



Brave Benbow

by William A. Benbow

For my wife Petra without whose help this book would not have been possible, and for my children, Carol-Lynn and Sean, and grandchildren, Zachary, Eli and Griffin.

Cover by Petra Benbow

BRAVE BENBOW

By

William A. Benbow

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BRAVE BENBOW

The Life of Vice-Admiral John Benbow

1651-1702



By William A. Benbow

The Author welcomes enquiries and additional Benbow information.

Preface

Once upon a time, my father told me a tale of a renowned ancestor, an Admiral in the British Navy, who was part pirate and part hero, who had fought bravely on the Spanish Main, captured many enemy ships and died in a famous battle in the West Indies, in the midst of a mutiny.

This family legend has led me on two quests, to search for my roots and to find Admiral Benbow.

William A. Benbow
Victoria, B.C.
June 1988.

ADMIRAL JOHN BENBOW

Benbow! On the roll of fame
Thine stands forth a honoured name;
Britain mourned her gallant son,
Wilst recounting trophies won;
England's Queen with pity moved
Mourned the hero England loved.

Many a year has passed since then,
Many a race of gifted men:
Heroes, statesmen, princes, kings,
Borne on Time's relentless wings
In their turn have passed away,
Mingling with their kindred clay.

Yet the memory of the brave
Dies not with the opening grave,
But like some sweet perfume cast
Lives, all fragrant, to the last.
So Salopia, thy brave son
In mem'ry lives through vict'ries won!

F.P.A., The Salopian and West-Midland Monthly Illustrated Journal, May
1879.

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Come all ye seamen bold, lend an ear, lend an ear,
Come all ye seamen bold, lend an ear:
Tis of our admiral's fame
Brave Benbow called by name,
How he fought on the main you shall hear, you shall hear,
How he fought on the main you shall hear.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"Whosoever commands the sea commands trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself".

Thus did Sir Walter Raleigh in the early 1600's set the stage for the rise of maritime powers and the clash of emerging empires. One of the key figures in this conflict at the end of that century was the merchant admiral John Benbow.

Spain and Portugal had laid claim to much of the new worlds they had discovered. Portugal had led the way south around the cape of Good Hope and on to the Spice Islands of the East Indies; while Spain capitalized on the West Indies. The two nations had grown in power as they mastered navigation and other essential seafaring skills and monopolized trade upon the sea. They divided the world trade with the assistance of Pope Alexander VI who drew a line down the Atlantic Ocean on May 3 and 4, 1493 in his bull *Inter Caetera*. This line extended north and south through a point 300 miles west of the Portuguese Azores. This granted to the Spanish King all lands in the New World discovered or to be discovered and forbade all persons without Spanish permission to go there for the sake of trade or any other reason. The treaty of Tordesillas in June 1494 reiterated Portugal's monopoly along the African coast and interests in the East Indies.

However the two powers continued to compete with Portugal ignoring the *Inter Caetera* and bringing slaves from Africa to the West Indies. This was a particularly lucrative business as Spain tended to ignore the needs of its colonies while it concentrated on looting the new world of its gold and silver. This attracted French and English and Dutch privateers who first intercepted returning ships near the coast of Spain and then ventured into the Caribbean itself. One of the earliest attempts of the English to trade beyond the line were the voyages of John Hawkins in the 1560's. In 1580 Spain conquered Portugal and so rid itself of that competition and thought itself lord of the seas.

The northern Europeans were stirring, however, and by the turn of the 17th Century two new maritime powers emerged and Spain was eclipsed. Both Holland and England had long claimed authority along their coasts. England insisted on all foreign ships lowering their flags in salute in the English Channel. The United Provinces of the Netherlands were breaking away from Spanish control and sending out fleets of armed merchantmen to wrest African and Far Eastern markets from the Spanish Crown. These "Sea Beggars" as they were called attracted French

Huguenots who had no qualms about crossing the Papal line. French privateers under Francois le Clerc attacked Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Santiago and Havana in 1553. In 1556 French privateers captured ten of the Spanish Galleons.

The English under Francis Drake further probed the Caribbean and even set up trading posts. Drake sacked several Spanish cities including Portobelo and Carthagena in the 1580's. Philip II of Spain responded by sending the Armada to attack England in 1588. The English established their superiority over the Spanish by defeating the Armada off Calais. The English ships were more streamlined and were more manoeuvrable and faster. The Dutch were challenging Spain in the Moluccas for the Spice trade and in the Mediterranean itself.

