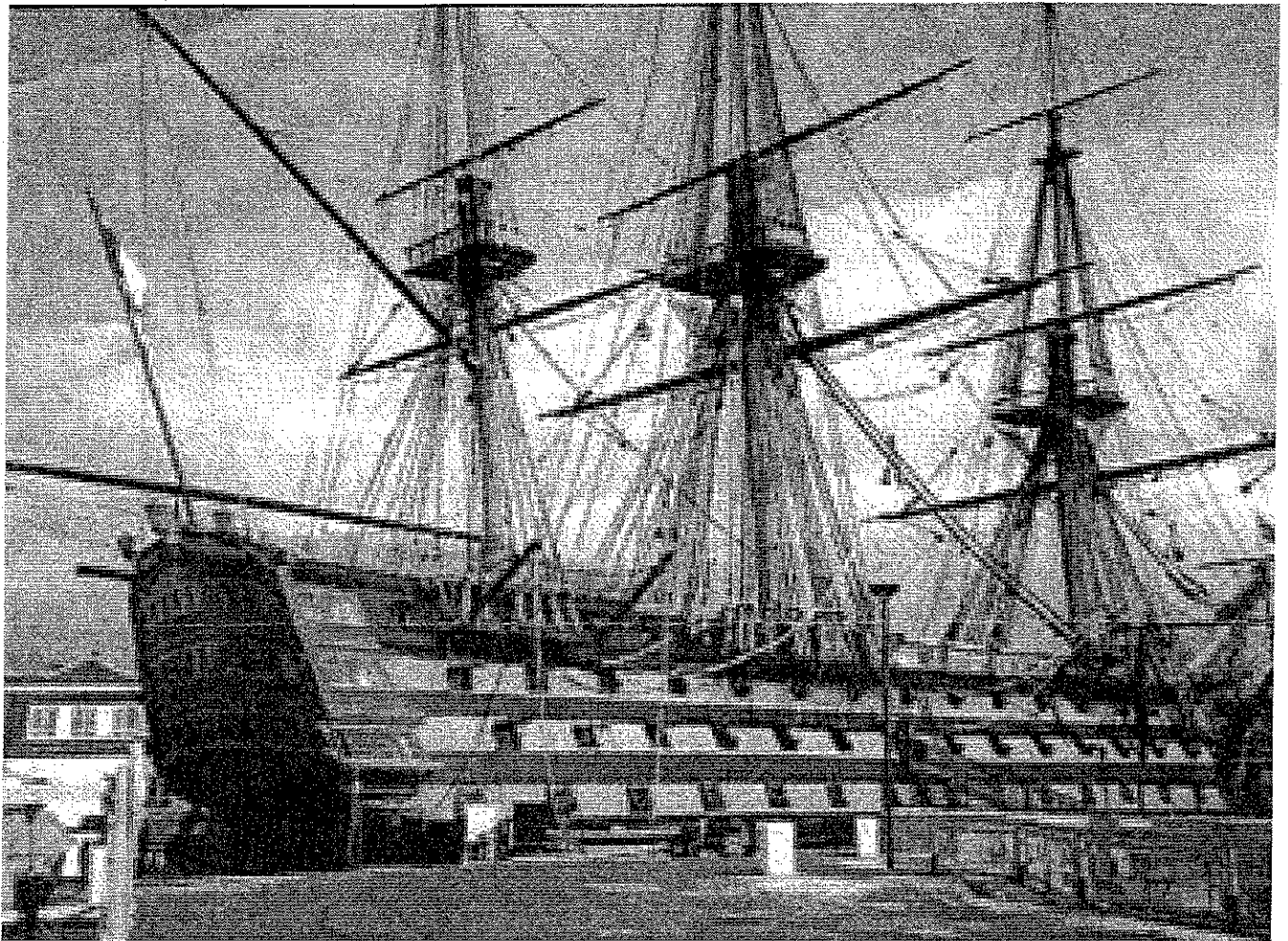




Reflections

A Literary Supplement to the *CS Forester Society* Newsletter



Number 7: March 2004

STRANGER THAN FICTION – Richard Hill on *The Prizes of War*

BOOKS: Christopher Smith on *Louis XIV*;

Lawrie Brewer on *Flying Colours*;

Judith Edwards on *Lord Hornblower*.

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Richard Miller – *The Admiralty Clerk*

CORRESPONDENCE: the *Annie Marble* in Africa; shooting an albatross;

CSF's literary admirers; CSF on *Churchill*; the *Hornblower* saga and history.

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Louis XIV revisited **Christopher Smith**

In spring 2003 Simon Publications of Safety Harbor, Florida, issued a paperback reprint of CS Forester's *Louis XIV*. So this may be a good time to revisit a work to which its author gave a low rating that has perhaps been too readily endorsed by readers of his later novels.

Printed in Norwich by Jarrold and Son, the biography was published in London by Methuen in 1928. Costing what at the time was the relatively high price of half a guinea (55p), it is a handsome volume of generous dimensions. The format is demy octavo, i.e. 14 by 22 cms. After eight pages of prelims, of which only pages v and vii are numbered, come 244 pages of text, two of index and a blank leaf, i.e. 15 gatherings ("1" to "15") of 8 leaves each and another (with the signature "16") of just 4. Thirteen rather drab historical portraits are provided by way of illustration; one serves as a frontispiece, and the others are inserted at appropriate points in the narrative. Eight pages of advertisements of "Methuen's General Literature" are included at the back. The text is set in large type (14-point Scotch Roman) and printed on thick, quite soft paper, which tends to make the book appear more substantial than it really is. *Louis XIV* is bound in red linen-covered boards. The colour of the dust-jacket is a contrasting dark green.

The British Library holds two copies of *Louis XIV*, and the *Catalogue* might be taken to suggest that the biography had appeared in two different states in 1928. But the entries are deceptive. Apart from the excision of the advertisements in the book with shelf mark W4/3342, both copies, which have been rebound, are identical.

In *C.S. Forester and the 'Hornblower' Saga* Sternlicht notes what a low opinion the author of *Louis XIV* had of his work. Forester declared that his historical biographies were the poorest work he had ever done and that he knew nothing about their subjects. His funds were low at this period in his life, and his sole motivation in writing had been the fee of £25 that he had received on submission of the synopsis of each of them.¹ This is carrying self-disparagement almost to the same excesses as the fulsome praise loaded on the apparently ungrateful author in the blurb printed on the dust-jacket. "Mr Forester," it exclaims, "deals very successfully both with the personality of the 'Sun-King' and with all the momentous developments which took place in his reign.... As usual, his comments are illuminating and significant. The book supplies a demand which has arisen for a modern and well-written life of the greatest French ruler before Napoleon."

The truth of the matter, not perhaps unexpectedly, lies somewhere between Forester's over-modest disclaimers and his publisher's over-enthusiastic puffing. Writing the book may be seen as quite a demanding assignment for Forester, and one not without some rewards beyond the modest payment. The biography was aimed at the general public, not the specialist historian. That implied a challenge. There was little reason to imagine that many British readers in the late 1920s knew a lot about Louis XIV or, for that matter, cared very much either about him or his period. So Forester had both to present a lot of information and drum up interest.

His task was all the more difficult because he was writing at a time when many traditional assumptions about biography had been overturned. In 1918 Lytton Strachey opened a new era with *Eminent Victorians*, and among the many writers none probably had more influence on Forester than Phillip Guadella.² Reverence towards the great figures of former ages tended to be replaced by an impish delight in debunking. But that was not all. Revolting against the leaden-footed scholarly memorials of past achievement in vogue in the nineteenth century, the new generation demanded relatively brief biographies that subordinated narrative to critical insight, carried their scholarship lightly and presented fact and opinion in entertaining, not say brilliant prose.

¹ Sanford Sternlicht, *CS Forester and the Hornblower Saga*. Syracuse University Press (1999), pages 29-30; 67-68.

² See **Notes** at the end of this article.

Biography into art – or irony

As his later career testifies, Forester was not destined to emerge as one of the leaders of the new wave of biographers. All the same, his *Louis XIV*, like his lives of other major figures, may be seen as belonging in many ways to the 1920s. Its author is quick on his feet and writes with assurance that is not checked by any undue awe for his subject. Writing as a man of the world, he is not taken in by appearances and expects his readers to enjoy with him occasional glimpses of the seamy side of what used to be seen as grandeur. Forester does not go anything like so far as Lytton Strachey did in systematically undermining reputations, and he does not seek so ostentatiously to draw attention to his own brilliance in either penetration or style. All the same, *Louis XIV* is certainly very different from the sort of biography that would have been expected before the Great War.

Above all, it is plain that Forester, like the Bloomsbury biographers, can be seen as setting out to turn his biography into a work of art. That rather nebulous concept becomes clearer in the light of a comment that David Garnett makes in *Familiar Faces*, one of his autobiographical books.³ He tells of working on a novel "quite consciously writing as a painter paints: that is keeping the whole book in my mind all the time". So too, resisting the temptation of attempting to summarise a vast body of material from memoirs and take into account a good two centuries of scholarship, Forester sees his task as the creation of a unified image of Louis XIV.

On occasion, when talking of the king's education, for instance, he will briefly pause to mention alternative interpretations. His habitual manner is, however, to move on briskly and convey certain impressions. These, besides, seem calculated to appeal to modern readers who would also respond to a number of artfully placed allusions to recent events.

The very titles of the first two chapters reveal the approach. The first is headed "Heredity", the second "Environment". Where earlier historians would have delved into genealogy and given a sober-sided account of the history of France in Europe in the half-century before Louis's birth, Forester plunges in, confidently creating a perspective and suggesting that his approach will be up to date, not to say scientific. What is even more important is that, unlike many earlier biographies that were not afraid to try their readers' patience at the outset, this one moves off fast. Chapter Three keeps up the spanking pace, and its title, "The Search for a Wife", has a certain irony about it.

³ See Note at the end of this article.



The Sun King and his era

Louis XIV had a long life that began in difficult days and rose to a certain splendour only to end in a long decline. Though the first two movements offer the biographer an attractive pattern, the third stage can easily seem rather gloomy. Forester has, however, no intention of going through every episode in chronological order. Instead he selects salient events and leading characters, making the most of those whose role in seventeenth-century court life might have been passed over with a certain embarrassment by nineteenth-century historians. The remarkable cast of royal mistresses is described with an attention not far from relish, and Forester does not hesitate to show the seamy side of what the French like to call the "Grand Siècle". The larger public issues are not neglected either. There is a rather disapproving description of the functioning of the state. Accounts of the interminable succession of wars that marked the Louis reign are given some life by graphic descriptions of battles, though the king did not play any heroic part in them. Forester also gives some indication of his personal interests by devoting a chapter to the topic of "Sea Power".

If, in general terms, Forester succeeds in creating a certain impression of Louis XIV that will still, even seventy years on, carry conviction, there are some weaknesses. A good publisher's reader really ought to have persuaded him to identify from the start the troubles of the king's early days as the "Frondes". References to Louis's prowess as a dancer need to be made much more explicit if readers are not to imagine that what he was fond of was anything like modern ballroom dancing. Most serious of all is a failure to appreciate the great part religion played in France at the time. The Reformation had split Europe, and the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion shook France. But,

after the Council of Trent, France in the seventeenth century experienced the Counter-Reformation. When late in life Louis himself turned to piety he was following where many of his subjects had already gone before. As for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which is now seen as France's loss (and England's gain), it was an integral part of Catholic policy. Forester is, however, by no means alone in mistaking the true nature of Catholicism in Louis's reign. What is perhaps more surprising is that he does not make more of the king's medical history. A lot of information is available, and a writer who had had some training as a doctor might have developed it to show the king as a man who suffered the well-meaning but pitiless ministrations of physicians and surgeons with stoic dignity.

