

★ QUARTERDECK

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF MCBOOKS PRESS - MARCH 2007

DOUGLAS REEMAN

“I found it difficult to let go ...”



Douglas Reeman, aka Alexander Kent
(Photo by Kimberley Reeman)

Alexander Kent's new Adam Bolitho naval adventure, *Heart of Oak*, hit the bestseller list in London within days of its January launch. And this month, the US hardcover edition is published by McBooks Press (see page 3).

Nearly forty years ago, English novelist Douglas Reeman was sailing along writing sea stories set primarily during the twentieth century when his American publisher suggested that he author a novel set during the Age of Sail.

Under the pen name Alexander Kent, the first broadside in a new series about British naval officer Richard Bolitho was fired with the publication of *To Glory We Steer*.

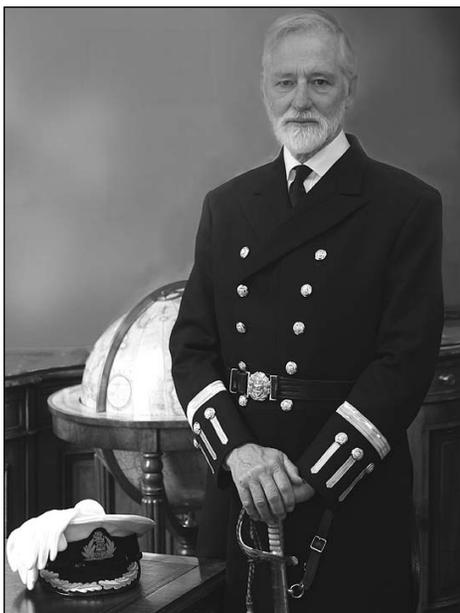
Over four decades, Richard Bolitho, and now his nephew Adam, have charmed armchair sailors and professional seamen alike with their leadership, courage, and humanity under the most trying of circumstances.

As *Heart of Oak* was about to make its American

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RICHARD WOODMAN

Elder Brother of Trinity House



Captain Richard Woodman in the dress uniform of a Trinity House Elder Brother.

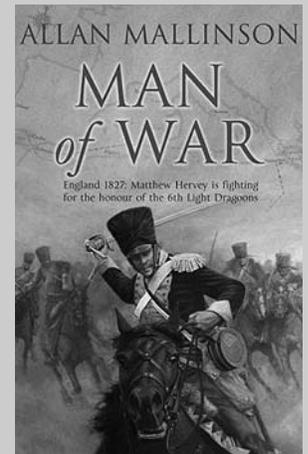
Captain Richard Woodman, author of the Nathaniel Drinkwater novels and a distinguished maritime historian, recently was elevated to the position of Elder Brother of Trinity House, the ancient English organization dedicated to the safety of shipping and the well-being of seafarers since it was granted a charter by Henry VIII in 1514. Woodman describes his long-term association with Trinity House in the following article.

By Captain Richard Woodman

I was first aware of Trinity House in 1960 when on my way to Norway in a sailing vessel. I was part of the crew of a British entry into the third Sail Training Race, as the tall ships events were then styled, and we put into Harwich for fresh water before heading for Oslo. We were offered a berth by the chief superintendent of the Trinity House Depot there, and alongside the pier lay a rather interesting ship, the 1938-built *Patricia*. We went aboard and the experi-

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SCUTTLEBUTT



ALAN MALLINSON

Man of War by Allan Mallinson, the ninth title in the Matthew Hervey novels, will be available in April. It follows *Company of Spears*, which will appear in a new trade paperback edition.

G.S. BEARD

Lieutenant Fury by G.S. Beard will be published in hardcover in August in the United Kingdom. It is the sequel to *Midshipman Fury*, which launched the new naval fiction series in 2006.

JAMES DUFFY

The Fight for Rome by James Duffy, the second title in the author's new Gladiators of the Empire series, will be published in hardcover by McBooks Press in September. It is the sequel to *Sand of the Arena*. The author will be featured in the September issue of *Quarterdeck*.

BY GEORGE!

