

The C S Forester  
Society

# *Reflections*

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## THE SHIP

Hornblower and the CASTILLA, Decatur vs Hornblower & Peabody, The Ship - Autobiographical Elements, AGM report from France, Rowland Hilder illustrator, Betty Brown, CSF's Secretary, Early Tanslations of The Ship, The Captain of HMS PENELOPE: Angus Nicholl, C S Forester on HMS PENELOPE

A NOVEL BY

C.S. FORESTER

TOM LEA





## Hornblower and the CASTILLA

James Ashton

CASTILLA is remarkable as having been twice captured by Hornblower. Did Forester intend this coincidence or did he hope his early magazine short story would be superseded by the later *Atropos* novel? The second episode is itself interesting in that different editions place it at different ends of the Mediterranean.

The scene is set early, in Chapter 9 of the first Hornblower novel, *The Happy Return*, with a mention of "Lieutenant Hornblower's part in the capture of the CASTILLA six years ago". Later in the book we hear his "left [hand] bore the ingrained powder stain he had acquired at the boarding of the CASTILLA." The following two novels, *A Ship of the Line* and *Flying Colours* both refer again to the same incident giving times of eight and ten years in the past respectively. So the battle is dated around 1802 by Forester writing before the outbreak of World War II.

Then, early in the war, Forester wrote three Hornblower short stories of which one, *The Hand of Destiny*, revolved around details of this foreshadowed battle. No dates are given but the story opens on Hornblower's first day as Lieutenant. Now when, in 1948, Forester wrote *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower*, he revised his chronology somewhat, leaving, in my view, mid-1799 or perhaps November 1796 as the best date for this story.

In this article I compare four versions of the story:

- Saturday Evening Post: "Young Captain Hornblower" 1953-07-25 to 1953-09-12, illustrations Ken Riley. 58200 words, Castilla Encounter off Crete;
- Little Brown: "Hornblower and the Atropos" 1953-09-10, jacket illustration Ralph Pallen. 94700 words, Castilla encounter off Spain;

- John Bull: "Hornblower and the Nelson Touch" 1953-10-03 and "Hornblower of the Atropos" 1953-10-10 to 1953-11-28, illustrations William Little. 74200 words, Castilla encounter off Spain;
- Michael Joseph: "Hornblower and the Atropos" 1953-11-09, jacket illustration Val Biro. 94700 words, Castilla encounter off Spain;



Boarding the CASTILLA (John Bull edition)

You can guess by the word counts that the novels are very similar to each other. Both serialisations have been cut and, while there are commonalities to the cuts, there are differences too and the SEP version is substantially shorter than JB. Of the four versions, only SEP has the Castilla encounter at Malta. In the other three versions, Atropos has returned the treasure to Gibraltar before the encounter. Both of the serialisations omit the transfer of Atropos to the King of the Two Sicilies and end before H's journey home to find his children dying.

As a matter of history, HCMS CASTILLA was at this time a 64-gun ship of the Spanish navy. She had been built in El Ferrol, commissioned in 1780 and had taken part in the Battle of Cape Spartel in 1782. By 1810 she was in use as a hulk in Cadiz Bay with French prisoners aboard. On the 15th of May she dragged her anchor in a storm, ran ashore and was burnt by the French. According to the Spanish Navy this CASTILLA was the sixth vessel of that name to serve and the current CASTILLA is the twelfth.

[http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castilla\\_\(L-52\)](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castilla_(L-52))

On the climactic day of *The Hand of Destiny*, it's a different, fictional CASTILLA that's sighted in the Bay of Biscay with only "eighteen guns a side" and yet "a ship of considerably superior force" to the MARGUERITE where Hornblower served as junior lieutenant. (There should not have been so many lieutenants aboard such a small vessel.)



Midshipman Prince falls from yard arm (John Bull edition)

Presumably both combatants were unrated sloops of war. Boarding with most of MARGUERITE's crew Hornblower receives the power-grain tattoo on his left hand. He leads the assault on the CASTILLA's poop and the battle is won, earning him the fifty-guinea sword from the Patriotic Fund.

That would seem to wrap up the history of Hornblower and the CASTILLA neatly but it was not to be. *The Hand of Destiny* was not published in book form until after Forester's death so perhaps he felt he could forget the episode and retell it in a later novel. Certainly the short story has some problems of consistency, in particular with *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower*. Alternatively, there's no reason why Hornblower could not capture two ships of the same name over the years. The best argument against this idea is that it would seem a remarkable coincidence and yet one which is not mentioned by Forester. Personally I hate to discard a Hornblower story and feel there's room for both episodes in the canonical chronology.

So we come to 1953 and the publication of *Hornblower and the Atropos*. The final naval action sees Hornblower again in a battle with "the CASTILLA, one of the survivors of Trafalgar" (though the historical CASTILLA did not fight at Trafalgar.) This time the date is midsummer 1807 and the enemy is "one of their big frigates", a fifth-rate vessel of 44 guns. ATROPOS in contrast was sixth-rate with only 22 guns so it's just as well the action is begun by HMS NIGHTINGALE of 28 guns (title picture of this article). The British ships prevail by boarding; again with Hornblower in the thick of the action. No mention of powder stains to his left hand.

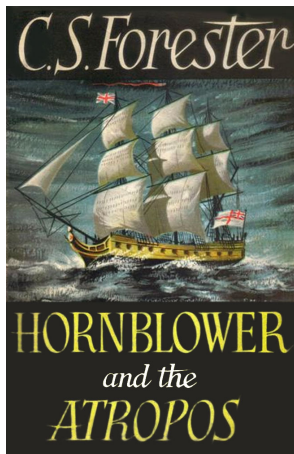
An interesting aspect is that the location of this battle is different in the first-published version of the *Atropos* story, *Young Captain Hornblower*, serialised in *The Saturday Evening Post*. All other editions place the action south of Mallorca. The serialisation has ATROPOS first encounter CASTILLA in the Bay of Mesara at Crete.

So why the change? My feeling is that it's simply to shorten the story. Of the four first editions (two serialisations and two novels) the *Saturday Evening Post* edition is much the shortest compared with the novels. By having ATROPOS meet CASTILLA on her way back from Marmorice Bay the plot is simplified considerably.

The number of changes required is not great but they do require more knowledge of sailing in the Mediterranean than I'd expect of an American copy editor. Surely Forester must have had a hand. All the serialisations of Hornblower novels cut plenty of material but this is the most significant change of fact. A comparison is given in the table on the next page.