Though there are weakness in *Louis XIV*, Forester was unduly modest in disparaging this biography, even if it was the one that interested him least. Working on it widened his grasp of history, and France less than a century later was to be the background of his Hornblower stories. He gained further experience in the art of looking out sources and using them to what he regarded as best advantage. Besides, for a writer no experience in the handling of words is ever wasted, and in *Louis XIV* the prose runs very easily, slowing down where description or analysis called for and then pursuing narrative with purposeful rapidity. Another consideration is perhaps far more important still. Forester has tried his hand at historical biography and had not done at all badly. Yet he had discovered that this was not his true sphere. History moved him, provided him with a framework for characters and actions, with details that enabled him to create an atmosphere of reality. But for self-expression he had to move beyond the constraints of historical fact and find himself in historical fiction.

NOTES

Eminent Victorians by Lytton Strachey (1880-1932) – with its portraits of Gordon of Khartoum, Cardinal Manning, Arnold of Rugby and Florence Nightingale – is in a 2003 Oxford paperback, edited by John Sutherland Professor of Modern English Literature, at University College London.

David Garnett (1892-1981) was the son of publisher's reader Edward Garnett and Constance, a translator from Russian. He grew up in the literary environment of Bloomsbury. His first wife – artist Rachel Alice Marshall – died in 1940: the second was Angelica Bell, niece of Virginia Woolf. Garnett ran a Soho bookshop and wrote novels – *Lady into Fox* (1922), *The Sailor's Return* (1925), *Aspects of Love* (1955). He edited the letters of TE Lawrence (1938), and wrote three volumes of autobiography: *The Golden Echo* (1953), *The Flowers of the Forest* (1955), and *The Familiar Faces* (1962).

Philip Guadella is referred to in passing on a Dutch website as *de befaamde Engelse historicus*, but I have found nothing else about him except obscure references to bonnets and

boots, and a remark which would make him a forerunner of Denys Arcand: *the barbarian invasions always came from the east until we discovered America*. Am I missing something?

LOUIS XIV OF FRANCE (1638-1715)

Louis inherited the throne in 1643 and reigned over 70 years, redefining the monarchy and giving his name to an era. The formative events of his life coincided with the climax of the English Civil War. He was driven out of Paris for 4 years (1648-1652) by *les Frondes* – a popular revolt against taxes, which the nobles joined. So, just as the later Stuart period (1660-1714) consigned the Divine Right of Kings to the dustbin of English history, Louis was inaugurating its Indian summer, which would last until 1789 in France. In 1661, aged 22, he took personal control of the reins of power. "He sees everything, hears everything, makes every decision, gives every order" a minister wrote. Louis was briefer: *l'état, c'est moi* – "I am the state".

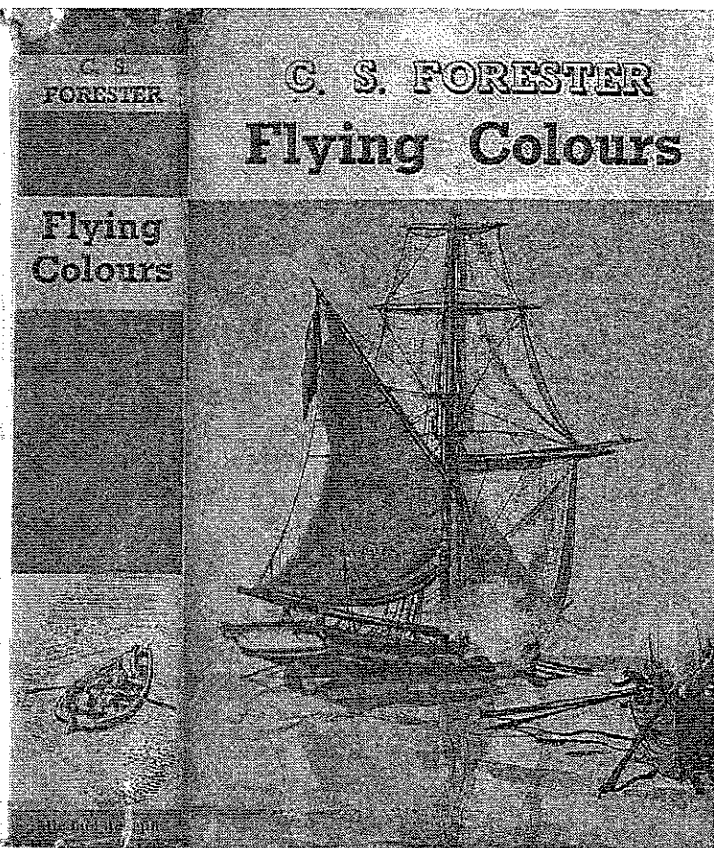
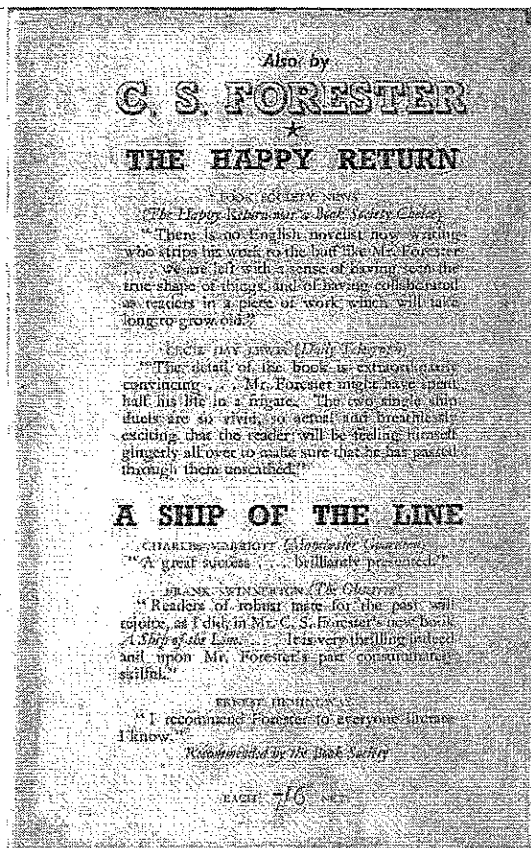
The seat of government was transferred to Versailles, the wings of the aristocracy clipped, and a massive programme of economic reform begun. In some ways, Louis anticipated Napoleon. France was to expand to its natural frontiers – the Rhine, Alps, Pyrenees – and to dominate Europe. This meant the creation of an army of over a quarter-of-a-million, naval expansion from 20 to 270 ships – and three decades of war. At first, the Stuarts supported Louis' expansion into the Netherlands. Then the replacement of James II by his daughter and her Dutch husband launched an intermittent second Hundred Years War (1698-1815) with France – without which, we would never have had Gibraltar, Winston Churchill or Captain Hornblower!

The 1660 marriage of Louis to Maria Teresa, daughter of Philip IV of Spain, would also shape the next 150 years. At the time, the nuptials attracted more attention. The wedding took place on an island in the Bidassoa River between France and Spain, and Anne of Austria, Louis's mother and till recently regent, enjoyed a brief revival of glory, by forcing the bride to shed Spanish for French regalia. The poor *infanta* was quite overcome by the stress of the occasion.

Other concerns were graver. The Edict of Nantes (1598), a negotiated compromise establishing the legal toleration of Calvinism in Catholic France, marked the end of the worst phase of the Wars of Religion. The belated acceptance by the French clergy (1615) of the conclusions of the sham-bolic Councils of Trent (1545-1563) had at the time been a dubious move in a labyrinthine political game. But, as in England, religious conflict in France could still offer temptations to crowned heads. Like Charles II, Louis became increasingly attracted to Catholicism, and he took even more drastic steps than James II did. In 1685 he revoked the Edict, provoking a second exodus of highly skilled Huguenots whom France could hardly afford to lose.

James II, of course, was about to reappear at the Boyne, as nominal commander of Louis's expedition against the newest recruit to the Grand Alliance of Emperor, Pope and other European powers. His defeat by the polyglot army of William of Orange would become a controversial landmark in Irish history. Shortly before Forester wrote, that history had seen a dramatic change of direction, arising partly from another Great European War. With the passing of Louis in 1715, France's situation would evoke England's after Versailles: victorious but exhausted, picking up the pieces for another round.

David Stead.



FLYING COLOURS – my favourite book – LAWRIE BREWER

There is a huge level of competition from the hundreds of books and stories CSF wrote, but if I were to name a 'favourite' it would certainly be *Flying Colours*.

I first came across the book in 1956; my Harrow prep school master had the excellent habit of reading for 10 minutes at the end of each English lesson. My father purchased for me the Penguin paperback I still have and if I had needed more encouragement it was on the back cover: - 'I find Hornblower admirable, vastly entertaining' said Winston Churchill. I was captivated, and started my collection of Hornblower which now includes a first edition, dust-jacketed *Flying Colours*.

Why should we judge this the greatest of the series? It starts in adversity and ends in triumph – always the recipe for a good story. The majority of narrative is on land; the man alone, with no crew. The sole officer is Bush along with the key servant Brown. The three women of Hornblower's life – Maria, Lady Barbara and Marie – all feature in this one story. The countries we visit are those central to all Hornblower's naval career – France and England. The key villain awaits the planned journey – the road of adversity leads to Napoleon himself.

We begin *in medias res*, as every best epic should!

'Captain Hornblower was walking up and down along the ramparts of Rosas.' He is a prisoner, to be taken to Paris for trial for war crimes. We travel with his

lieutenant. 'Bush's face was less craggy and gnarled, the flesh drawn tight over the bones so that he looked unnaturally younger, and he was pale instead of being the mahogany brown to which Hornblower was accustomed.'

The cox'n keeps us company: "That man must be silenced", said Hornblower. "Aye, aye, sir". Brown meditated for a second before continuing. "Better let me do that, sir. Here, you". Colonel Caillard received Brown's fist full on the jaw, in a punch which had all Brown's mighty fourteen stone behind it. He dropped in the snow, with Brown leaping upon him like a tiger.

We meet the Comte de Graçay when Hornblower, Bush and Brown escape from their escort and take refuge in a chateau. 'A tall thin man in a blue coat with a glistening white cravat stood there to welcome them, and at his side was a young woman, her shoulders bare in the lamplight': Marie.

We leave France now 'The swift water of the Loire was clear, and under the blue sky the distant reaches were blue as well, in charming colour contrast with the spring-time emerald of the valley and the gold of the banks' The escape to England is achieved: 'This was the England for which he had fought for eighteen long years, and as

he breathed its air and gazed around him he decided it was worth it'.

We meet again the second woman: 'Lady Barbara was there; it was a surprise to see her in black - Hornblower had been visualising her when last he had seen her, the grey-blue which matched her eyes. She was in mourning now... but the black dress suited her well - her skin was creamy white... he remembered with a faint pang the golden tang of her cheeks in the old days' We bury Hornblower's wife: 'Maria was dead. Maria the tender, the loving... He had lost Maria... Maria was dead'.