In Nelson's Footsteps

Every time I approach Victory Gate – the entrance to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard on England's southern coast, with stone pillars topped by golden orbs standing watch on either side – I always feel a rush of emotion, knowing that I am about to walk in Nelson's footsteps. The Dockyard, once officially known as the Royal Dockyard, dates to 1194, when King Richard I ordered that a dock be built in Portsmouth. Eighteen years later King John ordered that the facility be enclosed with "a good and strong wall."

Passing through the ancient portal, it is not difficult to imagine the



Victory Gate,
Portsmouth Royal Dockyard ...

likes of Nelson, Collingwood, St Vincent – or, for that matter, Richard Bolitho and Thomas Kydd – walking this hallowed ground. And reading naval history or fiction set against the backdrop of the 1700s and 1800s brings the scene to life.

Gazing down Main Road, past the three great naval storehouses on the left which were built in the 1760s, the masts of HMS *Victory* are visible over

the Double Ropehouse on the right, which dates to 1771. The storehouses were constructed of re-used ships' timber, with brick cellars to protect flammable materials. Rambling along, the Mast Pond is visible on the right. This was excavated in 1665 by soldiers, townsfolk, and Dutch prisoners of war.

Stepping around the ropehouse, *Victory's* stern hoves into view, and my pulse quickens. This site always brings to mind Douglas Reeman's recollection of his visits to *Victory* as a boy with his grandfather. This ancient and storied vessel, with her dull black hull split by a wide ochre stripe, pierced by gunports, tends to make boys of us all once again.

Waiting to board the ship through an entry port on her starboard side, thoughts of the historic figures – among them St Vincent, Nelson and Hardy – who trod her decks come to mind, along with the thousands of Jack Tars from several nations, including America. The keel for this venerable vessel was laid at Chatham Dockyard on 23 July 1759. She was constructed of over two thousand oak trees – equal to about 60 acres of forest. Now, well over two centuries later, *Victory* remains a fully commissioned ship in the Royal Navy.

Once aboard, visitors find themselves walking the planks of a scarred gundeck, which is the original, dating back to the ship's construction. Upon these timbers, Royal Navy seamen slept, ate, and fought the Battle of Trafalgar. Stepping inside the cabin once inhabited by Nelson, the table at which he wrote his famous last prayer remains yet another symbol of Britain's greatest hero.

Climbing a ladder to the quarterdeck, one emerges into open air where a brass plate embedded into the planking commemorates the spot where Nelson fell, mortally wounded from the musket of a French sharpshooter. Earlier, we had stood in the cockpit four decks

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Coming in April ...

- Broos Campbell launches *The War of Knives*, the second title in his Matty Graves series.

BOOKSHELF

28 - Heart of Oak

By Alexander Kent

“The Falmouth-bound coach hesitated at the brow of a low hill, its wheels jerking and spinning against yet another ridge of frozen mud. The horses, four-in-hand, took the strain, stamping with frustration, their breath steaming in the pale, misty sunlight. They, more than any, were aware that their part of the journey was almost over.”

Thus begins Alexander Kent’s twenty-eighth Bolitho naval adventure. And for readers, another journey is just beginning.

It is February 1818, and Adam Bolitho longs for marriage and a safe personal harbour.

But with so much of Britain’s fleet redundant, he knows he is fortunate to be offered HMS *Onward*, a new 38-gun frigate whose first mission is not war but diplomacy, as consort to the French frigate *Nautilus*.

Under the burning sun of North Africa, Bolitho is keenly aware of the envy and ambition among his officers, the troubled, restless spirits of his midshipmen, and the old enemy’s proximity. It is only when *Nautilus* becomes a sacrificial offering on the altar of empire that every man discovers

the brotherhood of the sea is more powerful than the bitter memories of an ocean of blood and decades of war.

The prose of Alexander Kent, supported by impeccable details and descriptions of life at sea and ashore in the Sea Service of Great Britain has inspired readers – both young and old – for nearly forty years.