## Book and Serial Differences



***Hornblower and the Atropos*, Michael Joseph, London, 9 Nov 1953.**

Cartagena was fast coming into sight; the castle and the towers of the churches were visible now beyond the sheltering island of La Escombrera. With this westerly wind it was simple enough to stand right in so that from the masthead a view could be had of the inner harbour

Four of the line and a frigate laid up at Cartagena was what had last been reported there, so there was no change; negative information for Collingwood again, but useful.

The frigate must be intending to make a sortie, to chase away this inquisitive visitor.

Palos Point disappeared over the port quarter as ATROPOS went flying on into the open Mediterranean.

Surely if CASTILLA intended to put back into Cartagena she would have gone about by now

ate cold beef and the last of the goodly soft bread taken on board at Gibraltar.

for they had run a full two hundred miles from Cartagena; unless the CASTILLA was prepared to go right up the Mediterranean far to leeward of all Spanish bases, it was time for her to head north to fetch Minorca. He would follow her there, the terrier harassing the bull, and he would give a final yap at the bull's heels outside Port Mahon. Besides, the CASTILLA's alteration of course might not portend a mere flight to Minorca.



**YOUNG CAPTAIN HORNBLOWER**

*By C. S. FORESTER*

***Young Captain Hornblower*, The Saturday Evening Post, Philadelphia, 25 Jul 1953 to 12 Sep 1953.**

They were fast drawing level with Cape Lithinon; soon they would have to alter course slightly to avoid Gavdhos

The possibility of a ship of war sheltering in the Bay of Mesara had occurred to Hornblower; it was likely with a Levanter blowing—at least, not likely, but possible. It was his duty to explore possibilities; a report to Collingwood that the coast of Crete was clear would be negative information, but even negative information is useful in war. This time it would not be negative information.

This would be a likely place for her to wait to intercept the Smyrna convoy.

Cape Lithinon disappeared over the port quarter as the ATROPOS went flying on into the open Mediterranean.

Surely if the CASTILLA intended to put back to Crete she would have gone about by now

ate cold beef and the last of the goodly soft bread taken on board at Marmorice.

for they had run a full two hundred miles from Crete; it was time for her to head north to fetch Crete. He would follow her there, the terrier harassing the bull, and he would give a final yap at the bull's heels outside Fair Haven. Besides, the CASTILLA's alteration of course might not portend a mere flight to Crete.

The last remark about being “on the track of convoys beating up the Mediterranean from Sicily and Malta” seems anomalous if CASTILLA is at Crete.

I find a final point of interest in the mention of Fair Haven. It seems an unlikely name to appear on a chart of Crete but those who know their Bible will remember it as the place the Apostle Paul found shelter sailing from Myra. The Biblical name turns out to be a literal translation of the Greek name “Kaloι Limenes” or “Καλοί Λιμένες”.

# Decatur vs Hornblower & Peabody

Jetse Reijenga

Re-reading C.S. Forester's *The Barbary Pirates* and *The Captain from Connecticut* prompted me to turn to "a Rage for Glory, the life of Commodore Stephen Decatur", a biography by James Tertius De Kay [1]. It highlights Decatur's role in the birth of the US navy and the war against the North African Pirates around 1800. The purpose of this contribution is to try and shed some light on Decatur as an inspiration and as a role model of characters and events in some of CSF's novels.



Commodore Stephen Decatur (1779-1820)

Previous biographies of Stephen Decatur were published by Waldo (as early as 1821), Mackenzie (1848), Brady (1900), Anthony (1931) and Lewis (1937). Forester must have had access to at least one of these at the time of writing the books mentioned above. Forester also read Mahan's *Sea Power in relation to the War of 1812* and Theodore Roosevelt's *History of the War of 1812* [N&S].

Superficially, Stephen Decatur has something in common with both Horatio Hornblower and Josiah Peabody (the Captain from Connecticut). Born 3 years apart, both Decatur and Hornblower were naval heroes in the eye of the public, fighting in the same wars, albeit on different sides. All three of them naval heroes of their time, and married a woman of social standing. All of them fought in duels.

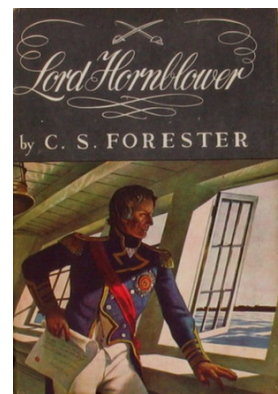
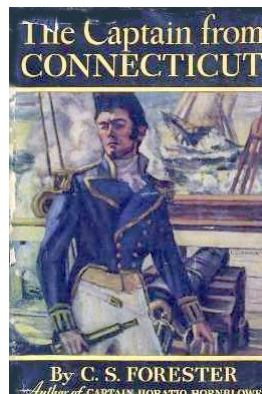
But this is as far as the parallel runs, because who as a midshipman during the early 1800's has not fought a duel? Intellectually the difference in characters between Hornblower and Decatur can hardly be larger. The same difference applies to societal and political influence. Decatur enjoyed public esteem and being consulted by politicians, Hornblower was allergic to anything remotely

linked to politics and politicians. Decatur and Peabody were flamboyant personalities, but Hornblower was a complex one.

Life in a blockading fleet is an essential part of the Hornblower series. The Decatur biography on the other hand, provides good insight into the frustrations of the US navy, blockaded by the British around 1812. Decatur, landlocked with his vessel the *United States* in the harbor of New London and under the protection of its two forts, even went as far as attempting to kidnap and hold for ransom the commanding officer of the blockading squadron, Sir Thomas Hardy, who was in the habit to dine ashore with an American friend. Another idea by Decatur implied a 2+2 ship duel with the British, in order to get the blockade lifted. The idea was not pursued, but it cannot be a coincidence that Forester actually used it in the final chapters of *Captain from Connecticut*. In that case it was about the 24 hour rule rather than blockade breaking. The duel between USS *DELAWARE* and HMS *CALYPSO* (captain Davenant), was aborted by the announcement of peace.

Duelling apparently was very much part of the life of officer's ranks in the early 19th century. In Forester's novels it plays a minor role: in *The Even Chance* (Mr. Midshipman Hornblower) and a *Captain from Connecticut*. Both duels were actually sabotaged in identical fashion, by the Horatio's captain and by Joshua's wife Anne de Breuil respectively. Yet another aborted duel.

The Decatur-Peabody link has been previously treated in *Reflections 4* by David Stead [2], mentioning parallels and conflicting time schedules compared to historical events. It is interesting to note that Sanford Sternlicht [3] gives two examples where in his opinion the story of the Captain from Connecticut loses credibility: the duel sabotaged by his wife, and the ship's duel at the end of the book. Loses credibility?? Both incidents prove that Forester was inspired by identical, real events in Decatur's life.....