So, what do we learn about CSF technique? Lights, camera, action - nothing too complicated here. Consider Bush; as Mr Rochester was to Jane Eyre, a strong man upon whom Hornblower can depend, but who is now subdued. And Brown - is he not just one-up on Rousseau's noble savage? The women - one for comfort, one for social ornament - and we all know why we dream of foreign girls. *Monsieur le Comte?* - every reader can aspire to white cravats, and being *Chevalier* of the Holy Ghost. How can a schoolboy not be fascinated, but why does this survive as a great book?

Firstly, the magnificence of the escape from Nantes in the recaptured British cutter *Witch of Endor*; with Bush at the helm and Brown inspiring a group of pressed galley slaves, the man alone runs out a 6-pounder and disables two pursuing French longboats. In the 'Companion' CSF describes his mental creation of the event: - "A sudden boiling over, the flurry died down with the mental picture of Hornblower recapturing *Witch of Endor*".

Consider too, the use of language. Here is CSF at his peak: - "Your friend will soon get well" commented the surgeon. "Now let us replace the dressings. So. And so." His dexterous plump fingers rebandaged the stump, replaced the wicker basket, and drew down the bed coverings.' The picture is vivid, not a word wasted.

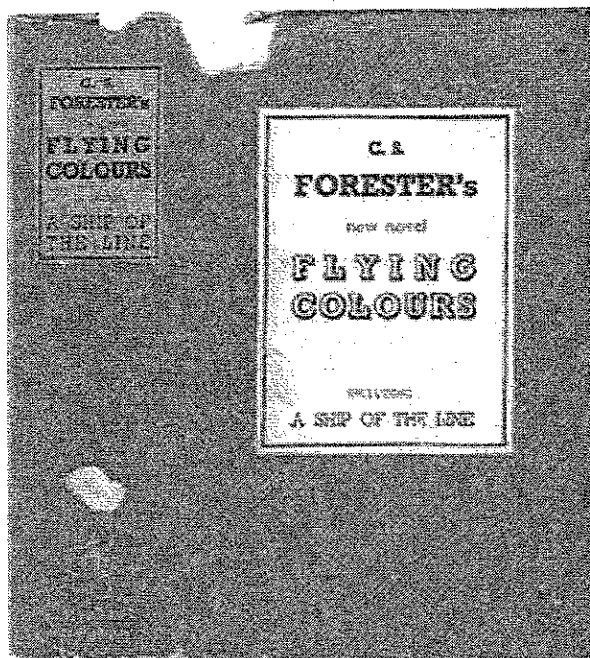
But perhaps most importantly, '*Flying Colours*' is the milestone book in the Hornblower series. The first-written *Happy Return* was expected to be a one-off; the second, *Ship of the Line*, was a story to which Hornblower was appended - the 'discarded character' said CSF. But here we have a particular story, designed for a particular, establishing character. Now CSF is getting serious about his nascent hero.

What Forester does therefore, is distill the essence of the man. The water - the sea upon which Hornblower spends the majority of his life - is kept to a minimum. The crew - amongst whose masses Hornblower will spend his entire career - is marginalised. The Napoleonic war - the *raison d'être* for the Royal Navy for two decades - is focussed on a single small battle. The

enemy - I am of an age which privileged me to be warned by my grandmother "Boney'll get you" - is personified as the single person of Bonaparte, the objective of the escorted journey.

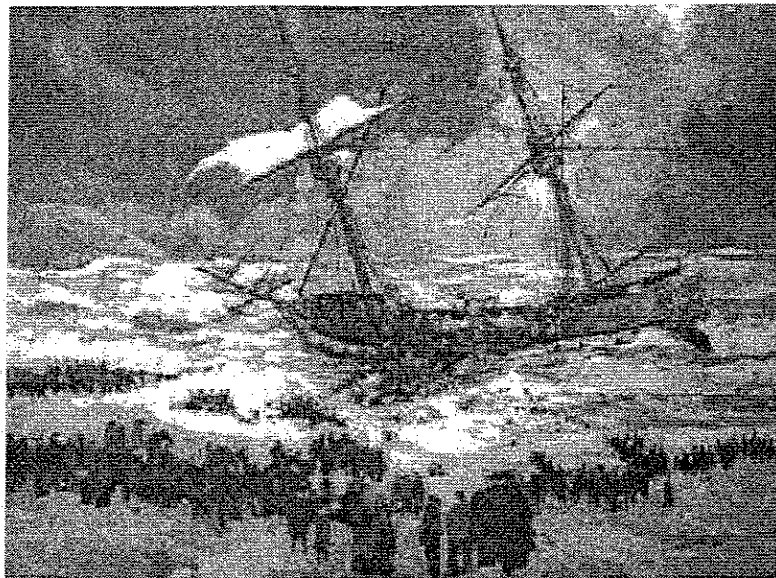
Evaluate this masterful cast of the character into stark relief, by means of comparison with Patrick O'Brian's technique. Had this been Aubrey, we would have known the name of every duck in the yard of the *Château*, the weight of every ingredient in the ship's biscuit and the square footage of each sail carried by *Witch of Endor*. In contrast, CSF offers only sparse background. The omission of incidental detail is balanced by the contrivance of three powerfully drawn female characters, further to test and reveal Hornblower's personality.

Boney avoided, embroiling relationships controlled, a personal sea victory, wealthy status achieved and at the end, the Prince Regent's decoration - in *Flying Colours* we see the man alone. He triumphs. The story for a 10-year old and still, 40-ish years on.



- Lawrie Brewer thus extolled *Flying Colours* at the CS Forester Society meeting in Oxford, October 2003.
- Further contributions, on the theme of **My favourite Forester**, are warmly invited.

▪ **For the collector!**
Flying Colours including *A Ship of The Line* - London: Michael Joseph, 1938 1st edition. Published in conjunction with The Book Society, this edition was issued a day before the separate volume which consisted only of *Flying Colours*. Such books may be found through www.abebooks.co.uk or www.abebooks.com. To locate a particular edition, go straight to **ADVANCED SEARCH**. But be warned! The edition above will cost £225-£300. To bring back the *Witch* on the previous page from Botany Bay, multiply by four or five!



Lord Hornblower - taking liberties with history? Judith Edwards

Sir Horatio Hornblower is sitting in the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey, in the autumn of 1813. He is attending the service of the installation of Knights of the Bath, his wandering eyes revealing his apparent boredom. We are on the second page of *Lord Hornblower*, and C S Forester describes, through Hornblower's eyes, other notable naval members of the Order of the Bath present with him:

"But elsewhere in the chapel there were men with whom he was proud to share the brotherhood of the Order – Lord St. Vincent, huge and grim, the man who took his fleet down into the heart of a Spanish squadron twice its strength; Duncan, who destroyed the Dutch Navy at Camperdown; and a dozen or more of admirals and captains, some of them even junior to him in the Navy List – Lydiard, who captured the Pomona off Havannah; Samuel Hood, who commanded the Zealous at the Nile; and Yeo, who stormed the fort at El Muro".

Until 1815 the maximum number of Knights at any one time was thirty-five, so it would have been easy for Hornblower to pick out those he knew. St. Vincent, Duncan and Hood are well known names but I, at least, had not heard of Lydiard or Yeo before. I was curious to find out more details of the exploits Forester mentions, and perhaps to check his facts. Yeo [above right] is the better documented of the two, even meriting an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Lydiard: triumph and tragedy

Charles Lydiard was one of Nelson's lieutenants in HMS *Captain* in 1796, and was given command of the 44-gun frigate HMS *Anson* in December 1805. In August 1806

he was cruising in *Anson* off Havana in Cuba, in company with the frigate *Arethusa* (38 guns, Captain Charles Brisbane). Havana was at that time sometimes spelled Havannah; Forester uses the latter, I suspect because it looks more old-fashioned. On the morning of 23 August they sighted the Spanish 34-gun frigate *Pomona* trying to enter Havana harbour against the current. *Pomona* anchored close to Morro Castle which had a battery of 16 (or 11 – accounts vary) 36-pound guns. Further reinforcements came from Havana, in the form of 10 (or 12 – again, the number varies) gunboats, each with a 24-pounder. *Anson* and *Arethusa* anchored alongside *Pomona*, in shallow water, and the action started. Thirty-five minutes later, *Pomona* had struck her colours and the gunboats were all destroyed – 3 were blown up, 6 were sunk, and the remainder driven on shore. The castle guns were firing red-hot shot, which set the *Arethusa* on fire; this was fortunately soon put out. The *Pomona* was taken into British service under the name *Cuba*.

Anson and Captain Lydiard came to an unfortunate end only just over a year later. On Christmas Eve 1807 *Anson* left Falmouth in a gale, to take part in the blockade of Brest. By the time they sighted Ushant the storm was so bad the Captain Lydiard decided to return to Falmouth. On the afternoon of 28 December they were in Mount's Bay to leeward of the Lizard. They were failing to clear the land, and anchored. However, at 5am on the 29th the anchor cable parted, and a few hours later its replacement also parted. The ship was then steered towards the beach and run on to the sand. The mast fell, forming a bridge to the shore over which several men scrambled to safety [illustration, above left]. Others were pulled ashore by local onlookers, but many

men were lost (accounts vary from 60 to 120, out of a crew of 370) and the ship was broken up by the waves. The most notable victim was Captain Lydiard himself who was swept away, reportedly while trying to save a young seaman. His body was picked up on 1 January 1808 and brought into Falmouth the following day for interment.

It is therefore very surprising that Hornblower was able to see Captain Lydiard safe and sound in Westminster Abbey over 5 years later!

Yeo: from Lieutenant to Commodore

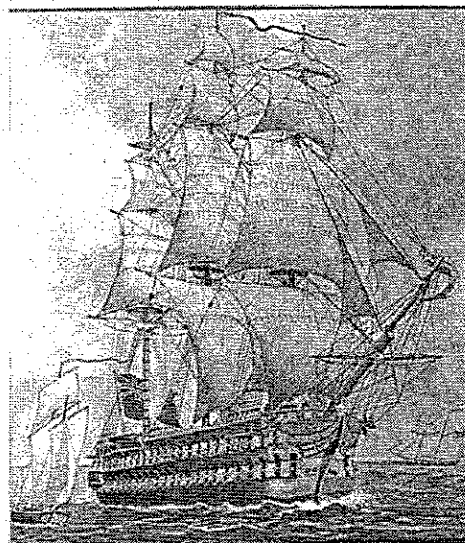
James Lucas Yeo was born in 1782 and joined the Royal Navy at the age of 10. He was promoted to lieutenant in 1797. He was serving in the 38-gun frigate *Loire* (Captain Frederick Lewis Maitland) off the north-west coast of Spain in June 1805. Captain Maitland had information that a French 26-gun privateer, the *Confiance*, was fitting out at Muros, and decided to capture or destroy it. (Forester makes an error in *Lord Hornblower* in naming the place Muro; it is definitely Muros, not far south of Cape Finisterre). On the morning of 4th June the *Loire* towed the ship's boats, with 50 officers and men under the command of Lieutenant Yeo, into Muros Bay. A small battery guarded the bay, and the captain ordered Yeo to spike its guns. The boats landed under the battery, whereupon its defenders fled. The guns were spiked, but then Yeo realised that the fort opposite was firing on the *Loire*. He stormed the garrison of around 100 men with his fifty and it soon surrendered, Lieutenant Yeo himself killing the governor of the fort in a sword fight. Only six of the British were slightly wounded, including Yeo. Part of the fort was blown up and its twelve 18-pounder guns spiked; the boats returned to the *Loire*. Meanwhile, another boat's crew took possession of the *Confiance*, whose guns were on shore. Yeo was commissioned as Commander into the *Confiance*. He was made post on 21 December 1807, retaining command of the ship, which had been raised from a sloop to a post-ship. Captain Yeo was knighted in 1810. He commanded the British naval forces on Lake Ontario in the war of 1812-14 (from his first-rate flagship *Saint Lawrence*, right), and died off the coast of Africa on 21 September 1818.