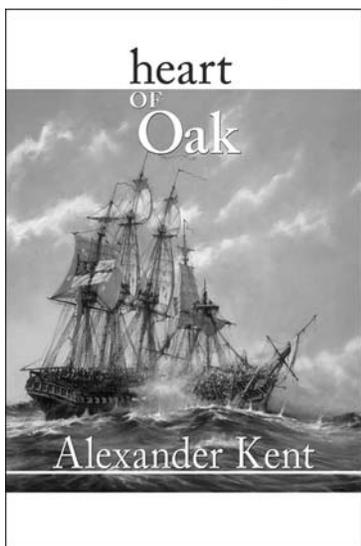
Along the way, the Bolitho novels, including *Heart of Oak*, have frequently appeared on best-seller lists, a weather gauge of their immense popularity around the world.

In this latest chapter in the Bolitho saga, which spans the American Revolution, and the

French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath, the author’s storytelling is as incisive as the day he completed the manuscript for *To Glory We Steer*, which introduced Richard Bolitho and launched the series.

Cracking the covers of *Heart of Oak* is to be savored, like sipping a select wine from Richard Bolitho’s preferred shop in St James’s Street, London. This is vintage Kent.

\$24.00 - 253 pages
US Hardcover First Edition



**NEW FICTION
PUBLICATION DATES
2007**

US (United States)
UK (United Kingdom)
PB (Paperback)
TPB (Trade Paperback)
HC (Hardcover)

March

Heart of Oak (USHC)
by Alexander Kent

Any Approaching Enemy (USTPB)
by Jay Worrall

April

The War of Knives (USHC)
by Broos Campbell

No Quarter (USTPB)
by Broos Campbell

May

Barbary Coast (UKHC)
by Peter Smalley

August

Lieutenant Fury (UKHC)
by G.S. Beard

September

The Fight for Rome (USHC)
by James Duffy

Tomorrow the World (USTPB)
by John Biggins

October

The Admiral’s Daughter (USHC)
by Julian Stockwin

Tenacious (USTPB)
by Julian Stockwin

DOUGLAS REEMAN

From page 1

debut, Douglas Reeman responded to questions from *Quarterdeck* from his home south of London:

***Heart of Oak* takes place in 1818. Had the Royal Navy by this time changed significantly from that during the time of Nelson?**

The navy had been cut tremendously in size, because the war had ended, and nearly all the big ships were laid up. But the fleet was still fully manned, even though the press gangs had become obsolete. Apart from lack of employment, there was still the lure of the sea and the hope of prize money. Men still went to sea, and for some, especially the professionals, it was their only home.

Over the course of the Bolitho novels there have been countless instances of heroism exhibited by the characters – officers and Jack Tars alike. Is this sort of behavior in battle rational?

It may not be rational, but it happens constantly. It's happening right now, wherever men are engaged in combat. It's a question of survival. Once battle is joined, and the enemy's flag is alongside, no matter which enemy it is, you're face to face and blade to blade (and in my own case, gun to gun sometimes). The most ordinary man is capable of selfless heroism.

What motivated the real-life characters in Royal Navy history to face death in ship-to-ship actions or in hand-to-hand combat?

The answer is loyalty, to one another, and to the ship, which is the same thing. Because

whether by chance or, in Bolitho's time, enforcement, those men were there, and that was all they had. Some of the people may have been in the same ship for years, others were newcomers, but they all depended on one another completely, and fought for one another and for the ship.

What did you learn during your service in the Royal Navy that you apply to your novels? Do your experiences in the Sea Service apply to both your Bolitho novels and your modern naval stories?

“Once battle is joined, and the enemy's flag is alongside ... you're face to face and blade to blade (and in my own case gun to gun sometimes).”

– Douglas Reeman

I could say, “Everything!” The same qualities of trust, loyalty, blind courage overriding fear, the dread of showing fear. Learning everything you can about the vessel you're serving in, and in particular the weapons. Technically, I acquired my knowledge of seamanship and gunnery from my time in the Navy, but mostly it taught me to observe and remember the behaviour of ships' companies under all conditions, even the most harrowing. And looking back, I still ask the same question: “What would have happened if ...?” If the Japanese pilots who attacked Pearl Harbor had been armed with the same weapons that wiped out Hiroshima and

Nagasaki, would the war have ended then and there? Suppose the Japanese had bombed Los Angeles or San Francisco instead of Pearl Harbor? Or, obviously, if we'd lost the battle of Trafalgar, when the fleet was commanded by a man who was already dying, and who won it through the sheer force and inspiration of his presence, his legend, his charisma?