With the death of Queen Elizabeth I, James VI of Scotland became James I of England, the first of the Stuarts. He launched a period of peace with Spain and attempted to solidify this by proposing marriage between his son and the Spanish Infanta. He tried to negotiate an English presence in the West Indies by promising to forbid his people from going anywhere in the West Indies where the Spanish were already established, but allow them to develop any area not already settled. The Spanish did not agree but a truce was in place. Similarly the French acknowledged that their corsairs sailed in the Indies at their own risk and action between the Spanish and them would not damage official relations between the two countries. The Spanish even entered negotiations with the Dutch. Thus the northern European countries attempted to establish more peaceful relations with Spain and so remained officially out of the West Indies. However, unofficially English, French and Dutch interests continued to trade and began to settle some of the smaller islands which had been ignored by the Spanish.

These smaller islands, the Lesser Antilles, form a semi-circular barrier stretching north and south from Trinidad to Antigua like a ring of forts overlooking the valley of the Caribbean and the Greater Antilles of Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, and Cuba. The Spanish had seen no use for these small islands when they laid claim to the larger ones and the main land of New Spain (Central America and Mexico) and the Spanish Main (South America). This was a strategic error of gigantic proportions as this chain of small islands once occupied by the northern Europeans allowed them to control the Caribbean Sea and intercept Spanish traffic. Their position is particularly significant in that the Easterly Trade Winds place them to windward of the main Spanish possessions. In the Caribbean, generally speaking, the wind blows strongly from the East and so in the days of sailing ships movement was best executed from east to west. Thus privateers could swoop down on the Spanish from out of the East whereas the Spanish had to beat upwind for weeks in order to attack the islands of the Lesser Antilles.

This northern European settlement of the West Indies was given impetus by the dissolution of the Spanish Dutch truce in 1621. The Dutch under Piet Hein looted San Salvador in May 1624. In response the Spanish sent everything they had to retake it. In the end the Spanish fleet was completely destroyed by a combination of bad weather and the Dutch. With the seas cleared of Spanish seapower the French, English and Dutch moved in. The English chose Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis and began planting tobacco and sugar. French joined the British on St. Kitts and settled Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, and Grenada while the Dutch took St. Eustatius, Saba and St. Maarten in the Leeward Islands and Curacao, Aruba and Bonaire near the Spanish Main. All three countries settled east of the Spanish Main in Guyane: British, French and Dutch (Surinam). The Dutch administered the coup de grace in 1628 when Piet Hein captured

the galleons and bankrupted Spain. She had no money to pay her European armies and her West Indian colonies were isolated and dependent on trade with the enemy. Between 1623 and 1636 the Dutch intercepted 500 Spanish ships, nearly one a week.

With the 1640's came the English Civil War and Cromwell's rise to power. Following his successes in England Scotland and Ireland, Cromwell decided to rid the seas of the Dutch trade monopoly and so began the first of the three Anglo-Dutch wars. The Dutch were led by Maarten Harpertszoon Tromp, a "tarpaulin", a life long seaman who had worked his way up to the top. Cromwell chose Robert Blake, a wealthy merchant and soldier, to be his general-at-sea. They fought seven major sea battles and developed strategies and techniques for war at sea that lasted for centuries.

On April 8, 1653 Blake and two other generals-at-sea signed two documents detailing sailing and fighting instructions. These set out directions and communications which included the line of battle formation wherein each ship follows the one before in precise order and engages the enemy in concert once the general commences to attack. Previously ships had fought individually with little coordination and often were unable to bring their full firepower to bear on an enemy ship for fear of hitting a friendly one. The line ahead battle formation ensured full broadsides could be utilized against the enemy and protected the bows and sterns of the lined ships. Improved signalling systems and the development of a corps of professional officers combined with these new tactics to enable the English to gain control of the Channel and blockade the Zuyder Zee. Peace was signed at Westminster in April 1654. It was about this time that the future Admiral John Benbow was born.

Cromwell next dispatched General-at-Sea William Penn with a fleet to the West Indies in order to wrest from the Spanish as much of their island territories as possible. At the same time he sent another fleet under Blake to the Mediterranean to establish the prestige of the English fleet and attack the French as well as the Barbary pirates of North Africa.

The West Indies fleet attacked Santa Domingo on Hispaniola but failed miserably. Rather than return empty handed the English attacked and took the Island of Jamaica. The English thus stumbled on one of the most strategically important islands in the Caribbean. It has a natural harbour capable of sheltering a large fleet and is situated in the centre of Spain's possessions and close to the route the galleons took from Carthagen to Havana. So in 1655 began the English presence in Jamaica. It very quickly became the base for British and allied privateers.