Regarding CSF's opinion of duelling, and the minor role it played in his novels, the understatement in *Captain from Connecticut* is clear:

- *His uncle Josiah, two months later, paid the penalty for having become a gentleman, and died in Baltimore twelve paces from the pistol of another gentleman who had been his friend until.....(page 14)*

In the 1950's Forester re-used the scene of an aborted duel in *The Even Chance* (Mr. Midshipman Hornblower).



Ioan Gruffudd in *The Even Chance* in Episode 1 of the *Hornblower* TV series (1999)

Young Midshipman Hornblower is accused of cheating during a game of cards and he challenges his opponent. After the duel, this is what HMS *Justinian's* Captain Keene has to say about it:

- *Now here is some gratuitous advise.....never fight another [duel]. Some people, oddly enough, acquire a taste for duelling, as a tiger acquires a taste for blood. They are never good officers, and never popular ones either. (page 38)*

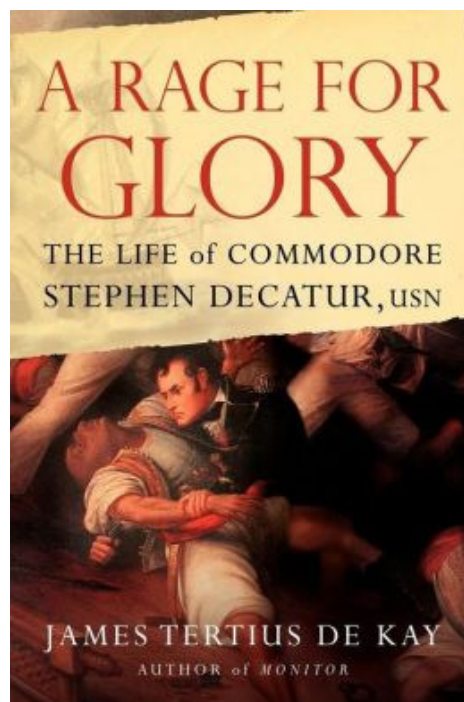
Again in *Hornblower and the Atropos* we are confronted with the ridiculous habit of duelling between hot-headed "men of honour". Diving expert McCollum gets mortally injured in a duel with "Doctor" Eisenbeiss.

- *"You had better keep him alive," continued Hornblower. "You had certainly better. If he dies I can try you for murder under the ordinary laws of England. Don't look at me like that. I am speaking the truth. The common law knows nothing about duels. I can hang you, doctor."*

De Kay's biography on the other hand, details duelling practice around 1800 in quite some interesting detail. Having fought a duel in his early years, Decatur as a junior lieutenant introduced into the new US navy the "Decatur Plan".

The ruling required all midshipmen under his command to pledge themselves to neither give nor accept a challenge to a duel without previously reporting their disputes to him and allowing him the opportunity to find some means of resolving the argument and cooling their hot tempers. The ruling, adopted by most other ship's captains undoubtedly saved many lives. It is therefore nothing short of bizarre that Decatur himself should be killed in a duel at the early age of 41. The detailed description of the preceding chain of events alone, starting as early as 1807, is sufficient reason to read de Kay's biography of Stephen Decatur.

As mentioned, Decatur's life has been widely documented in earlier biographies, to which Forester must have had access. He may even have read that Decatur's wife Susan had deliberately been kept ignorant of her husband's acceptance of the duel. Soon after daybreak on March 22, 1820, Decatur sneaked out of his house on President's Square without notifying his wife, only to return at breakfast, mortally wounded and dying. Anne de Breuil saved her husband's life through sabotage of the pistols for the duel and it is a matter of pure speculation whether Susan Decatur would have done the same, had she known.



## References

1. James Tertius de Kay, *A Rage for Glory, the life of Commodore Stephen Decatur, USN*, Free Press, New York (2004), ISBN 0743242459
2. David Stead, *History, Literature and The Captain from Connecticut* in *Reflections* 4 (2004)
3. Sanford Sternlicht, *C.S. Forester and the Hornblower Saga*, Syracuse University Press, New York (1999), ISBN 0815606214

# Autobiographical Elements in C S Forester's *The Ship*

John Forester

C. S. Forester's novels typically have a few strongly described characters tightly involved in the plot. Each other necessary character is simply described by his duty to that plot, without further detail. *The Ship*, however, has a plethora of characters, each of them vital to her function as a fighting warship and each of them created with both their function in the ship and the story and character that brought them there.

## Able Seaman "Curly" Presteign

Forester being a literary man, there is a poet in the crew, Able Seaman "Curly" Presteign. As for Forester's taste in poetry, when he was demanding that I learn Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* he described it to me as one of the greatest English poems. Forester wrote some poetry for the Forester Marionette Theatre. He also wrote about writing poetry. Cyril, the protagonist of *Two and Twenty*, is a failed medical student (as Forester was) who writes popular verse: "tricky stuff, good second class stuff, meretricious stuff, which even sensitive judges felt compelled to praise at first sight." Cyril in a dark mood recognizes the defects of his verse and returns to medical studies. As I wrote in my biography of Forester: "These thoughts which Cecil ascribed to Cyril are exactly those with which Cecil tortured himself when the black mood was upon him."

There's none of that in *The Ship*. Presteign is an orphan who entered the RN as a child. With no better background than that, he has the ability to turn the sights he sees into appealing sentences, as about the curling wake behind *Artemis* at full speed. After finding a Shakespearean sonnet in the ship's library, Presteign adopts that form for his own purposes. That's poetic genius at work. Forester rightly chooses not to present us with a sample of Presteign's verse. Poetical absent mindedness does not do well with routine naval details, but since Presteign is extremely reliable as a loader of the port-side pom-pom, led by the phenomenal gunner Harris, he is to some extent guided out of trouble by his leader.

## Stoker Henry Hobbs

Deepest in the ship, in the lonely gloom of the shaft tunnel, tending the bearings of one propeller shaft, is Stoker Hobbs, mulling over God's wrath at what Hobbs mistakenly believes to have been his sinful life. Forester's schooling had exposed him to Anglican Christianity, although it left him an atheist. He obviously had some experience with censorious religiosity and some concern about its effects should his activities become known, as is shown by his description, in the *African Queen*, of Rose

Sayer's narrow-minded London upbringing. But he had also written, shortly before writing *The Ship*, about the fiercely evangelical Connecticut upbringing of the American Captain Peabody, taking inspiration from Jonathan Edwards' frightening sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, easily available as a part of American literature.