What lessons can today's Royal Navy learn from the Sea Service of Nelson's time forward?

Completely different scene, dif-

ferent circumstances. I can't make any comparisons, I'm afraid. The spirit of Nelson is there, certainly. Their role is so different in the world now, however. For one thing, if there was a war, a world war, the speed of that war, the high technology, would mean there would be no convoys necessary to keep this country alive. It would be back to the beginning, mere survival.

What continues to spark your passion for stories about the officers and sailors of the Royal Navy, whether during the Age of Sail or during the twentieth century?

I think it's because each ship

was completely self-dependent. Once they left port, anything they needed, if it was damaged, missing, or otherwise required, they had to create themselves, with whatever skills and material they possessed. Each ship was a microcosm. Boats, sails, rigging ... the old *Superb*, a 74, and one of Nelson's most famous ships, was at sea for four years, as the ballad says, with “ne'er a week in port.” She was never late for a battle, although the weed on her bottom was many feet long, trailing after her. But her ship's company kept her going, and with a huge amount of pride as well. There were lots like her.

Would you share a brief preview of *Heart of Oak* without spoiling the story for your readers?

Chronologically, it follows *Man of War*, and examines tests of Adam's leadership, his responsibilities to those ashore and afloat, and his interest in the youngsters aboard his new ship, whom he sometimes compares with himself and his own lowly beginnings. The book also looks at the psychological effect of working closely with the old enemy, a ship originally taken from the British, and the moment when all men have to realize that the brotherhood of the sea is stronger than the memories of war. Sheer humanity has to take precedence over prejudice and bitterness.

Have you plans for a sequel to *Heart of Oak*, or a new story from Richard Bolitho's career?

We'll continue to follow Adam. There are a few gaps in Richard's career, but at the present time, the impetus is

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27 - *Heart of Oak*

1818 ... Adam commands of the frigate HMS *Onward*, and faces tests of his leadership.

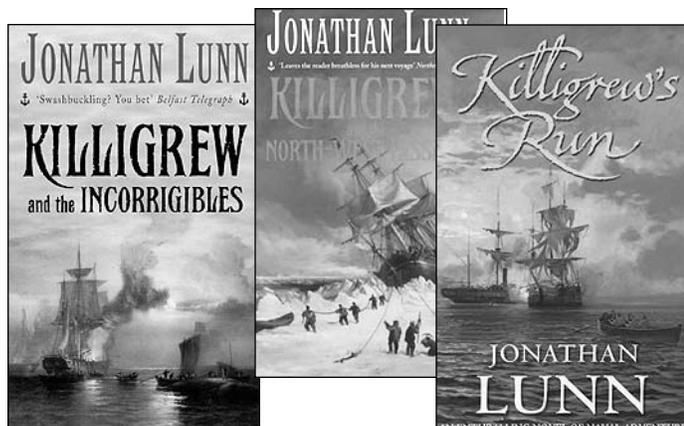
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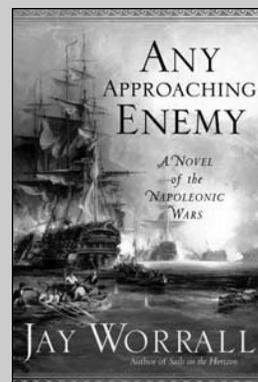
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From page 4
onward!

Is there a new Douglas Reeman novel in the works?

Yes, there is, although, oddly, I found it difficult to let go of *Heart of Oak* for some reason, possibly because it took a long time to write, and was written under some tough circumstances. The new book is now taking shape in my typewriter, and a lot of it takes place in the Mediterranean during the last war with the light naval forces engaged there, drawing once more on my own experiences in MTBs (motor torpedo boats).

