous. And the happy ending lacks conviction, as do all the supporting cast, especially Anne de Breuil.

Jonathan is a once-and-future Lothario whom Josiah idealistically wishes to give the chance in life that their uncle had given him. Ironically, he succeeds - Jonathan skips ship, to turn toy boy to a Martinique widow. A real romance would have had both siblings decently married, as in *Twelfth Night*, or one yielding to the other in courtship of a respectable heroine, like the Loveday brothers in Hardy's *A Trumpet Major*. In *The Captain* these outcomes are in fact combined, but the role of second brother for second bride must go to Davenant. It is quite clear why neither the French nor the Americans can bring Jonathan back by force, and - contrary to the canons of romance - he lacks both conscience and the chance to redeem himself by stealing Davenant's plans!

In real life people get away with shameful conduct. Anne understands this better than Peabody, and other things, including her husband's own motives. She understands the inadequacy he feels after grappling with Lerouge, exactly like Decatur (who also had had a brother with him) famously grappled on the deck of a Tripoli pirate. It is because he focuses on imaginary humiliation, rather than the fact that could have been killed, that Peabody seeks death or glory again - as does Davenant. Blinded by male emotions, on the eve of his departure on what both see as a fatal journey, Peabody comes to his wife like a little boy, confides that he feels like Christian at the Cross. Anne plays her part stoically. Had Peabody been *Hornblower*, she could have used the same words as her literary antecedent, Marie de Graçay. Peabody, too,

⁸ CS Forester, *Hornblower and his Majesty*, *Collier's*, 23 March 1940

⁹ Sandford Sternlicht, *CS Forester and the Hornblower saga*, revised edition, Syracuse University Press (1999), pages 119-123.

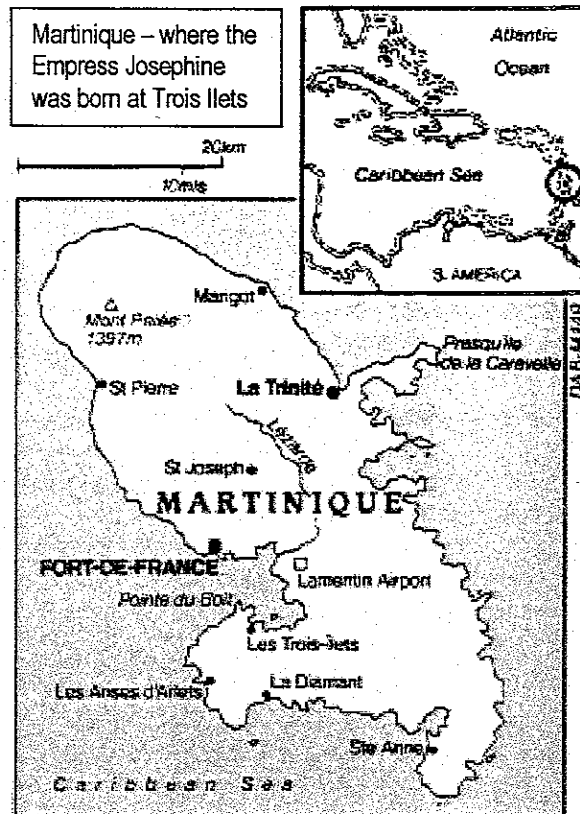
anticipates: not Captain Hornblower, but (first) the protagonist of *The Even Chance*, using this very phrase to conjure up a last encounter with Davenant., then the devout if utterly insecure failed fencer Krause. But by now women are less dutiful than before, and war even less of a game.

If World War II stimulated the writing of *The Captain*, it may also have informed the plot. Peabody and Davenant against Lerouge hint at the role America and Britain should be and indeed are playing in the 1940s. And there may be another reference. A few months before, the issue of neutral rights had underpinned an international crisis. A powerful raider at large brushed aside 3 British ships, but was trapped in a neutral port. The British manipulated the 24-hour rule to keep her there. Finally, romantically, tragically, Captain Langsdorff shot himself aboard the burning and scuttled *Graf Spee* in the Plate Estuary. Whose side was America really on?

In Martinique, *The Captain* does change gear, from adventure to comedy. But this alone does not spell failure, and the transition is not abrupt. By the time we arrive, we are two-thirds of the way through. When the belligerents first drop anchor, there is perceptible relief from what appeared as a slow and inexorable build-up to the kind of battle that ends *A Ship of the Line*. It also seems that Peabody's stay will be short, that he will at once prefer destiny to a woman. We expect that his furtive exit from the ball will succeed – right until it fails.

Elsewhere, Forester has been faulted for his alleged inability to write comedy. *The Captain* surely refutes the claim. Take the Governor's manifest agony as everything and everyone conspires to aid Peabody's ludicrous proposal. Or the sparkling chase-sequences: the rival captains racing to get out of port, Davenant cursing his sweating rowers, Peabody wilting before his abandoned officers, both yielding to the harbourmaster. So comic are the rivals that on one occasion they even laugh at themselves. Then, finally, there comes the abortive duel, after Anne and her aunt, alarmed at the possible loss of one or even two husbands, have surreptitiously replaced pistol balls with toast!

A possible source for this episode may be Thackeray's *Barry Lyndon*, whose hero's own tragicomic odyssey begins with his flight from the ground where he has supposedly killed Captain Quin, his rival for the love of his cousin. The duel has really been fixed by the family, alarmed by the prospect of calf-love wrecking a lucrative alliance to replace lead with plugs of tow. It may even be that *The Captain* is entirely tongue-in-cheek, if its title intentionally echoes Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee at the court of King Arthur*. Upstart navy indeed!