Recycling history: a novelist at work

It is interesting to see that an episode from each of the two actions discussed finds its way into *Lieutenant Hornblower*, published some six years after *Lord Hornblower*. Forester did not waste the results of his research! Red-hot shot was fired at the *Arethusa* during the action off Havana in which Lydiard took part, and Lieutenant Yeo's storming of the fort at Muros could well

have inspired Lieutenant Hornblower's similar feat at Samana Bay.

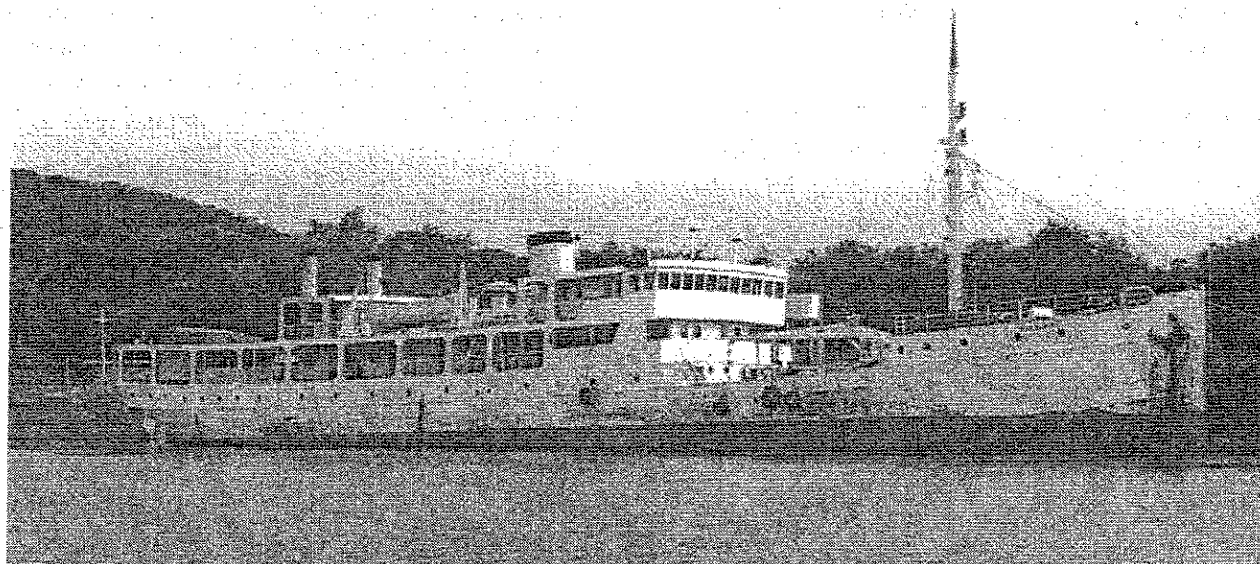
So Forester's facts are correct, as far as they go. Both Lydiard and Yeo did exist, both were junior to Hornblower in the captains' list, and they did undertake the brave exploits mentioned by Forester. We can ignore minor errors and idiosyncrasies in the spelling of place names. We cannot however escape the major anachronism – neither man could have been in London in the autumn of 1813. Lydiard had been dead for nearly 6 years, and Yeo was on the other side of the Atlantic.



Were Forester's anachronisms mistakes, or were they deliberate fictions? Forester had researched Lydiard's capture of the *Pomona* in 1806; it is inconceivable that he had not also discovered that he was drowned a year later. The shipwreck was well documented – at least as well as the action mentioned. It is even more inconceivable that Forester did not know, or forgot, that Yeo was in America at the time. He is mentioned several times in *The Naval War of 1812* (mostly critically – his glory days were behind him) and, although this was not published until ten years after *Lord Hornblower*, Forester had surely taken an interest in that war much earlier. Of the other three heroes he mentions, Hood was in the East Indies between 1812 and 1814 so his presence in London in 1813 is also wrong. As this fact is mentioned in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Forester was surely aware of it.

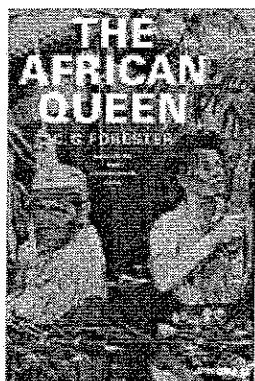
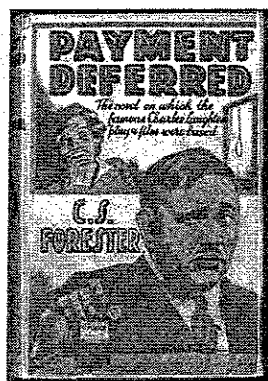
This leads us to the conclusion that Forester placed Lydiard, Yeo and Hood in the Abbey because it was impossible for them to have been there in reality. It is only one instance - and a minor one at that - of the many instances where he amends history to suit the purposes of his story. Inserting real characters and events into a story certainly adds verisimilitude. However, is attributing impossible events to those characters acceptable, or irritating once one knows them to be false?

CORRESPONDENCE



Under African Skies Kevin Patience

catalogues the ships and boats associated with the filming of *The African Queen*. He challenges an account in a recent issue of *Ships Monthly*, presenting the full facts and a photographic archive.



I read with interest an article on the *Liemba*, formerly the *Graf Götzen*, published in *Ships Monthly*, August 2003. However I would like to point out a number of errors.

The *Graf Götzen* was launched in June 1914 and powered by twin triple expansion engines - but was not fitted with a 4-inch gun until over a year after its launch. This gun came from the cruiser *Königsberg*, sunk on 11 July 1915. It was salvaged by the Germans and removed soon afterwards for use in the land campaign.

The *Graf Götzen* was not sunk by a seaplane but scuttled by the retreating Germans on 26 July 1916 as Allied troops closed in on Kigoma. It lay off the mouth of the Malagarasi river until 1919 when the Belgians salvaged it and began towing it back to Kigoma.

The *Graf Götzen* sank again and was eventually salvaged by a Royal Navy team in 1924 and returned to service in 1927 as the *Liemba*. In 1977 the *Liemba* was fitted with twin diesels and again in the mid 1990s underwent a major refit that should see it in service for many years to come [above].

Regrettably the *Liemba* did *not* star in the film *The African Queen*, as the cost of sending the camera crew from Uganda and the Congo, where the film was made, to Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika, for a few seconds of film, was excessive. Instead the role of the German raider *Luiza* was played by the East African Railways and Harbours steam tug *Buganda* that was close to hand at Kisumu. The *Buganda* [overleaf] has now been retired from service and is the floating annex to a hotel in the port of Mwanza where the cabins are named after the stars of the film.

I was living in Kisumu with my folks when they made *The African Queen* and remember hearing about the launch. In fact years later I met a chap in Mombasa who bought the launch after the filming and who fitted the steam engine for the film, which incidentally did not drive the boat - that was a little diesel engine at the back. As for Forester himself, I read the script for the play of *Payment Deferred* years ago, as my Mother played Mrs Marble on stage in Nairobi. Stirring stuff!

Under African Skies

Kevin Patience is the author of a number of books and articles on East African military and transport history. He published *Konigsberg - A German East African Raider* in 1997. It tells the full story of the ship from the launching to the present day, illustrated with numerous photographs many of which have not been published before. Hardback, 120 pages, 150 illustrations including rare photos, maps and appendices. UK £15 inc P&P elsewhere US \$ 30 inc P&P Available from the Author at kjpatience@hotmail.com.

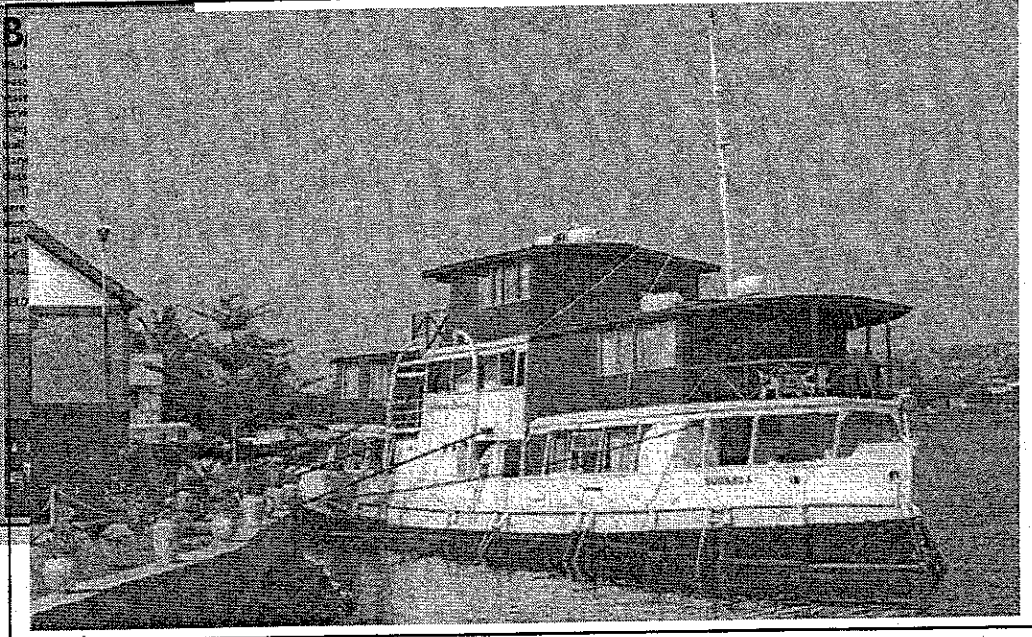
Forgotten Hollywood star

Every Friday a big liner like the Lusitania goes to London on a regular service to Liverpool, London. The ship is six years old, has two coal fires and has a great engine room in an Oscar-winning film, but few people know of her existence. Lusitania started for maiden voyage 4,000 miles from her builders yard, originally named Graf Goetzen. She was the first of three passenger ships ordered from the German Imperial Government in East Africa. The Graf Goetzen was built in 1914, but after the war she was managed by one and a half mile long, and transferred on to be a hotel of 200 beds at Kapsara. The ship was originally built for local use to transport the ship, the German Kaiser's construction on the national system and soon population. Graf Goetzen launched in August 1914, was 2,200 (700 tons) long, powered by a single triple expansion steam engine, carrying a single propeller and displaced 1,575 tons.

The ship arrived in East Africa and on completion Graf Goetzen was fitted with a four inch gun and used to transport German troops on the 200 mile long lake to attack British and South African troops. She was the largest and most powerful vessel on Lake Tanganyika, so action was taken to take her out of the pool. On 10 July 1916, she was attacked by a submarine and sank in shallow water. She was raised and towed to Kapsara but with the war just the Germans scuttled her there to prevent her falling into Allied hands. She lay with her hull turned above the water for the next six years.