## Ordinary Seaman Albert Whipple

Highest in the ship, sweeping the horizon with his binoculars, is Ordinary Seaman Albert Whipple, the crusading son of a crusading mother, self-righteously out to kill great numbers of the enemy with the fervor of one of Cromwell's Ironsides. While the Ironsides were motivated by Protestantism, they were trained into a superlative fighting machine. Forester had had no personal experience of such, but he knew his history. The nearest example, in Forester's life, to Ordinary Seaman Albert Whipple is Forester's description of the youthful upbringing of Leading Seaman Albert Brown. Between Hobbs's vision of Hell and Whipple's crusading fervor are all the rest of the crew.

There's Mr. Kaile, the Commissioned Gunner, who has risen to the top of the enlisted rates through intelligence used unsparingly to learn a complex subject, at least partly to give his loving wife the comforts he knows she deserves. There's Ordinary Seaman Triggs, the least intelligent of the crew, always late and always in trouble for neglecting his duties, but whose refusal to allow pain to deter him from obeying the one command he has understood, to flood the magazine, saves the ship from destruction.

And far off on the horizon are two more men vital to the story, the Italian Admiral Nocentini and his German observer Captain von Bodicke. The whole purpose of *HMS Artemis* and her companions is to persuade those two that it would be best to keep their distance or turn away.

While each of these many men has his function, character and story, they are such as show CSF's skill in inventing characters to suit the book's purpose, without using elements of his own character. Their sources could be men he had met, or men he had read about. The fact that the Surgeon Lieutenant Commander remembers scenes from *Guy's Hospital*, where CSF misspent his youth, is not really an autobiographical touch.

But there are two characters drawn in much greater detail, the captain and his secretary. Since the whole activity of *HMS Artemis* is directed by the mind and character of its

captain, his mind and character must be described in detail. And, of course, the captain must be supremely competent and courageous, whatever his other characteristics may be. But to merely write that the captain is competent and courageous does not persuade the reader that that is so, particularly in the case of naval warfare when enemies are far distant and approaching shells cannot be seen. CSF recognized that the reader needs a character so different from the captain that the difference emphasizes the captain's qualities. This character has to be close to the captain but not have the character of a professional naval officer. So CSF created the captain's secretary, a man whom war has drawn from the white-collar civilian world onto the bridge of a cruiser in action. In describing each of these men in detail, CSF used details from his own life.

### The Captain

It starts with a name. The Troughton part of Captain The Honorable Miles Ernest Troughton-Harrington-Yorke is one of CSF's birth names and family names. The Honorable indicates a younger member of the nobility, and we must not forget that CSF suspected that his real father was someone of higher status than the school master who was his mother's husband.

The Captain's talk impressed the listener with his character. As Jerningham realized, "the Captain must have so much personality and force of character that anyone talking to him automatically credited him with physical strength." There's CSF succeeding in social and literary worlds through his use of words. The Captain understood the nature of war. "War was perfectly logical, but to grasp all the premises of war was very difficult and it was as fatally easy to draw incorrect conclusions from incomplete premises in war as in everything else." There's CSF the student of history and, in a way, Hornblower playing whist.

In a quiet moment when the Italians first turned away, the Captain tells Jerningham of the difficulty of predicting the enemy's movements, not knowing all the facts that motivate him. Then, the Captain adds, having just seen Whipple climbing to the crow's nest, "And the next commonest mistake is to give unnecessary orders. Whipple up there will keep a sharp lookout without my telling him." Jerningham sees "this courteous gentleman with his smiling common sense and insight into character. It crossed Jerningham's mind, insanely at that moment, that perhaps the Captain after all might be able to make some progress with Cicely French if he wanted to." CSF certainly had had sufficient experience in that field.

The Captain "was a man who was profoundly interested in the art of living." There follows a list of things that provided him pleasure, followed by a list of acts whose success

provided more pleasure, ending with: "success in battle. These were the things that gilded the bitter pill of life which everyone had to swallow. They were as important as life and death; not because they were very important but because life and death were not very important." In my view, those last two sentences state CSF's view of the world and life.

The Captain, "he himself knew, only too well, that he was only a dormant volcano, that mad rage could still master him. ... So the Captain regarded with suspicion his decision in favor of attacking the Italians again; warned by the surge of fighting madness in his brain he waited to cool off before reconsidering." Then later: "That might be just fighting madness. He knew that his judgement might be clouded, that this decision of his to keep his guns firing might be the result of mere berserk rage. Yet his instinct told him that it was not so." Hornblower's character was similarly described, although in much lighter tones; both had strong temptations that had to be mastered.

As CSF wrote to Frances Phillips in 1947, "It's all freaks of chance, one way & the other, adding up to a final balance. You can't pick one thing out of the mixture, you know. You understand that, don't you, my dear? And I'm madder than any hatter you ever met."

I have often written that Hornblower was CSF, had he the courage to be so. I suggest that Captain The Honorable Miles Ernest Troughton-Harrington-Yorke also has much of CSF in him, plus the necessary and desired courage. In that way is the story of when the Captain, as a young midshipman in charge of a picket boat, caused his boat's wash to discommode the Admiral. Called to account, he faced down the Admiral by explaining that the caution sign was not placed where it could be seen. I know of no similar incident in CSF's life, and I rather doubt that he would act as he writes of the Captain.

### The Captain's Secretary

Paymaster Sub-Lieutenant James Jerningham is introduced with: "In the delirious days before the war, he had written advertising copy ...". When CSF found himself so hard up that he had to look for a job, he found himself writing advertising copy in an agency. The job didn't last very long, but it produced the futile and absurd prospect of becoming the advertising manager for Colman's Mustard and the farcical scheme of making a killing by cornering the market of the advertising space of London's newspapers. And it provided the background for CSF's Plain Murder.

"And Jerningham had spent his years rioting around town, drinking and gossiping and making love with a gang of men and women whose every reaction he had come to be able to anticipate infallibly ... He had always felt his abilities to be superior to those of any of the men, and he



had taken to his bed any of the women he had felt a fancy for." Aside from the grossly exaggerated affluence and alcohol, that is rather as CSF thought of himself in his earlier years.

But Jerningham has a problem: "For Jerningham was afraid. He knew himself to be a coward, and the knowledge was bitter. ... He was ashamed of that." Naturally, CSF had to have a fearful character to describe the very real dangers of naval warfare and to contrast against the "stolid courage which ignored the dangers around them."

But CSF had his own bundle of fears. He feared discovery of both the secret of his birth and those of his secret life. He feared proximity to disabled people. He had a fear of heights, even when seeing Fluffy, the cat, walking on the eight-inch wide bulwark around the sun deck, because of the thirty-foot drop on the other side.