Is there anything else you

would like to share with our readers?

I'd like to say that my wife Kim's epic of the eighteenth century, *Coronach*, will be published later this year. It's a very suitable time for me to speak of her, because she helps me so much with my books; we work as a team. I think she's a fine and inspiring writer, and I'm so excited about this project I want everybody to know. I can only say, "I wish I'd written it!" And I sincerely hope my readers will take her and her magnificent book to their hearts.

Visit Douglas Reeman online:
www.douglasreeman.com.

RICHARD WOODMAN

From page 1

ence stuck in my memory so that when, many years later, I was contemplating leaving deep-water cargo-liners, in which I was by then serving as a watch-keeping Third Officer, I recalled what I had heard about in Harwich.

Most mariners in those days thought of Trinity House as a pilotage authority, providing pilots for several major British ports, and would have guessed, quite wrongly, that the *Patricia* was a pilot cutter. In fact she was a “lighthouse tender.” This rather restrictive term actually embraced a range of functions, including buoy laying, surveying, wreck marking, lighthouse and lightvessel maintenance, replenishment and crew relief. Additionally in her case, she also acted as an inspection vessel, taking members of the Board of Trinity House to sea so that individual Board members, the Elder Brethren, could not only inspect their own stations – lighthouses, buoys, beacons, and lightvessels – but also those of individual ports who maintained their own aids to navigation, but were responsible to Trinity House in which are vested powers of supervision under both Royal Charters and Acts of Parliament.

I found the nature of the work appealing, and joined as a Second Officer. My first appointment was to the west coast aboard the Trinity House Vessel *Alert*, looking after a significant number of stations off the English and Welsh coasts, which offered a variety of tasks, usually in bad weather. The area was geographically mixed and encompassed strong tides, exceeded only by those in the Bay of Fundy, in Nova Scotia, so I was broken in to my new job in the most challenging of circumstances. What was more

I took to it with enthusiasm, greatly enjoying the boat work, all personnel reliefs in those days being carried out by boat – often in hazardous conditions, as was emergency buoy work. The notion of buoys being within the compass of a harbor is inaccurate. Many around the British coast lie in exposed positions, and in extreme weather require a degree of attention and emergency support that kept us on our toes and out of our bunks.

In addition to our certificates of competency common to the greater merchant service, we were obliged to pass internal service examinations in

escorting man-of-war always followed the Royal Yacht. It brought the *Patricia's* captain and navigating officer the headache of maintaining station on a ship astern, rather than the convention of following the ship ahead. The *Britannia* did not keep station on anyone.

I thoroughly enjoyed my work in *Patricia*, and in 1973 was promoted to become her First Officer, her executive officer, a post which I held until 1977.

The opportunity then arose to carry out some experimental work in a new offshore launch. This offered me a very small

five – with more reductions in sight eventually leading to two large vessels and one small vessel. Modern technologies had been all this while having a huge impact upon lighthouses and lightvessels. Modern power and control systems had been evolving, personnel levels were reducing, and we had a service helicopter, all offshore stations having been provided with a helipad. The *Winston Churchill* herself had been adapted for helicopter operations and all lighthouse replenishment was now by this means – again a new set of challenges and an even wider variety of tasks over a much larger sea area than hitherto. To accommodate this increase in the work load, we had by then double crewed each ship so that the ships had no significant down time and kept the sea almost continuously.

During the successive summers between 1981 and 1984, with several of my colleagues, I served a secondment (temporary duty) in charge of guardships in the Strait of Dover. These were chartered deepwater trawlers, specially fitted out to operate as intercepting vessels to ward international shipping off a large, submarine civil engineering operation as it worked its way across the Strait, linking the national power grids of the UK and France. This was hair-raising stuff requiring the running of a tactical plot and carried out in the foggy summer months for which the area is notorious.

During this time I had been transferred to the new *Patricia*, which had been built by Robb Caledon in Leith and commissioned in 1982, the old ship having been pensioned off (she ended up as a shoreside nightclub in Stockholm where she

“... *Patricia* occasionally landed some interesting tasks, the most unusual of which was to act as escort to Her Majesty’s Yacht *Britannia* ...”