British took control of Tanganyika after the war and Graf Goetzen raised and put into service on the lake. She was found to be in excellent condition and entered service in 1922, providing a regular service across the lake. In 1933, when the British left the lake to become the Territory of the Lake, she was sold to the new government.

C.S. Patience's book 'The African Queen' based on events on Lake Tanganyika during World War I was being made into a film. The film was originally chosen to star the film of the largest German warship on the lake, taking her over post-war. The film was produced with a great presentation and operated by the General Fisheries Corporation, Lusitania maintained a regular service from Mwanza in Zanzibar to Kapsara in Burundi and on to Kapsara in the east. Each night the ship is lit and the ship which can carry up to 500 passengers, is nearly always full to capacity.

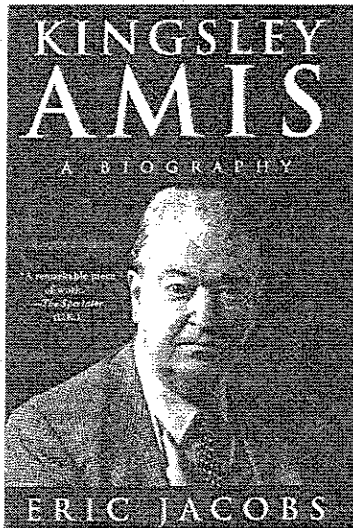


Shooting an albatross

All honour to director Peter Weir and his crew for a brace of awards in your BAFTAs for *Master and Commander - The Far Side of the World*. But am I alone in thinking that CSF might have influenced the writing, here and there, in a minor capacity? The yarn is enclosed by exhortations to "Beat to Quarters", and Aubrey's Admiralty Orders about the *Acheron* evoke Hornblower's about *Natividad*. It even manages to include the climax of *The Ancient Mariner*. I won't tell you how, in case you haven't seen it yet - but it's a bit far fetched. Hornblower and Barbara were only discussing literature, after all, when he grudgingly admired Coleridge!

Paul Ellison Hunter, Philadelphia

The film derives from more than the books in its title. The climax comes, inter alia, from an incident thrown away in a few lines in Far Side, though the last chapters of HMS Surprise would repay attention, especially from connoisseurs of The Happy Return, or of duelling. Patrick O'Brian, whose own appreciation of CSF is perhaps much broader and deeper than that of some of his fans, seems to have gained a level of esteem like that enjoyed by CSF in his time. But better to understand such phenomena than lament them. On Coleridge, see Ken McGoohan, Ancient Mariner, Bantam Press (2004) - in the shops over here now.

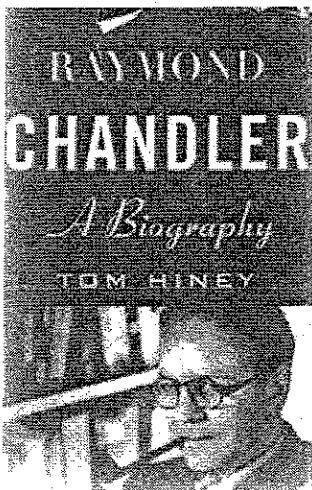


Not without honour

Don Beadle wonders whether there are other records, apart from the ones he mentions, of appreciation of CSF by famous people (*Admirable Hornblower*, *Reflections* 6, page 12). I have come across two biographies of authors who have such an admiration.

Kingsley Amis, by Eric Jacobs, has two references: *The only writer he still cares to read, sometimes on publication, is George Macdonald Fraser, journalist, screenwriter and author of the Flashman novels. Otherwise he will stick to old reliables: Evelyn Waugh, Christopher Isherwood, CS Forester, Anthony Powell, Elizabeth Taylor... He re-read [these] old favourites. Fiction like theirs could be guaranteed to deliver, so why waste time on new stuff that would almost certainly disappoint?*⁴ *Raymond Chandler*, by Tom Hiney, has: *He read CS Forester's Hornblower novels, and found that what he liked most was 'the detail of the handling of the ships, the manoeuvres for battle and all that sort of thing [which] seem to me quite fascinating and wonderfully exact.'*⁵

Adrian Taylor, Norfolk.



⁴ Eric Jacobs, *Kingsley Amis*, Hodder (1995), pages 16; 357.

⁵ Tom Hiney, *Raymond Chandler*, Chatto (1997), page 93.

Leader and Historian: Forester on Churchill's *Gathering Storm*



My father once told me, probably in the 1950s, that during one of his summer visits to England he had had lunch with Churchill at Churchill's country house. It appears that there are records of Churchill's activities that might substantiate the statement, but with my father, one never knows... The following is an evaluation of the view of 1900-1945 history in *Right about Everything? – Forester on Churchill* (*Reflections* 6, pages 17-20). I don't intend it to be a defense of my father.

Hitler occupied the Rhineland with a token force. David Stead comments that "neither France nor Britain would (or could) react." Neither did. But it has been reliably reported that had the French moved with the forces at their disposal, the Germans would have retreated and, perhaps, Hitler would have been overthrown by an army coup. I think that the phrase "or could" is unwarranted.

The view of the fear of aerial bombardment is not accurate. CSF wrote, in *Churchill*, "They [European governments] thought of death raining from the skies; no one knew how effective air warfare might be, and no one was anxious that his people should find out first." The commentary says: "Looking back again, Forester berates the cowards who had feared the bomber -- an unknown quantity, so he claims, in the 1930s. By contrast, Churchill was the bomber's fervent champion..." Now, Stanley Baldwin stated, probably in Parliament, that "the bomber will always get through." The fact of the matter was that fighter forces could not, by themselves or assisted by any amount of ground-based anti-aircraft fire, shoot down more than a small fraction of a bomber assault... The defender, therefore, would have to have some fifty or a hundred times the number of fighters as the attacker had bombers. That equation was changed only by radar, which was brand new, with first prototypes in 1937 or 1938 and very

secret... I remember the fear of aerial bombardment that the adult society transmitted to its children at that time.

It is asserted that the Hornblower stories "stood between Forester and his own pacifist past." At what time did Forester have a pacifist past? What evidence can be advanced for this view? None of his books express approval of pacifism, and the one book that concerns pacifism, *The Peacemaker* of 1934, satirises it. The novel *Two and Twenty* (1931) has much autobiographical material in it, and its protagonist discovers that discussion of war was no longer socially prohibited, as it had been for about ten years after the Great War. That reflects CSF's recognition of the change, as indicated by *Brown on Resolution* of 1929.

It is stated that "Forester missed yet another chance to praise Churchill -- when he was supposedly at the very helm, in 1914." In *Brown on Resolution*, he praises Fisher rather than Churchill as the "new power at the Admiralty," that deployed a battle cruiser to finish off the German raider *Brown* had managed to delay. Both the modern battleship and battlecruiser were Fisher's creations; his personality and drive got them produced. Indeed, Forester's use of the fictional *Leopard* in *Brown*, and the actual use of battle cruisers against Von Spee at the Falklands, was exactly the use for which Fisher had intended them. Without Fisher, Forester would not have had the plot of *Brown* available to him. Fisher was a famous name in naval warfare, known to many of the public in 1929, while Churchill was still noted as much for the Gallipoli disaster as anything. The assertion that "the reader will already have guessed 'Churchill'" as the new power would not have been true in 1929.

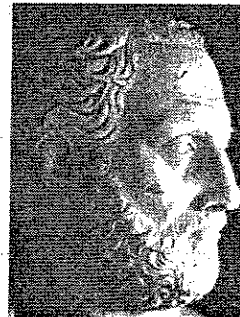
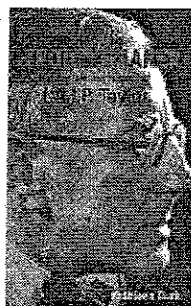
Forester is criticised for personal revisionism, in his "own fervour to contain Mussolini [which] might not predate his reading of *The Gathering Storm*." Forester's words are: "It was fear which, in the last word, held back the British government from dealing with Mussolini in the Mediterranean as he should have been dealt with and as (history now shows) he could have been dealt with." It is stated that Forester showed more perspicacity in *The Ship*, when he described the Italian admiral's view of his leader as: "one who practised caution as unflinching as he preached risk." That description was a wartime estimation of an enemy leader which turned out to be reasonably accurate, as shown by the postwar assessment that Mussolini's aggression could have been stopped early. CSF never claims that he urged early military force against Mussolini, only that postwar assessment suggested that it would have been effective.

John Forester, MS, PE, Lemon Grove, California.

A partial reply

I tried to compare the account of the early C20 that CSF took from Churchill with standard histories. Most of my data came from AJP Taylor's *English History*: that on the Rhineland from the closing paragraphs and endnote B of chapter 11, that on air warfare from the start of chapter 12. Taylor is accessible, and interesting: a critical supporter of Churchill -- not a hagiographer or iconoclast. But our concern here is CSF.

CSF (following Churchill) says that the British government was as afraid of Mussolini in 1935-36 as the French government was of Hitler - and fear robbed them of their wits. Now, Italy's performance in 1940-43 might well suggest that the threat or use of force in 1935-36 would have run little military risk. But broader political and strategic factors had ruled it out. I did not say that Forester had urged such action in 1935-36, but that he endorsed such a retrospective suggestion from Churchill in 1948. In 1935, Churchill "kept out of England and so avoided pronouncing for or against Italy" (Taylor). A declared Liberal like Forester would probably have supported "all sanctions short of war" against Italy -- the line of the League of Nations and, more or less, of the National government!



The word "pacifist" is potentially misleading. Apart from his views on peace initiatives in 1916-17, CSF's "pacifism" derived from my readings of *The Peacemaker*, *The African Queen* and *The General* as primarily satiric. I have not read *Two and Twenty*, although the wave of literary revulsion at the Great War had indeed peaked before it appeared. My view of 1914 came from a 1970s illustrated History of World War I, which had emphasised Churchill's primacy in directing strategy. In 1929, Churchill would have been known as a cheese-paring Chancellor forcing cuts on the Navy!

But I was guilty of a worse anachronism! Taylor, "the last Liberal historian", combined scholarship with a rare ability to make history accessible -- as did Forester, at least in *Nelson* and *1812*. Thucydides, with whom Forester had compared Churchill, warned against the impediments set by popular legend along the path of real history. Until I read *Man of the Century: Winston Churchill and his Legend since 1945*, the book by John Ramsden to which I alluded in *Reflections* 6, I had not realised the extent to which Churchill's own account of the 1930s had been regarded as the Truth Writ Large. In that case, Forester's *Winston Churchill: Leader and Historian* is entirely typical of its time rather than its author.

David Stead.

Indefatigable Hornblower!

I'm afraid I have nothing more on the *Droits de L'Homme* monument (Sir Edward Pellew and *Les Droits de l'Homme*, *Reflections* 6), except that I believe - I can't be sure - that it was in the town of Ploneur-Lanvern. The townspeople had gathered on the beach but could do little to help.

It was in *The Commodore* (chapter 8) that Hornblower is quoted as being at the lead:-

"He could remember as a midshipman in Pellew's Indefatigable being at the lead that wild night when they went in and destroyed the Droits de l'Homme in the Biscay surf. He had been chilled to the bone that night, with fingers so numb as almost to be unable to feel the difference between the markers - the white calico and the leather with a hole in it and all the others. He probably could not heave the lead now if he tried, and he was quite sure he could not remember the arbitrary order of the markers."