Jealous rage replaces Jerningham's fear when a letter, from his pocket, informs him that one of his harem in London has married and become pregnant. Having shed his fear, his memory returns so he is able to correctly identify, for the Captain, the types of the distant Italian cruisers. Later, when the Captain gives Jerningham the definite task to inform the crew about the battle that surrounds them, Jerningham does a good job of it, dispensing courage despite the dangers. When the shells start coming in, "He saw the whole Italian line a-sparkle with gunfire. Every one of those ships was firing at him. He gulped, and then with one last effort regained his self-control, panic fading out miraculously ... and he was left savouring, almost doubtfully, his new-won calm." Would CSF respond as Jerningham? That's hard to say.

## Report on our AGM in Nevers and an Outlook to 2013

Dear Members of our Society,

27 – 29 September 2013 we held our Annual General Meeting in Nevers on the Loire, actually our first AGM on foreign territory. But everyone made it safely to the venue, 16 Society members and guests in total coming from France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Canada and the US.

The venue was a couple of kilometers away from the city of Nevers, the Chateau du Four de Vaux in Varennes Vauzelles, the model for the Chateau de Gracay in "Flying Colours" and "Lord Hornblower" as Hornblower-ficionados know.



*Drinks reception and welcome address*

After a champagne-welcome in the garden of the premises – on a mild and sunny afternoon – we all drove to an observation deck on a crest above the Loire in order to get a feeling for the lie of the land, which is hilly here. The hills are covered with meadows and leafy woods; no vineyards yet, they begin a distance away downstream near the town of Sancerre. The Loire, the longest unregulated river in Europe, was low at the time of our visit, showing golden-brown gravel banks and beaches as described in "Flying Colours". And across the Loire its tributary could be seen, the Allier, in the words of Hornblower "itself a fine river almost the size of the Loire", which the three sailors, after having said goodbye to the Count and Marie, reached after a couple of minutes; so they must have pushed their boat into the water right below where we were standing today.

Dinner was taken at the Auberge de l' Ecluse in the hamlet Givry/Cours-le-Bares, where a side channel of the Canal Lateral enters the Loire. A good restaurant indeed, in the middle of nowhere, so to speak, something which you find in France and nearly nowhere else and one of those things - 'savoir vivre' - the French are rightfully proud of.

On our way back to our lodgings we had a last stop in Nevers at the foot of the cathedral, where an ancient bridge crosses the river. Rum was served by Jetse Reijenga and we proposed a toast to Hornblower, Bush and Brown, who had passed under this bridge on a stormy winter night in 1810.



Society member Ken Napier gifted with a very full voice trained in the stormy weathers on the seven seas, read the extract “God help sailors on a night like this.....” cited by Brown in “Flying Colours” and we all, as you can see, had a wonderful time.

Next morning we met at the Chateau again. The programme started with AGM formalities and the respective officers made their reports. The complete Minutes of the Meeting are to be found on our website. These were the main topics: three issues of Reflections were published since our last AGM, the number of Society members rose from 200 to 230 and the finances of our “moneyless” Society are in good shape.



The formal part of the AGM

The latter is mostly due to the ongoing demand for the completion, written by Society member Bob Smith, of the unfinished novel “Hornblower and the Crisis”, which you can buy as an e-book or hardcover through our website. We used part of these proceeds to pay for this AGM and we raised a glass and sent a ‘thank-you’ to Bob.

The Chairman thanked all officers for their dedicated work in the past year. John Roberts – in a smooth and brisk fashion – managed the vote for the re-election of all officers to their posts.

Thereafter we started our presentations, some of which will be published in upcoming Reflections. First we saw two views of “The Ship”, our Book of the Year 2013. Lawrie Brewer spoke about “The Ship’s” literary qualities.



John Forester and Jetse then presented a pictorial battle history of the battle of Sirte in March 1942 east of Malta by which the book was inspired.



Action picture during the battle of Sirte, 22 March 1942.

After a finger-buffet lunch a presentation followed on the locations in France chosen by CSF for the Hornblower novels including movie fragments of the Hornblower escape route in “Flying Colours” from the Hollywood picture with Gregory Peck of 1951 (picture below).



In the following open forum discussion we selected “The Commodore” as the Book of the Year 2014 and as the venue for our next AGM either onboard a sailing ship from a European port or on the island of Rügen in the Baltic, exactly where at the entry to the ancient port of Stralsund, Hornblower destroyed the pirate vessel “Blanchefleur”. See the minutes of the AGM 2013 on <http://csforester.eu> under Publications/Archive.

Towards the end of our presentations Serge Aillery of the literary association “Maison des Ecrivains de la Mer”, based in a house on the sea with a museum attached near the city of Nantes at the mouth of the Loire, gave us a French view of maritime literature in general and CSF in particular. Finally, as a surprise and not on the agenda, Nicolas Grigorellis gave a fascinating explanation of how it came about that he started his own CSF/Hornblower website 15 years ago.



And then some of us turned totally crazy as you can see on the YouTube video accessible through our website. On the lawn outside the chateau a hundred yards away where according to "Flying Colours" the Loire was supposed to be, three adult men, two of them carrying a one-legged cripple between them, started their approach towards the chateau, citing from "Flying Colours" the sentences of Hornblower, Bush and Brown, moaning and groaning and two more members barking furiously enacting the chateau watchdogs. A subsequent glass of champagne for everyone at the premises turned us back into serious minded citizens.

Our traditional Castle Pie Dinner, this year à la française (actually the taste without the finesse I expected) brought the evening to a close. During dinner we saw a short movie fragment from the Hornblower TV series showing the "original" castle pie.



Later still Lawrie surprised us with some songs accompanied by guitar and Marlieke de Vos gathered some of us to play a rubber of Whist.

Next morning, Sunday, there were grey skies; true farewell weather. After breakfast we gathered in the center of Nevers for a tour of the city passing by the Gonzaga palace which the freedom-longing Hornblower too had seen through his telescope from the top of the tower of the chateau.

As Bob Smith could not attend our AGM personally, we subsequently framed a copy of the photo below to him and he commented it in his thank-you note with the following words: "I am finding the picture very comforting: it exudes good nature, cheerfulness, friendship, accomplishment, comradeship, and I am greatly comforted to think that I am connected, however tenuously, with that group of people."