– Captain Richard Woodman

local knowledge, so one became an expert on all sorts of arcana, and in due course I was moved to another ship, ironically arriving back in Harwich where I served in THV *Ready* until accepting a plum position as Second Officer in the very same *Patricia* I had admired several years earlier. In addition to her ordinary routine tasks, *Patricia* occasionally landed some interesting tasks, the most unusual of which was to act as escort to Her Majesty’s Yacht *Britannia*. We always embarked the members of the Board for this duty – the Elder Brethren – in full fig, and then preceded the Queen in *Britannia*. This was a rare privilege, since the

but independent command, which I took for just over a year, until I was sent to THV *Mermaid* as First Officer. I was in this ship for only a few weeks when her commanding officer was taken seriously ill, and for six months I “acted-up.” This experience stood me in good stead for a promotion board in 1980 when I got my brass hat, the rank of Commander, and a ship of my own, the THV *Winston Churchill*.

The *Winston Churchill* operated on what had been *Alert's* old patch, but this had by this time been expanded since we had reduced the number of lighthouse tenders from nine to

RICHARD WOODMAN

From page 7
lies today).

On completion of the Channel secondment – which was intermittent – I remained in command of *Patricia*. The combination of routine work and the odd ceremonial task kept us all busy and the ship smart, but in due course career progression meant that I had to make the difficult decision to leave the ship and go into operational management ashore. On the one hand this would mean that I saw more of my wife and children, on the other it meant that I would have no more hands-on control of a ship. Though I had been a small-boat sailor for many years, it was not quite the same, but I was also getting older and what I had been doing was not an old man's job.

Ashore I became involved in operational planning, and in particular played a small part in the complexities of the system designed to replace lighthouse keepers by fully automated stations controlled and monitored from a single base station. Unfortunately it was not only the lighthouse keepers whose posts became redundant; once all this was *in situ* there was little call for aging superintendents, and I decided to bite the bullet and concentrate on journalism and authorship for a few years, with a bit of sailing thrown in for good measure. So, shortly after leaving the service, I did some square-rig sailing, and crossed the Atlantic in a yacht.

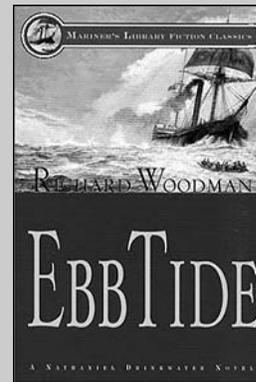
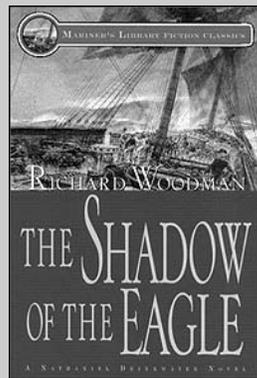
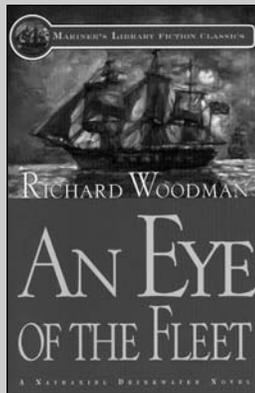
That might have been that, except that I was approached to become a Younger Brother of Trinity House. There are about 300 Younger Brethren and they include naval officers, masters of merchant ships, a handful of pilots and harbor masters, a few

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RICHARD WOODMAN

From page 8

distinguished yachts-people – we have both men and women in our ranks – and one or two other notable members of the British shipping world. Apart from an element of social life, this fraternity seeks to encompass a degree of maritime experience able to act as an advisory body or undertake tasks commensurate with the skill pool available to the Board and it is from the membership of the Younger Brethren that the senior Board Members – the Elder Brethren – are nominated.