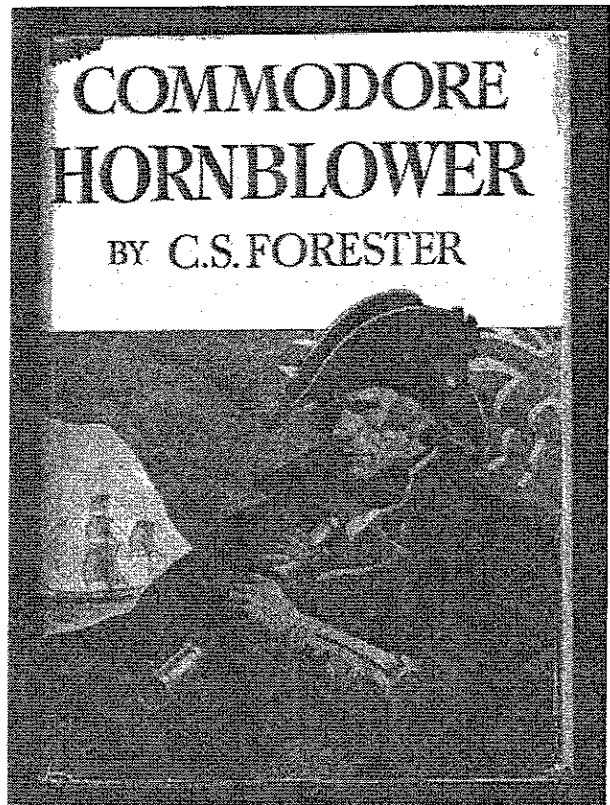
The *Blanche fleur*, which Hornblower's Baltic squadron is pursuing on this occasion, is subsequently destroyed by his bomb ketches. Now, I'm sure that other people will have spotted it, but in chapter 3 of *Hornblower in the West Indies* he uses a boat mortar to destroy the lair of *The Bewildered Pirates*, recalling how *"He had seen the principles at the siege of Riga nearly twenty years before"*. The siege had been in 1812, during Napoleon's invasion of Russia!

Yet in the first story of *HWI - Saint Elizabeth of Hungary* - he is in New Orleans in 1821, with the Governor talking of the Battle of 8 January 1815, *"over six years before"* - and chapter 4, *The Guns of Carabobo*, is also set in 1821, coinciding with Bolivar's victory which secures the Liberation of Venezuela and the creation of Greater Colombia. *The Commodore* was first published in 1945, and *Hornblower in the West Indies* in 1958.

Looking forward to your next effusion! Yours aye,
Ken Napier, Chazarem, France.

By accident, force of circumstance or design, Forester displays repeatedly carelessness over Hornblower's CV. The Commodore clearly recalled the days of his youth, during Pellew's watch and ward on the fringes of French attempts to invade Ireland. This last is history, but incompatible with Mr Midshipman Hornblower, which has Pellew based (prematurely) in the Mediterranean in early 1797. It would seem that, when Forester played to his US readership by having his Midshipman born on Independence Day, he did not then fully realise the consequences!

Hornblower in the West Indies poses further problems. The doubling of the time between the siege of Riga and Napoleon's death might represent a "senior moment" on



the part of Hornblower! The Bewildered Pirates indeed starts with him at "the weary age of forty-six", which a man born on 4 July 1776 would have reached in the summer of 1822! But at his first appearance in print, as Captain of the Lydia, Hornblower had been all of five whole years older. This - rather than the rejuvenating presence of Lucy Hough - might explain his shedding of a whole year of age during his captivity by the pirates. It seems more likely, however, that Pirates was originally set in 1822-23, so after both St Elizabeth and The Guns of Carabobo - which actually compete for more or less the same slot in 1821!

When Hornblower first sets foot in the New World, in St Elizabeth, another factor comes into play. Before 1941, Forester had been able to draw on the War of 1812 for fictional purposes, in The Captain from Connecticut and Hornblower and His Majesty. According to the Companion, the Commodore and his ketches had been at first intended for Baltimore, but the politics of the Anglo-American Alliance meant that any conceivable scenario would inevitably cause offence. So, then, off to the Baltic - perhaps to help a once-and-future Soviet Union defeat a proto-Nazi invader!

Coming soon in Reflections

- *Tales of War* from the pen of a Storyteller
- *Selling The Sky and the Forest*
- *Ending Hornblower and the Crisis*

Ideas for further themes, comments and contributions are most earnestly solicited. Please send to:

151 Walkley Crescent Road, S6 5BA, UK.
david-stead@lineone.net

Adrian Taylor

A Walk through the City

Another episode in the continuation of
Hornblower and the Crisis

The same wherryman rowed Hornblower back across the Thames to the south bank after the last meeting with Marsden at the Admiralty. As he sat in the bows of the boat he pulled his boat cloak more closely about him for there was a cool brisk wind blowing for once in a way. There were still swifts, swallows and martins skimming over the water with their piercing whistles. The wherryman wielded the sculls with the skill of long practice. He spat into the grey-green water.

"Well, cap'n." He spat again. "What tricks has old Boney up his sleeve?" And he winked broadly at his passenger.

"Britannia rules the waves," replied Hornblower non-committedly. He thought that that was about as far as he ought to go with this burly seaman regarding the affairs of state. He wondered how much the man knew about the current situation. Mostly hearsay gossip, he suspected. The wherryman was unshaven – the archetypal four days' growth – and this seemed to Hornblower's lively mind to be suggestive of late nights spent in some riverside alehouse. Goodness alone knew, he thought as he pulled his boat cloak yet more firmly about him, what half-truths and wild rumours about the war were disseminated in the smoky depths of such places.

As the boat bobbed over the water, the wherryman seemingly engrossed in his task, Hornblower thought of the letter from the Reverend Thomas Clive. It was an interesting composition, which raised a series of possibilities. Inevitably he recalled his wedding at the church of Saint Thomas à Becket in Portsmouth. It had seemed an ill-advised venture even then to have linked his life to the mouselike Maria's and it seemed yet more so now. But at least the faithful Bush had proved his worth on that occasion as so many others. Then he recalled his meeting with Admiral Cornwallis – "Billy Blue" as he was known throughout the navy – and his subsequent adventures aboard the *Hotspur*. He realised that the cut and thrust of naval warfare lent a spice to his existence which a landlocked life with Maria could never do. Hornblower was thinking of his wife's busybody of a mother when the boat reached the further bank of the river. He stepped over the gunwale as the boat rocked with the small, windblown waves, and on to the jetty.

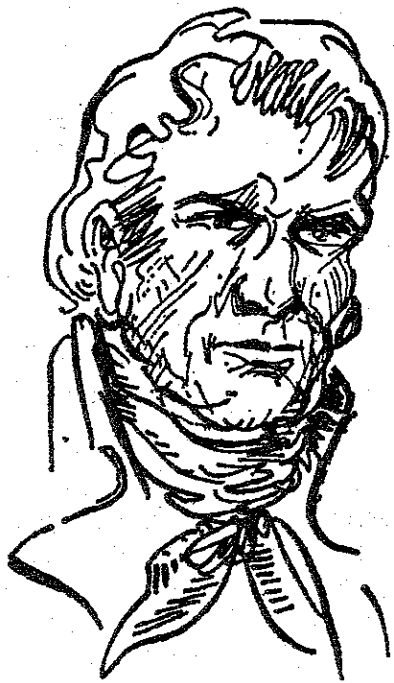
He had decided to walk to *The Saracen's Head* as he felt in need of exercise and he had much to ponder; often and anon he had paced a heaving quarterdeck

with his thoughts his sole companion and many a time such a walk had born fruit and conclusions had been reached regarding some naval tactic which he fancied he may not have attained in any other way. And so he waved away the driver of the cab who had come touting for business on spotting the unmistakable uniform of a naval captain.

After he had tipped the wherryman – quite likely the money would be spent in some low dive of a tavern – he set off at a brisk pace towards his destination. He was quite clear about the route by now, having followed it off enough of late. And he was careful where he stepped, for the cobbles of these London streets were not so much paved with gold but were decorated with a fantastic collection of the flotsam and jetsam of city life. Although his attention was inevitably drawn to the sights and sounds of the street, he tried to think about this fellow William Wilson, about whom the Reverend Thomas Clive had his eloquent suspicions. Then he remembered those letters from Maria, one of which was seemingly not from her. He must look out this latter missive when he returned to his room. As he avoided a doubtful-looking puddle in his path with an adroit side-step he decided that it would be a useful exercise to compare the two letters. Perhaps that man Dorsey would be of assistance in this matter. At that moment forgery seemed an ugly word in a game of high stakes. As he strode along, Hornblower was conscious of a tightening of his throat and that his heartbeat had increased to a great degree. Of a sudden he realised that he was actually beginning to enjoy this sleuthing in which he had found himself entangled. He had felt similarly when boarding an enemy vessel on a cutting-out expedition; cutlass in hand, he would be overtaken by some fighting daredevil which he may never have suspected as some turnip-growing landlubber. Indeed, the byways into which a naval officer might be led were most surprising.

Once again there was a suggestive patch of liquid in his path and he stepped around it carefully. And then from a nearby building there came a high-pitched scream. But Hornblower barely noticed it, so engrossed was he in his thoughts. The Reverend Clive had actually used the word "forgery" in a long paragraph of speculations in his letter. Hornblower increased his pace in his eagerness to reach his destination. It was annoying when a ragged street urchin approached him, arresting him in his progress. He gave him a penny after fumbling for a space in his inner pocket and the bare-footed boy skipped away over the filthy cobbles.

But it was not long before Hornblower had attained the portals of *The Saracen's Head* and there was the landlord, as self-satisfied as ever, to greet him as though he were a long-lost brother.



The Admiralty Clerk Richard Miller

The grey November sky foretold a hard night's frost and the probability of snow. The room was large, the coal fire which blazed by Mr Rawson's big desk sending little of its glow to the corner where Philip Hart copied the last batch of orders into the register. The scratching of quills, punctuated by the comings and goings of messengers, constituted the bulk of Philip's working day, which was sometimes sheer drudgery and at others frantic bustle, as impatient mounted messengers stamped and jangled their spurs while seal and wax were applied to urgent despatches.

Just now it was drudgery. Twenty orders had been painstakingly copied and from the subdued murmur coming from Mr Rawson's desk where a messenger stood it seemed likely that Philip would have to remain late again tonight. Not that he minded particularly, but the long hours were tiring his eyes and the walk to the house he shared with his married brother in Deptford was a long one. He would probably walk down Whitehall as the quality set out on the evening social round, standing aside as elegant officers sauntered up St James's.

The solid furnishings of the room seemed totally in keeping with the vast organisation. The navy had moulded Philip's life since the age of sixteen, when he had left the Westminster School and – with the right word spoken in receptive quarters – he had entered the Admiralty as a junior clerk. The fresh-faced enthusiastic

boy had grown into a rather flinty sharp-featured man, who showed little of his feelings to the outside world, and kept his excitement – which had never faltered – on a stern leash. The office was as surely his niche as the quarterdeck of a frigate was to the other servants of the Lords Commissioners who were destined to serve afloat.