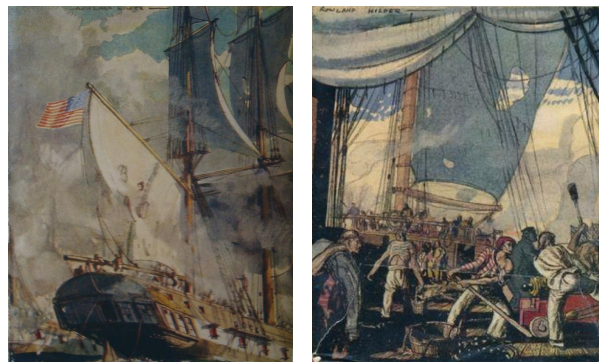


Yes, that is how I feel too. I send you my best wishes wherever you are on or beyond the shores of the seven seas and I hope to see you next year.

Ludwig Heuse, Chairman

## Rowland Hilder, illustrator Jetse Reijenga

Over the years many artists have designed covers for Forester's books and their many reprints: Robin Jacques, N.C. Wyeth, Val Biro, David Cobb, Kenneth Wynn, Samuel Bryant, Tom Lea. One of my favourites is Rowland Hilder. As far as I can find out, Hilder did only the first UK editions of *Happy Return* (1937) and the *Captain from Connecticut* (1941)



Artist and Illustrator Rowland Hilder was born in 1905 at Great Neck, Long Island USA. His family returned to England in 1915. He trained at Goldsmiths' College School of Art and during his career he has been referred to as the Turner of his generation.



Hilder worked with oil but watercolour was his favourite medium. He was appointed OBE in 1986. He continued to paint into his retirement and died in 1993.

more information on Rowland Hilder and his work:

<http://www.francis-iles.com/html/hilder.html>

<http://www.bookroomartpress.co.uk/biographies/33.html>

# Betty Brown, the author's secretary

## Jetse Reijenga

Of course Brown is a common name, but one cannot deny that the name occurs in many of Forester's books. Agatha and Albert in *Brown in Resolution*, Brown as Hornblower's personal servant in naval battle, high society and domestic environment. There is a Paymaster Commander Brown in *The Ship* and a Troop Sergeant-Major Brown as Curzon's second in command in *The General*. What about Forester's book for children; Poo-Poo had a real name, Harold Heavyside (HH!) Brown. Except for Braun in *The Commodore* all are heroes large and small. And as was mentioned in an earlier issue: all of them facilitators and symbols of solid reliability. There were also Browns in the author's personal. Curtis Brown was CSF's first literary agent in the 1920's at Methuen and there must have been a Brown behind the Little of his American publisher.

And then there is Betty....

She is introduced in *Novelist & Storyteller*: "Betty Brown and her husband Lenny were fellow members of the tennis group at the Orinda Country Club and the Berkeley Tennis Club and probably slightly younger than Cecil and Kathleen. The Browns had no children; they lived a few blocks from Keeler Avenue. Betty Brown became Cecil's secretary, working mostly at his house and partly at her home. She would remain with him for about seven years." [N&S]

In the summer of 1999 a Centenary Exhibit of Forester's books was held at the Georgetown University Library. It included numerous books inscribed by the author and dedicated to Betty Brown.

Let these inscriptions by her employer tell her tale.

- *Poo-Poo and the Dragons* (1942): "Betty & Lennie Brown with best wishes from C. S. Forester."
- *The Ship*: "Betty Brown, with much gratitude, because without her help I don't think I could have written this any faster. C. S. Forester. April 1943."
- *The Bedchamber Mystery* (1944): "To Betty Brown, Maybe she still wears the scar, but I'm not sure C. S. Forester." The scar refers to the principal incident in the title story, a suggestive inscription.
- *The Commodore*: "To Betty, very gratefully. She only made one mistake, & that was taking the job on. From C. S. Forester. April 1945."

- *Lord Hornblower*: "To Betty to whom I shall always be grateful for help that cannot be measured from C. S. Forester May 17th 1946."
- *The Sky and the Forest*: "To Betty without a kurbash from C. S. Forester with much love & gratitude July 8th 1948."
- *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower* (1950): "To Betty after eight long years with love from C. S. Forester."
- *Randall and the River of Time*: "For Betty, who took all the trouble & did really all the work, gratefully, from C. S. Forester. Oct 12th 1950"
- *Lieutenant Hornblower*: "To Betty The most long suffering of secretaries with gratitude and thanks from the most long suffering of bosses C. S. Forester. March 1952."
- *Hornblower and the Atropos*: "To Betty without whose kind assistance ---- with best wishes from C. S. Forester. July 1953."
- *The Nightmare*: "To Betty on the morning after from C. S. Forester. July 7th 1954."

*Novelist & Storyteller* then tells us: When Betty's husband Lenny died Cecil wrote to Frances Phillips less than three days after, with his usual sympathy for bereaved people, "Betty is just trouble at present. She is jumpy and hysterical and full of self pity and she talks incessantly ..... it's a lot of strain, but I can't think what on earth to do – I can't fire her, of course, at least at present." [N&S]

Of course he "couldn't fire her at present": he was struggling with his latest novel, one he considered leaving unfinished, "which would intrigue my biographers, a great temptation."

That novel was *The Good Shepherd*. When it was finished he gave her two months notice and a copy of the book with an undated farewell:

*The Good Shepherd* (1955): "Betty, the only person I can be sure read every single word with every good wish from C. S. Forester."



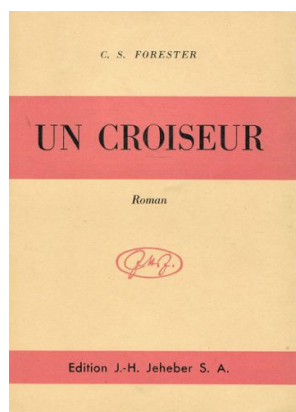
# The Ship - Early Translations

## Jetse Reijenga

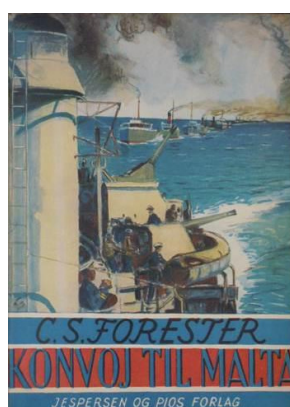
Reflections 25 reported Italian and Norwegian translations of *The Ship*. There were several translations in other languages in the 1940's. We have been able to find the following ones, most of them still available from 2nd hand book stores.

A Swedish translation by Louis Renner, *Kryssaren* (*The Cruiser*) was published by Bonniers in 1943, as a 244 page hard cover. Bonniers was the owner of the Continental Book Company, publisher of *The Ship* in the Clipper and the Zephyr series.