The Corporation of Trinity House is one of those odd British institutions which, by virtue of its ancient lineage, is almost impossible to explain to outsiders who either regard them as quaintly archaic or utterly irrelevant. On the face of it the medieval concept of what looks like a guild and remains ruled by a court of thirty-one Elder Brethren – presided over by a Master who happens to be HRH the Duke of Edinburgh – would seem to be just such a body, but in fact it is an extraordinarily efficient General Lighthouse Authority (with responsibility for the coasts of England, Wales, the Channel Islands, and Gibraltar) with an international profile. And while its three able and active executives are indeed Elder Brethren, they are the only ones on salaries, the remainder of the court being voluntary trustees. British aids to navigation are funded on a “user pays” basis by way of light dues on shipping, and are not a burden on the taxpayer. However, that is only one part of the Corporation’s function. Although it no longer supplies pilots to British ports, it remains a licensing authority for deep-sea pilots and it maintains homes for elderly

mariners near Dover, in Kent. It also undertakes charitable and educational work, sponsors a cadetship scheme, provides bursaries for young people wishing to follow the sea and undertakes other charitable works. Most notably it has recently assisted the government of Sri Lanka with expertise and materiel to re-establish aids to navigation on the tsunami ravaged coasts of that beautiful island. Having had a hand in the building of the lighthouses on the Great and Little Basses Reefs in the last century – when Sri Lanka was Ceylon and a British possession – it was fitting that a Trinity House

Bridge.

Consequent upon my appointment as a Younger Brother I served for several years on a committee making charitable grants and in the summer of 2006, was elected to one of the two governing boards. Broadly, in addition to assisting in the management of the charitable activities of the Corporation, I am one of several colleagues who make recommendations in support of the operational remit of the marine department in its service to the international mariner as a provider of aids to navigation. In this respect Trinity House is in the vanguard of seamark

I was made one of thirty-one Elder Brethren I was conscious that the precise number derived from the governing charter given by James II in 1685, that our powers to erect lighthouses and beacons was granted by Elizabeth I and Trinity House’s actual incorporation was by her father, Henry VIII. Even then, in 1514, “The House,” as it is affectionately known, had been in existence for at least three hundred years, though not in its present location. Royal Powers, challenged several times, have been upheld by Acts of Parliament, most notably in 1836 when all residual private lighthouses in England and Wales were nationalized under Trinity House management.

The succession of thirty-one Elder Brethren from 1685 is extraordinary and covers the whole spectrum of British maritime history. Under James II the Master was Samuel Pepys, not a noted seaman but a brilliant naval administrator (and actually a holder of a commission since James wished him to sit on a court-martial), and the office passed gradually from distinguished statesmen to members of the Royal Family. Among the Masters after Pepys may be counted Pitt the Younger, The Duke of Wellington, Palmerston, and Queen Victoria’s Prince Consort, Prince Albert. King William IV was another, while other royal Masters include two Dukes of Edinburgh and one of Connaught and Strathearn (after whose daughter, three *Patricia*’s have been named). The function of chief executive is carried out by the Deputy Master, the present being Rear Admiral Jeremy de Halpert RN.

It is among the Elder

“The Corporation of Trinity House is one of those odd British institutions which, by virtue of its ancient lineage, is almost impossible to explain ...”

– Captain Richard Woodman

presence was there to help the Sri Lankan authorities cope with the unprecedented tragedy that struck them on 24 December 2004.

In order to fund all these charitable undertakings, Trinity House draws funds from its own estate – largely property in London, though some agricultural land is owned – the letting of redundant lighthouse keepers’ cottages as holiday venues, and the provision of Trinity House itself for a wide variety of social events and celebrations, from weddings to formal corporate dinners, for its location is unique in the City of London with views of the Tower of London and Tower

providers. Although still known formally as a “lighthouse authority” the lighthouse itself – like its floating counterpart the lightvessel – is decreasing in importance. A modern buoy can carry an impressive array of data-providing gear nowadays and Trinity House also provides refined and very accurate GPS data and other sophisticated electronic aids to navigation which are – compared with the vulnerable global satellite system – of greater reliability and are therefore available as fail-safe back-up.