Philip loved London. In fact, he scarcely knew any other part of England, for from the time he had sung Matins and Evensong and puzzled over Greek verse at the Westminster School, his few leisure moments had been given to the back streets. There, small dark shops abounded, and his meagre surplus money was spent on small curios and the like. Needless to say, Philip was a bachelor; few women would have endured his austere manner which, coupled with his hobby, appeared to satisfy him completely.

The messenger stood by Mr Rawson's desk, looking up quickly as the door opened and James Hanson, the senior clerk, entered. Hanson was tall, alert and scathing, his dress completely in keeping with his important position, his tongue vicious, his words always few but straight to the point. Philip respected Hanson – both men in serving the Navy gave of their best. Hanson regarded Philip as an intensely loyal and trustworthy clerk and, as such, delegated to him work of a nature much above his humble position.

The workings of mighty stratagems evolved from these rooms. Scratching quills had, and would, send seamen to attempt the impossible, crackling linen paper had carried the orders which had set tottering the might of Napoleon's France.

Hanson spoke in low tones, the movement of his lips and the intensity of his expression conveying the importance of his words across the wide room. Rawson nodded, and with a stiff salute the messenger left the room. The rap of his boots on the polished flooring sounded loud in the quiet room. A few snowflakes dusted the windowpanes, and the muffled chimes of a church clock added to the prevailing air of solemnity.

Six o'clock arrived at last and the clerks, their day's work finished, started to clean their quills and tidy their papers. A few, whose work would continue into the late hours, shrugged and settled down to yet more of the never-ending copying of orders. Philip drew fresh foolscap, headed the sheet with the by now time-honoured sentence "Sir, I am commanded by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty..." and commenced copying the old, well-remembered phrases in his well-trained, elegant hand. The boy who, week after week, had sung Matins and Evensong seemed to find something of the peace that he had once found in soaring anthems in the superb phrasing of these orders

and Admiralty Letters. "You are hereby requested and required..." – while in fact the recipient was ordered to carry out to the letter the dictates of his superiors. Philip read on: "...upon receipt into your ship of all necessary stores as listed in the margin, to convey these stores to the Inshore Squadron under Admiral Cornwallis in the approaches of Brest. There you will receive orders at the Admiral's discretion and whilst in his company become attached to the squadron under his command."

The long list of stores was at last completed – slow match, hemp rope, and all the odds and ends demanded by the inroads of blockade duty into the equipment carried by the ships that performed this ceaseless vigil. Finally, the envelope was addressed: Lieutenant Simon Hardacre, His Majesty's Brig of War *Bittern*, at Spithead.

The orders were sanded and folded and, with the envelope sealed, Philip handed Mr Rawson his evening's work. Rawson tugged the tasselled bell-rope and a bleary-eyed messenger bowed as he repeated his words, "At first light, Sir, by messenger".

Philip felt tired. However, before he left, he set his desk in order, brushed his coat and adjusted his stock. The walk he had promised himself all day would lead through fashionable quarters and – totally conservative, by nature of his calling and upbringing – he must appear in good order.

Lost youth recaptured

The quietness of the room was startlingly replaced as Philip elbowed his way from the Admiralty. A jostling throng surged about him. Waggoners rolled ponderously by, ballad singers and street sellers cried their wares and thin, pale-faced urchins scampered in and out of the noisy crowd. A scar-faced knife-grinder sought custom at a corner, his tattered green coat and wooden leg underlining the title on his placard: "Rifleman Roberts, keen blades, keen prices". An open doorway sent shafts of light and bursts of song out into the chill November night.

At last Philip reached the shop in a small, reeking back street. "Silas Burrows" was the name over the shop. Its window scarcely lighted by two tallow candles was small, and filled to capacity. The owner was talking loudly and querulously as an empty-handed customer brushed Philip's sleeve as he left the shop.

The pay of an Admiralty clerk, although high as compared to that of the hard-worked men in city counting houses, did not justify expenditure on luxuries of an inessential kind, and certainly not on whims of fancy. Philip, being unmarried, could (to a small extent) indulge his desire to possess a beautiful (if somewhat

neglected) stuffed swan, whose arched neck and noble plumage brought back at every glance the memories of those glorious days at Romney when (with Jack Ridge and his brother Matthew) he had seen the wild and desolate marsh for the first time.

Silas Burrows, the shop's owner, did a trade in all varieties of such curiosities as came his way. Battered (if once resplendent) ornaments, clocks, plates, discarded furniture. Certain callers, glad to rid themselves of their gains, accepted meagre sums for snuff boxes, purses, rings and the like, which their busy fingers had filched at Blackheath or Finchley Common.

For several weeks, Philip had walked this way, a little flutter of excitement mounting each time he drew near the shop and scanned the windows. Each time he had relaxed, for the proud swan still held court in its cobwebby corner. The price, by Burrows's standards, was ridiculously high: six sovereigns, whilst the elephant's tusk which held the swan company asked a mere half-guinea.

"High price, Mr Hart?" Burrows had said. "Why, many would gladly part with six sovereigns for such a fine bird!"

Burrows had spoken as the braggart he was, who knew that he held the whip hand. But there had been some consolation in his speech. For, while Philip could not yet afford the swan, it was just as much within his grasp as that of any man who thought nothing of spending six sovereigns, yet could not covet its beauty.

Tonight, Philip had come to assure himself that the swan was still there, and to ask Burrows if he would take some payment in order to hold it for such time as he could afford the full price.

"I hold the swan for you, Mr Hart!" Burrows had whined. "But it takes up much room. In all reason, I must be paid for its storage. I will keep it, Mr Hart, for one shilling each week extra."

Philip had agreed. He had had to. The swan was beautiful. The memories that its ownership would always convey were much more so. Jack Ridge, his boyhood friend, had died twelve years ago, and the days that they had spent on Romney Marsh had become something of a mystical experience to this austere clerk. He valued the beautiful thing in Burrows's window, but – oh, so much more – the fast-fled days of youth...

Philip had clinched the deal. To all intents and purposes, the swan was his. He reckoned that, in six weeks' time, by careful saving, he would have it safely ensconced in the little Deptford parlour.

The flaring lights of Astley's Royal Amphitheatre cast shadows as he pressed through the throng. Elegant parties alighted from their carriages; poorly-clad shivering, hungry loafers looked longingly at the pictures of the thrills awaiting the lucky-and-wealthy inside. But Philip hardly spared a glance, for now he too was hungry, and the cold had entered his own bones. The small, crowded alleyways were his favourite short-cuts home, and at length he came to Deptford.

The swirl of a flood tide and the smell of the river were both noticeable, even from the house which, sandwiched between its fellows, fronted the water. Oars creaked, and cries echoed across the black river, as – shutting the door – Philip stepped straight into the cosy warmth of a sea-coal fire and the irritating monotony of the complaining conversation of his sister-in-law Ethel. His brother Thomas daily bore these assaults, directed at all-and-sundry and in particular at the station in life in which Ethel found herself.

The house was extremely hot. Feeling returned as blood coursed through thawing hands and feet and, regardless of the never-ending harangue, Philip sat at the table and consumed his fast-cooling supper.

Fickle fortune

Having eaten his fill, Philip turned his attention to the newspaper, which he (unlike many of his fellow clerks) made a point of purchasing at least three times a week. Its price of sixpence was certainly high, but he felt it necessary to keep abreast of developments (both at home and in Europe) and, whilst grudging its price, still considered the expense justified. The lengthy reports from the Continent told of the seemingly never-ending struggle waged by Wellington's Red-coated Regiments against the hotchpotch of Allies of Napoleon. The writers spoke of brilliant successes, or dismal failures, schemes planned, assaults mounted. They did not, however, tell of the human wrecks who littered the battlefields, of the shrieking wounded, the crippled, the blind.

Philip read on, oblivious to the mutter of conversation. For here was something of real interest – "Reports from the Admiralty Office". Now he could feel identified with the matter-of-fact sentences and time-honoured twists of grammar, for were not these the records of men he knew something of? The resplendent Flag Officers who arrived in their private coaches; the young and enthusiastic Frigate Captains with their haughty and condescending manner, and the mere Lieutenants who commanded Brigs, Cutters, Schooners and Ketches, but who tried sometimes to assume the manner of their lofty Superiors.

One paragraph stood out, not because of its Effect upon Naval Policy, nor even because of its effect upon many people. It simply served to ruin completely the enjoyment which Philip had obtained from his reading. "Portsmouth, the Court Martial held to try Lieutenant Jeremy Howard, Commander of His Majesty's Cutter *Wizard*, at Noon announced its Findings." The Lieutenant had been found guilty and dismissed the Service for hazarding his ship and thereby causing the loss of ten of her crew, which had occurred on Friday the 17th August last, in the approaches to Brest.

Philip had seen the newly promoted Lieutenant. In fact, for several minutes, he had engaged in conversation with the enthusiastic young man, as he had waited to be summoned to the Secretary's Office. But now the young man's hopes were dashed. The chances taken by oh, so many men, in the call of duty, had not paid off and he was left to seek more humble employment in a merchant vessel, whilst his lucky fellows could continue to pace the deck of a man-of-war. The Royal Navy was a hard master.

Philip turned dispiritedly to the advertisements. "An Auction at Church Street, Deptford." So, at last, the big corner house was to change hands. Yet somehow even this gem of local gossip did not stimulate his interest. Doctor Nettleton recommended his instant indigestion remedy, which had brought relief to sufferers from this intolerable malady. Exaggerated claims clamoured for space, compelling bargains sought to lure coins from the pockets of the gullible. At Drury Lane, ballet could be enjoyed. Philip read on, but behind the words lurked the face of the young Lieutenant who had paid the price of failure. Ethel and Tom had left the room, and he realised that his depressing thoughts had succeeded in separating him from even their nagging conversation. At least, he thought acidly, bad news had some compensations.

The small, quiet house and the subdued murmur of the river lulled Philip at last to sleep. Fitful though it was, it served to ease the tension which had clamped itself on his sensitive mind. A sudden outburst of song, and the equal abruptness of its ending, jerked him stiffly awake. Going to the window of the small room, Philip saw the distorted forms of three men stagger past the house. Shutting his mind to the revellers, he climbed upstairs to his room and, quenching his candle, settled down for the last few hours of sleep before dawn.

Torrential rain, driven by a southerly wind, sluiced down. A blunt razor, together with cold water, did nothing to revive his low spirits of last night. However, a start must be made, and after a frugal breakfast he started his walk to the Admiralty. His depression forced doubt into his mind, and the fear of losing the swan in Burrows's shop

nagged like a painful tooth as he trudged the narrow streets. Perhaps a keen-eyed wealthy young beau seeking to impress his current companion had bought the swan, or was about to buy it, despite Burrows's promise to keep it for him. He knew full well that, whatever Burrows had said, his word would not stand in the way of gold in his hand!

Reaching a decision, and quickening his pace, Philip walked down the alley to the shop where, as luck would have it, Burrows stood at the door, his belligerent manner evident as he swore at a ragged small boy who dispiritedly swept the shop.

"Morning, Mr Hart! Now, I wonder what can you want, so early of a day?"

"I have come for the swan," Philip blurted out, his anxiety and haste making even Burrows start.

"But the money, Mr Hart! Have you the money?"

"Take my watch. It is well worth the price, and in a few weeks I shall collect it", said Philip, showing a large timepiece which he greatly valued, but under the circumstances felt justified in sacrificing.