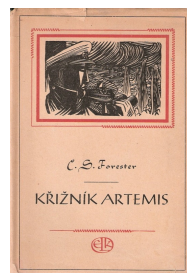
In early 1944, well before D-day a French translation was published in Switzerland, clearly intended for the French market. The translation by Pierre Lambert was published as *Un Croiseur* (*a Cruiser*) by J.H. Jeheber S.A., Geneva.



Also in 1944, while Denmark was still occupied, a Danish translation by Kirsten Retrup was published by 'Trods Alt' Forlag. The book was a 167 page soft cover. Trods Alt (which can be translated as Despite Everything) was an illegal publisher in occupied Copenhagen. A prominent figure in this context was Mogens Staffeldt (1915-1986), head of the Nordic Bookstore in Copenhagen, a meeting place for Danish illegality. In February 1944 Mogens and his brother Jorgen were arrested. Towards the end of 1944 Mogens escaped to Sweden, but his brother died in a concentration camp. In 1946 another Danish edition was published by Jesper Og Pios of Copenhagen.



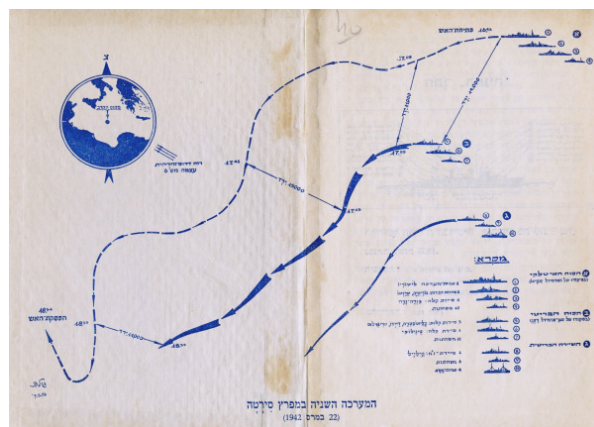
In Polish *The Ship* was translated by Evert Michalski and given the title *Bitwa o Malte* (*Battle of Malta*) in 1946, a 243 page paperback. In Czech the title became *Křižník Artemis* (*Cruiser Artemis*), this translation by Karel B. Palkovský was published by ELK, Prague (1948). Dutch title not surprisingly became *Het Schip*, a 217 pages hard cover published by V.H.C. de Boer Jr (1949), Translated by H.W.J. Schaap.



In 1954 a new French translation by Maggy Daille was published by Julliard under the title *Le Navire* (*The Ship*). Also in April 1954 there was a Hebrew translation, issued by the Israeli Army Publication Unit called "Maarachot", intended for the library of the Naval Forces.



Inside this book is a detailed map of the final hours of the battle. I am grateful to our member in Israel, Jehuda K. Straschnow for the gift of the Hebrew edition.



# Captain Angus Dacres Nicholl of HMS PENELOPE

Jetse Reijenga

Although written as if about fictitious people on a fictitious vessel HMS ARTEMIS the book is based on real events onboard HMS PENELOPE. ARTEMIS' captain for example is the Honourable Miles Ernest Troughton-Harrington-Yorke: Forester gave the captain his own middle name of Troughton. But who was the real captain of HMS PENELOPE during the 2nd Battle of Sirte?

Angus Dacres Nicholl was born on 17 November 1896. He entered the Royal Navy in 1915 as a midshipman in the Grand Fleet battleship HMS MARLBOROUGH. He served in the Battle of Jutland (31 May 1916) where he was in charge of a 13.5-inch gun magazine handing room when the ship was hit by a torpedo. About this incident Nicholl later recalled that a certain sense of humour is important for morale.

He was promoted to Lieutenant in 1918 and transferred to HMS BLUEBELL (1915), a 1200 ton Acacia class minesweeping sloop. In January 1921 the BLUEBELL left for the Far East. After return from the China Station Lt Nicholl transferred to the Mediterranean. He married Winifred Rose and a daughter Cecily Nicholl was born on 24 August 1924 on the island of Malta. He was made Commander on 30 June 1932 and he returned to Britain to act as Naval Assistant Secretary to the CID (1936 - 1939). He was promoted to Captain on 30 June 1939 and served as Naval Assistant in the War Cabinet Secretariat until 1941.

Nicholl then commanded the cruiser HMS PENELOPE, a unit in Force K based on Malta at the height of the naval war in the Mediterranean, 1941 - 1942. He was awarded a DSO on 20 February 1942.



Captain Nicholl congratulating 15-year old signal boy Roy de Moulipied who has just been decorated with the DSM.

The 2nd battle of Sirte of 22nd March 1942 (the subject of the book) and its aftermath resulted in a CBE on 5 Jun 1942: *For great gallantry, fortitude and resolution in bringing his ship, HMS PENELOPE, to port in the face of relentless and determined enemy air attack at Malta and on passage.*

## The SOEMBA docket

After PENELOPE's return to England on 1 October 1942 Captain Nicholl became Director of Operations Division (Foreign) at the Admiralty, a post he held until 1944. In that capacity he is well remembered by his Soemba Docket, one month before D-day. HNMS SOEMBA (pronounced Soomba) was a Dutch gun boat. Thanks to Captain Nicholl's effort the Dutch Navy was enabled to play a tiny but symbolic role in the front line of the D-day landing operations. Rear-Admiral Nicholl writes:

*"The matter of the Soemba's gun was raised in the first instance by a signal from the ship to the Admiralty, reporting the damage to the gun and requesting that a new one should be fitted or the damaged one repaired.*

*As Director of Operations Division (Foreign), I was responsible for bringing the matter to the attention of those Departments in the Admiralty who would examine the question, and, if thought appropriate, propose action to meet the Soemba's request. Soemba's signal was received about a month before D-day, 1944, a period of as great activity as the dockyards and ship-fitting firms of the country have ever experienced. I therefore knew that the Soemba had little chance of being ready in time to take part in the D-Day bombardments unless she were given special priority. Purely from the point of view of the bombardment operation, the Soemba was not of outstanding importance; but as one of the few Netherlands ships available for Operation "Overlord" she was most important from the political point of view. It would mean a great deal to Dutch morale that one of their warships should be in front line of the allied forces on D-Day.*

*So, as I have often found that a few lines of doggerel will ring a bell where prose knocks in vain, I started the docket off with a Limerick.*

## HNMS SOEMBA, defective 5.9 Gun

A report has come in from the Soemba,  
That their salvoes go off like a Rhumba,  
Two guns, they sound fine,  
But the third five point nine,  
He am bust and refuse to go boomba.