Being at the cutting edge, as well as having roots set deep in history, is one of the Corporation’s strengths. When

RICHARD WOODMAN

From page 9

Brethren that the strands of history may best be traced. Of the early British admirals Benbow, Torrington, and Russell may not be well-known to Americans, but many of your readers will be acquainted with Richard, Earl Howe; Edward Vernon; Edward Boscawen; George, Lord Anson; Edward Hawke; Augustus Keppel, Lord Barham, Edward Pellew and even Nelson's uncle Maurice Suckling and – among the distinguished statesmen, Frederick, Lord North, known to British history as the man who lost the Thirteen Colonies of North America! The greater number, however, particularly of those engaged most closely in the day-to-day running of the Corporation, were merchant masters, many commanders of East Indiamen, and well-known in their day. More



Trinity House Vessel *Patricia* (foreground), once commanded by Captain Richard Woodman, with Her Majesty's Yacht *Britannia*. (Photo from collection of Richard Woodman.)

recently Earl Jellicoe, Clement Atlee, and Winston Churchill are notable in the last century. Among its scientific advisors, Michael Faraday is probably the most eminent.

Although the Elder Brethren wear uniform, the Younger do not, for they are all equal –

whatever their previous experiences as admirals, pilots or merchant ship-masters, and that is part of the charm and uniqueness of the organization and its social life, for its hierarchy is not steep, but almost understated. Although there are regular meetings of the court

and boards throughout the year, we assemble en masse once a year, at the festival of Trinitytide, near Trinity Sunday in June. Having dined the night before, the court is convened in the presence of the Master and we process to St Olave's church in Hart Street, returning to Trinity House for lunch before all going our separate and varied ways.

To become part of this living historical lineage is far more than being absorbed into a tradition, it is to have one's name woven into the heart of British maritime history, and is a singular honor.

In addition to the Nathaniel Drinkwater novels, Richard Woodman is the author of three historical books about Trinity House: View from the Sea, Keepers of the Sea, and Lighthouses of Trinity House.

BY GEORGE!

From page 2

below, at the spot where the admiral had succumbed. Looking the length of the ship, and up at the masts, spars, and rigging, is an awe-inspiring experience. During the Age of Sail, this was a technological marvel, sailed through unforgiving seas and into battle by a breed of men who no longer exist.

Across the plaza from *Victory* is the Royal Naval Museum, which covers the entire spectrum of Royal Navy history. The HMS *Victory* exhibition focuses on the history of the ship and her finest hour, the Battle of Trafalgar. Displays allow visitors to sail the First Rate ship, and fire her guns. Nelson's ornate barge is suspended for all to see. And audio-visual presentations, interactive exhibits, and a selection of the admiral's most personal treasures tell the story of one of Britain's greatest heroes as it has never been told before.

The Nelson exhibits are worth revisiting, but perhaps the most impressive – and to me, startling – display is a full-size mannequin of Horatio Nelson himself. Stepping around a walled display, I came face to face with the man, and must admit I was a bit unsettled as he stared at, or possibly through, me. So real was the experience that I expected him to speak! Meandering through the other exhibits, which portray British sailors and their ships

through various historical periods, I could not get my mind off the Nelson encounter. To this day Nelson is revered throughout the fleet, and on Trafalgar Day, 21 October, celebrations and dinners are observed aboard ships flying the Union Jack and the White Ensign, as well as in shore-based installations.

The Dockyard offers a rich tapestry on British naval history, well beyond Nelson, including the *Mary Rose*, which was built for Henry VIII in 1509, and sank on 19 July 1545 within sight of the English coast near Portsmouth. She was carrying a large contingent of soldiers and sailors, with fewer than three dozen surviving. A few years back, the ancient ship was excavated, and more than 20,000 objects were recovered, including pristine examples of bows and arrows, clothing, shoes, and personal affects of seamen and soldiers. The ship's massive hull, now preserved in a state-of-the-art facility, is truly breathtaking to observe.

A full day in the Dockyard implants new and vivid memories with each visit, but as the rail carriage rolls northeast toward London, the imposing image of Nelson never fails to flash before my eyes, as I nod off for a late afternoon nap.

George Jepson

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