Burrows showed no pleasure, however much his astute judgement rejoiced at this sudden windfall. "The swan is yours, Mr Hart. I shall wrap it for you."

Philip sat at his desk. He had had to run the last part of his journey. However he had arrived at the Admiralty in time. He felt relaxed and happy. The rain drummed on the windows, a large basketful of orders had been placed on his desk, his quill needed sharpening; but safe in the corner stood the swan.

Hanson stood by Philip's desk. "I see, Hart, that Lieutenant Howard was court martialled and dismissed the Service", he said. "Remember this, the Navy needs men who take chances and are lucky."

At midday, Philip knocked on the door of Hanson's office. A large fire blazed within, and the dapper senior official smiled at his trusted subordinate. Slowly, Philip told his story and, with deepening interest, Hanson listened.

The swan, placed on Hanson's desk, was carefully examined by this cultivated man who, sitting back at last, looked up and said, "Remember my words, Hart, about the Navy needing men who are lucky. It seems to me that you are one of those men. This swan, a thing of beauty, is also a thing of worth. Strange to find both in this dreary world, but I am sure that you have procured something of immense value.

"The tyrant we all strive to defeat has subjected his people to untold terrors. The noble families of France, driven to despair, have turned in anguish to every improbable scheme to try to preserve their wealth.

"Look at the eyes, Hart. Look at the eyes! They are hard. They are merciless. They are diamonds!

"Valuables were – and are – hidden in all manner of unlikely places. But who would suspect a stuffed bird of being a treasure chest? Obviously not those who dispersed the remnants of a once great family. Hart, you are lucky. You are an extremely wealthy man.

"Do not, however, let this affect your duty, as I know it never shall. The Navy needs you, Hart. As I said, the Navy needs men who take chances and are lucky."



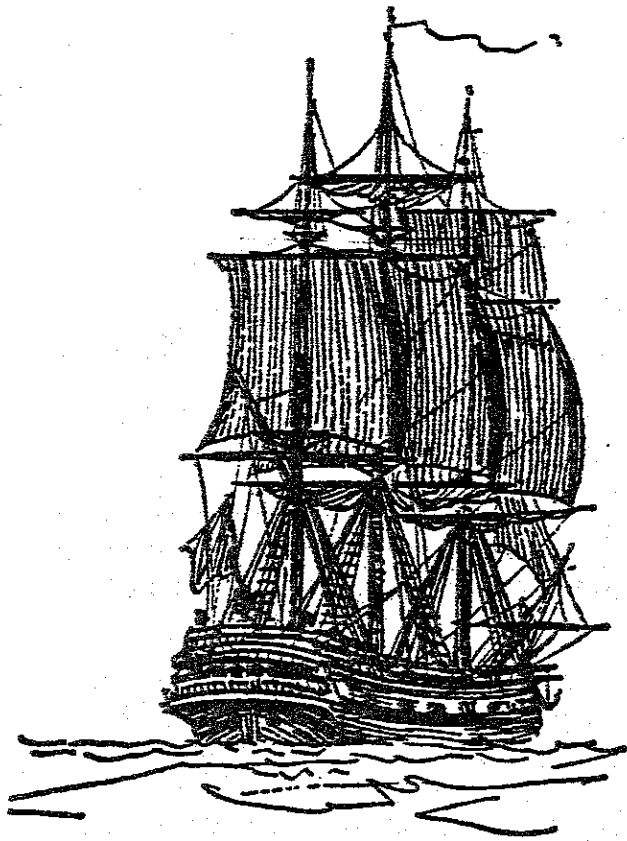
Trafalgar bicentennial

I certainly wish I could attend the next meeting in Portsmouth. Our visit to the Naval Museum was one of the highlights of our last trip to England. I would assume that there are great plans in the making for the 200th anniversary of Trafalgar and the death of Lord Nelson.

Ray Bergen, Vancouver, Washington.

*There has been some discussion in **Reflections** about how the **CS Forester Society** might react to the year 1805. Further suggestions from members are invited.*

*There is a series of lectures in London from 5-28 October 2004, about the cultural significance of Nelson: **Rediscovering Nelson**. Details and tickets from Mrs Janet Norton. Email: research@nmm.ac.uk.*



The Prizes of War: *Richard Hill*

On 28 December 1798 HMS *Brilliant*, twenty-eight guns, Captain the Hon. Henry Blackwood, could look back on a tough, difficult and financially unproductive eighteen months' work.

The ship's company had been deeply involved in the Mutiny at the Nore in May and June 1797. On 12 June the ship's log says "the *Brilliant* came up to the Little Nore, where the officers again took command and those concerned in the mutiny was sent on shore". Within a month the ship was on convoy and cruising duty in the North Sea, not the easiest of environments for a twenty-year-old frigate. Britain had been at war with France since 1793; Holland had recently, perforce, joined her as an ally. The North Sea and the Dutch coast were a war area and instructions "to cruise for the protection of the trade and the annoyance of enemy privateers" had real point; on 1 September 1797 *Brilliant* was in action against the Intrepid privateer of Dunkirk and a lugger, which was driven on shore. But she could claim no capture.

Further frustration must have followed when the ship arrived at the Great Nore on 16 October, after five weeks' working out of Lerwick in the Shetlands, and heard the news of the Battle of Camperdown. On 11 October Admiral Duncan's fleet had comprehensively

defeated the Dutch under de Winter. So the chance of prizes and military glory again eluded the *Brilliant*. To complete the irony, Duncan also arrived at the Nore on the 16th. The *Brilliant's* log made no mention of the celebrations, but ship's logs are not meant to be chatty.

Winter at the Nore may have given some respite from weather but it was scarcely likely to have sweetened the atmosphere, with the backwash of that year's mutiny and resultant courts martial. Perhaps it was something of a relief to captain and crew to be sent in the spring of 1798 to Cork, even though that inevitably meant convoy duty.

From the *Brilliant's* log it is clear that the North American convoy she escorted in April and May of 1798 was a very typical one. The convoy escort commander had constantly to be on the alert for privateers (one was chased off on 27 April and again the next day) and larger enemy forces (worrying intelligence was received from a schooner on 2 May that "three cut down ships and two frigates of the French were cruising off the outer banks of Newfoundland"). Strays from the merchantmen in the convoy had to be rounded up and convoy discipline preserved. In the event, St John's, Newfoundland was safely reached in late May.

A convoy back to Vigo in late June and early July, going with the prevailing winds and in summer, was an easier task. Now came possible reward: *Brilliant* was instructed to cruise off Tenerife, and this might be thought a good hunting ground for prizes. But luck was out. Two French frigates, the *Vertu* and *Regenerée*, were in Tenerife and their sortie was perilous for *Brilliant*. On her own, outgunned and outnumbered, she escaped only by the most spirited combination of gun action and manoeuvre, and at the expense of most of her anchors and boats, cast away to lighten and speed the ship. The action was professional and courageous enough to earn a note in the standard histories and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and no doubt at the time it got admiration from Blackwood's crew who had no wish to spend time in captivity in France or Spain, but did nothing to supplement their income.

The same lack of fortune dogged the ship for most of the rest of the year. She had her chances; a French convoy was encountered by *Flora* and *Brilliant* on 9 August but the escort was well handled and *Flora*, the senior officer, thought it too strong for them. Chase of a French lugger on 8 and 9 September proved abortive. October was spent cruising in longitude 50° West and days passed with no sight of anything. The frustration on board is almost palpable from the log entries. A brief respite in St John's, Newfoundland, in November, was followed by a further passage with a convoy across the Atlantic. But on 28 December, perhaps the luck had changed at last.

The log reads:

Fresh gales and hazey. Saw a strange sail to windward gave chase Boarded her made her a Prize and detained her supposing her to be a Dutch Indiaman under Danish colours called the Eenrom.

Behind that laconic entry lay a process that can be gathered from many contemporary account of similar actions, though no further details exist of this one. The sighting of a strange sail to windward, reported either by the officer of the watch or a sharp-eyed lookout, would have brought Blackwood on deck if he had not already been there. He would have ordered more sail to be set for the chase; a frigate, even to leeward, would easily fore-reach on a laden merchantman. When close enough to identify the chase's Danish colours, Blackwood was faced with his first major decision; whether simply to speak with this ostensible neutral and allow her to proceed, or to investigate by visit and search. Something about the *Eenrom's* appearance and conduct – position and course, configuration, cut of the sails, even the name which had a Dutch ring – must have convinced Blackwood he should order boarding.

When within hail, then, the *Eenrom* would be bidden to bring to. She would not argue; though armed as a matter of course, single merchant ships seldom resisted boarding for the purpose of search, certainly not by a frigate with her crew at quarters and the guns run out, as Blackwood surely would have been. The ships would lie perhaps within pistol shot, broadside to broadside, hove to, backed topsails slatting in the Atlantic swell. It was no situation for a merchant ship to show fight.

One of the *Brilliant's* cutters, oars pulled by experienced seamen, would take the boarding party to the *Eenrom* (there are countless contemporary despatches describing prodigious endurance by boats' crews and, in spite of the "fresh gales", such work would be routine for *Brilliant's* cutter's crew). The boat would be armed and the crew ready for trouble. The boarding officer, probably one of the frigate's lieutenants, might himself be not be armed if strict protocol was observed. He was well covered by his supporting party and boat's crew.

Language could be a difficulty: neither Danish nor Dutch was generally understood and the difference between the two not readily apparent. But English tended to be the common language of the sea and there were educated men on board the *Eenrom*, no doubt with enough English to answer the routine questions about port of departure, destination, cargo, ownership and nationality, and to produce the ship's papers: certificates, log and cargo manifests. And, as it subsequently appeared, a genuine English-speaker turned up, an American seaman of the *Eenrom's* crew

and (drawn aside perhaps) he had some interesting things to say.

The boarding officer was not satisfied. Something was not right about the *Eenrom*. All the papers and officers' replies to his enquiries pointed to Danish ownership, operation and destination: yet all his instincts – aided perhaps even at this stage by asides from the American sailor – suggested a Dutch connection. When the boat returned to the *Brilliant* he must have reported his suspicions to Blackwood.

So the *Brilliant* detained her prize. But there was much to be gone through before Blackwood or his ship's company could see any product from it. Not least, the law must be satisfied. *The Prizes of War*, in its investigation of the influence of the prize system on naval operations during the wars of 1793-1815, revisits the *Eenrom* case at various points, to give on concrete example of the way the system worked.

Richard Hill, *The Prizes of War: the naval prize system in the Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815*, Sutton Publishing (1998).



The Prizes of War is the first book ever to explore fully the complexities of the prize system. It is an original, newly researched and lavishly illustrated investigation into a hitherto neglected aspect of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

Rear-Admiral Richard Hill was born in 1929, entered the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth in 1942, went to sea in 1946, and served mainly in destroyers and frigates up to the age of 33. Promoted to commander, he then served mainly in Ministry of Defence appointments through the ranks of captain, commodore and rear admiral. He was a Defence Fellow of King's College, London, in 1972. In 1983-1994 he was Chief Executive of the Middle Temple, one of the British Inns of Court.

He completed his General Editorship of *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Royal Navy* in 1995, then embarked upon extensive research for *The Prizes of War*. He is editor of *The Naval Review* quarterly and Chairman of the Society for Nautical Research.

Rear Admiral Hill will be the guest speaker at the forthcoming meeting of the CS Forester Society in Portsmouth in May 2004. Full details are enclosed.