A.D. Nicholl, Director of Operations Division (Foreign)



*Everyone played. The docket went round to the various Departments in the orthodox way and each reacted with a matching Limerick until the First Sea Lord approved action being taken, the SOEMBA got her new gun and was there on D-day.*

On 3 September 1944 Nicholl was appointed Captain of Battleship HMS DUKE OF YORK. This flagship of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser had been responsible for sinking SCHARNHORST during the Battle of the North Cape on 26 December 1943. This tale is told by C S Forester himself in *The Saturday Evening Post* of 25 March 1945.

HMS DUKE OF YORK arrived at Malta for her working up before her journey east. On VE Day (8 May 1945) Captain Nicholl calls for three cheers for the King after announcing the defeat of Germany. On 2 September 1945 Captain Nicholl and his commanding Officer Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser were among those present on board the USS MISSOURI in the Pacific to witness the Japanese surrender, marking the end of WWII.



Captain Nicholl receiving princesses Margaret and Elizabeth (right) on the battleship DUKE OF YORK at Devonport (1946).

Captain Nicholl was promoted to Rear-Admiral on 10 July 1948 and on 2 January 1950 he became Companion in The Most Honourable Order of the Bath (CB). He retired from the Navy on 8 May 1951 but remained involved in naval affairs:

On May 6th 1955 he spoke at the Commonwealth Club of California in San Francisco, about "Today's Far-Reaching Changes in British Naval Policies". This location was close to the Forester residence in Berkeley. (did they meet??)

Angus Dacres Nicholl died on 12 April 1977 at the age of 80. There is a memorial plaque on the South wall of St Ann's Church in Portsmouth.

## Forester on HMS PENELOPE and the fate of a legendary cruiser Jetse Reijenga

The origin of Forester's *The Ship* is a coincidence of events: The cruiser HMS PENELOPE after the battle was so badly damaged that she had to undergo a major refit on the US east coast. On completion of that, Forester at that time was on the east coast and had himself invited to sail in PENELOPE during sea trials. He announced his departure to his wife in a letter of 2 September 1942:

*I expect I shall be utterly cut off for about two weeks. I don't want you to misinterpret this, I shall be in no danger at all, not any, but I shall be unable to receive any messages or send any. I'm going to have a very remarkable experience but a very safe one, and I'm as pleased as anything about it and I'm looking forward to it so much that I can't do any work here at all. [N&S]*

It was during this trip that he found inspiration for *The Ship*. On return in Norfolk, Virginia he wrote his wife on 18 September 1942:

*I am back again now, after having had the most wonderful and delightful experience anyone could imagine — a really amazing time. By the time I see you it won't be secret any longer and I'll be able to tell you all about it. [N&S]*

Forester's experience in sailing with HMS PENELOPE must have felt like setting foot on deck of HMS LYDIA, refitted after the final battle with NATIVIDAD in *Happy Return* (1937), the first of the Hornblower books. And now, reading *The Ship* more than 70 years after the events, the reader is again made part of the life and death struggle of the Allies in WW2.

After the sea trials PENELOPE returned home. Work performed at Portsmouth included installation of radar equipment (Type 273) and adding a terminal four 20 mm Oerlikon. She then left for Gibraltar, where she operated with the Western Mediterranean Fleet under the flag of Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, supporting the landings in North Africa.

In June 1943, PENELOPE took part in a bombardment and final surrender of the Italian islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa. As part of the 12th Cruiser Squadron in Force "H" she provided cover for the northern flank of the assault on Sicily. During the remainder of July and August, she took part in various other bombardments and sweeps during the campaign for Sicily.

In September 1943, PENELOPE was part of Force "Q" for the allied landings at Salerno, Italy, during which she augmented the bombardment force.

In the beginning of October she was transferred to the Levant in view of a possible attack on the island of Kos.

On 7 October, with other ships PENELOPE sank six enemy landing craft, one ammunition ship and an armed trawler off Stampalia. While retiring through the Scarpanto Straits south of Rhodes the ships were attacked by 18 Junkers-87 dive bombers. Although damaged by a bomb, PENELOPE was able to return to Alexandria at 22 knots.

From there, PENELOPE moved to Haifa in connection with possible developments in the Lebanon situation. Towards the end of 1943, she was ordered to Gibraltar for anti-blockade-runner duties in the Atlantic and on 30 November she returned to Gibraltar. On 22 January 1944, she took part in the amphibious assault on Anzio, Italy, providing gunfire support as part of Force "X" with USS BROOKLYN.

Unfortunately on 18 February 1944 HMS PENELOPE was torpedoed off Anzio by a German submarine. 415 of the crew, including captain George Devereux Belben went down with the ship. There were 206 survivors.

The significance of *The Ship* is indeed as Arnold Romberg says in *Reflections*-24: "it presents the crew members of one ship, and by implication those of many other Royal Navy Ships". Our Book-of-the-Year for 2013 is thus a fitting monument for the 277 other ships of the Royal Navy sunk in WW2 with 50,758 killed and 820 missing.

*This for the men in the ships,  
The stubble-haired boys who died,  
With the hard set smile on their lips;  
In their hearts the unvoiced pride.*

(from C S Forester's "Ballad of Coronel" in *Two and Twenty*, 1931)



## CORRESPONDENCE

I wonder if you can help? Many years ago I read a book by C.S. Forester where the main character was a Doctor, an early specialist in forensic medicine. This man was so sure of himself that he boasted his word was enough to convict any felon. He also got a girl into trouble and sent her to Scotland for the abortion as he would not break the law in Britain. This was some 30 years ago, I am sure of the author, but can find no reference to the title. I am slowly building a collection of all his works, so far this has proved elusive.

Thank you in anticipation, Edward Jolliffe

EDITOR: we do not know of any such book or short story. If this rings a bell with any of our members, please send details to the editor.

Hi Jetse,

The articles on The Ship make me wonder about the total number of Forester books sold, as the author is not listed on [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_best-selling\\_books](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_best-selling_books).

Greetings from Norway,  
Kai Svensson

EDITOR: What we know from the Author Price Guide (APG) is the number of true 1st editions of most of Forester's books. That number varies from 844 for Daughter of the Hawk (1928) to 90,000 for Lord Hornblower (1946). The total number of copies of all true 1st first editions was about 1 million. (this excludes reprints and translations!!)

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Mr Steven Domoslay, Grayling Hill, Max Copenhagen and Captain Anthony Cowden in the USA, Mr. Charles Sayer, David Crompton, Geoff Gidley and Steve Boyle in the UK, Able Seaman Ben Ktaz in Canada, Ms Elena Grabovsky in Australia, M. Serge Aillery in France and Mr Bengt Arvidsson in Sweden.

# Reflections

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Cover: 1st US Edition, Little, Brown (1943)