The secret history of Captain Peabody

Scrutiny of three historical contexts detailed by Forester in *The Captain* will shed more light on his methodology, and its consequences, for both historian and novelist.

The first is background for what we know about Peabody's early career – detail which may be unfamiliar to most readers. When war began in 1793, the Republic was obliged by treaty to open its ports to French warships and help defend the French West Indies. France took offence when the US preferred neutrality and improved terms of trade with Britain. In 1796-97, France seized 312 ships. The US response was to complete a naval programme on ice since the last Barbary crisis and at the same time to seek most-favoured-nation terms from France. When negotiations broke down, the two-and-a-half-year (undeclared) Quasi-War with France began. The frigate *Insurgente* struck her colours to Thomas Truxtun's *Constellation* off Nevis in February 1799. A year on, the *Constellation* defeated but failed to capture the *Vengeance* off Guadeloupe. Peace left behind a reduced navy, and a newly created Navy Board, ready for the next Barbary war. Stephen Decatur won his captaincy by destroying the frigate *Philadelphia*, which had been taken by the enemy, under the guns of Tripoli in 1804. He could also report the capture of 3 gunboats to Commodore Preble - who was *not* in fact impressed!

In our second case study, Forester uses precise details from the fringes of the Naval War to enhance the realism of a scene. Davenant pleads with Peabody to grant him passage so he can trap Lerouge's Baltimore schooner. Lerouge had turned pirate when operating from Haiti under Letter of Marque. Deal with him! says Davenant, or the Caribbean will swarm with pirates likewise "licensed" by Morelos or Bolivar. The instability in Haiti, and the quality of Baltimore schooners, are well known. José Maria Morelos had indeed emerged as effective leader of the radical faction in New Spain, and Simón Bolívar held Caracas from August 1813 until July 1814, winning a battle at Carabobo – as Davenant says - on 28 May. Davenant reflects just what such an officer might have known at that date. Forester's research and his incorporation of the details are spot on!

The dramatic date is the summer of 1814, a year whose events are repeatedly cited as background detail for Peabody's adventures, and which would have been very well-known to Forester's American readers. However it is precisely here that Forester seems to lose his touch, and that is where *The Captain* comes to grief. The problem is not that the haven of Martinique puts distance between the weary and the world, like Overcombe Mill or Illyria. The problem is that it is suspended *in time*.

Consider the sequence of events. *Delaware* breaks out during a winter snowstorm, her crew next setting foot on land 18 weeks later. Meanwhile, a captured officer says Wellington has invaded France and the Russians are on the Rhine, so France will be neutral by midsummer or before. The year is clearly 1814, and in fact letters dated 30 May 1814 are exchanged in port in Martinique. So far, so good, and Davenant's intelligence (above) fits. It is now that the trouble starts. The two captains agree on a week's armistice, with no record of extensions. But unless we suppose that time in Martinique passes slowly while time outside races ahead, it is clear that our latter-day Lotus-Eaters tarry not a week, nor even weeks, but months. Peabody hears that Decatur has been taken, that MacDonough is victorious on Lake Champlain, while the British have burned Washington and, according to the informant, were just about to move on Baltimore.

"It is instructive here to compare dates."¹⁰

24-25.08.1814	British in Washington
11.09.1814	MacDonough at Plattsburg
13-15.09.1814	British attack Baltimore
15.01.1815	Capture of Decatur's <i>President</i>

Peabody might have preferred all the bad news at once, regardless of the effect on the novelist's credibility!

¹⁰ CS Forester, *The Naval War of 1812*, Michael Joseph (1957), 241.



But there is worse to come. As he prepares *Delaware* for her last encounter with *Calypso*, Peabody says that if he is killed, *Delaware* must still shadow the force being prepared in Jamaica for an attack on New Orleans. Then of course the news of the Peace of Ghent arrives within hours. But the real dates are these:-

22.11.1814	Muster begins at Negril, Jamaica
24.12.1814	Peace signed at Ghent
13.02.1815	News reaches New Orleans!
17.02.1815	Peace ratified by Congress.

Never mind, they all lived happily ever after!

Conclusion

If *The Captain* fails, it is not only because Martinique is - like Prospero's Isle or Calypso's - isolated in space and time, with dire consequences for the historical backdrop, on which Forester has worked hard. The novelist's solution to his self-set literary problem also falls far short of other possibilities, in his own art and in life.

Forester had been struck by the *Naval Chronicle* record of the hiatus between the signing of the Peace and its entry into force, which would serve him well in fiction, in *The Happy Return*. In history, too, as Warrington still sank, burned and battled in the Pacific while Napoleon foundered at Waterloo and Decatur won at Algiers.¹¹ *The Captain* hints at indecision, at an author who could not finally decide whether to base his story on events of 1815 or those of the year before. So much for history.

And for literature? When *The Captain* was written, it was vital that neither side should be declared outright winner! But the problem had already been solved far better in *Hornblower and his Majesty*, where the story ends just as battle commences. *The Captain* merely offers *Calypso's* surprise return, and another comic chase-scene. How much better, dramatically, to have ended with Anne's grief as Peabody sailed away into dubious battle, whether to return with flying colours or, like the Trumpet Major, to be silenced forever.

If only *Little, Brown & Company* of Boston had taken the scissors again, as they had to *The African Queen*.¹²

¹¹ CS Forester, *The Naval War*, pages 246-247.

¹² Isabelle Roblin, *War, national identity and the alternative endings of The African Queen*, *Reflections* 1, pages 5-8.

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