Charles II was brought back to England from the Netherlands in 1660. The Navy though high in prestige was deeply in debt. As well Holland and England were drifting towards conflict. Both engaged in skirmishes in their far off trade routes. In 1664 English semi-official privateering yielded more than 100 prizes. To provoke the Dutch, Charles granted territory in the New World to the Duke of York which happened to include the New Netherlands. The Duke sent a Naval expedition to the new world and captured New Amsterdam from governor Peter Stuyvesant. As well Charles promoted a new English company, the Royal African Company to harass Dutch trading in West Africa.

In February 1665 the Dutch had had enough and declared war on the English. In the spring the Dutch armada sailed forth. It consisted of 103 men of war manned by 21,000 men and mounting nearly 5000 guns. It met the English fleet of 137 ships on June 11 off the east coast of

England near Lowestoft. The Dutch suffered from their divided political makeup which gave them too many admirals and encouraged jealousies and competitiveness between provinces. They lost 30 ships and 3 Admirals in this first battle.

The English however, had a more terrible fate in 1665 when the Black Plague decimated London. The winter slowed the spread of the disease and both countries rebuilt their fleets. The French declared war on England in January 1666 but never went to battle.

The Dutch were finally presenting a united front under Admiral De Ruyter. The English divided their fleet because of the added French threat. The Dutch caught them near the Flemish coast and forced them in against the land, ravaging them in what became known as the Four Days Fight. On the second day, though outnumbered now by 80 ships to 40 the English fought on. Then with only 16 fit ships the English made a fighting retreat. They joined up with another English fleet under Prince Rupert and with 60 ships decided to continue the battle. Finally fog rolled in and both sides broke off.

In July de Ruyter returned to the estuary of the Thames but was forced to make a fighting retreat leaving the English in control of the Channel. The English attacked and burnt a small Dutch town on the island of Vlieland and set fire to 150 Dutch merchant vessels.

In seeming divine vengeance fire broke out in London and financial ruin fell upon the English. Thirteen thousand houses were destroyed in this Great Fire of London of September 1666 which raged for four days. Nearly bankrupt, King Charles began to negotiate for peace in the Dutch town of Breda. As talks dragged the Dutch launched a daring raid up the Thames. Cornelis de Witt with de Ruyter attacked the Chatham docks on the Medway River and destroyed several English warships. The pride of the English Navy, the Royal Charles, was towed back to Holland.

Although the Dutch thus held the military advantage they were forced to make peace quickly to deal with a French invasion of the Spanish Netherlands. The treaty of Breda was signed on July 31, 1667. Dutch trading principles were confirmed in that English navigation laws were changed to allow Dutch ships to carry goods to England from the Rhine. As well England gave up its attempt to wrest a piece of the Spice trade from the Dutch East Indies. They returned the nutmeg island, Pulo Run and conceded a Dutch claim to Surinam in the West Indies. In return the Dutch agreed to let the English keep a fort in West Africa, and so maintain a foothold in the growing slave trade. Also, English title to the New Netherlands was recognized (New York and New Jersey).

In the West Indies the English under Henry Morgan protected their interests by attacking Spanish ports such as Portobelo, Maracaibo, and Panama. Spain finally capitulated and in the Treaty of Madrid reluctantly recognized English holdings in the Caribbean in exchange for restrictions on such attacks on its shipping and colonies.

But in Europe Louis XIV was on the move. His 1667 attempt to conquer the Spanish Netherlands was thwarted by a brief alliance between the United Provinces and England. However in 1672 the French struck again, this time with England supporting them at sea. Initially the French were victorious and penetrated deep into Holland itself. The retreating Dutch rallied around their newly elected stadtholder William of Orange. So began William's lifelong obsession to check Louis' designs. He drowned the French advance by breaching the dikes and flooding a large area around Amsterdam. He outflanked them by forming alliances

with the German Emperor, Spain and Lorraine. His ships under Admiral de Ruyter defeated the English in 1672 off Sole Bay and off Ostende and Kijkduin in 1673. England sued for peace in February 1674 in the Treaty of Westminster. The land war dragged on but peace was finally concluded by the Treaties of Nijmegen in 1678-79. The Dutch Republic was left intact and Louis had created an implacable and unyielding foe in William of Orange.

It was also in 1678 that John Benbow began his career in the Royal Navy by enlisting as Master's mate on the Rupert, in Portsmouth.

Religion became a more critical factor in European politics by two events in 1685. Louis revoked the Edict of Nantes, which since 1598 had allowed toleration of Protestants in France. Protestants fled to Holland, friendly German states and England. William of Orange utilized religious fears to form alliances with the other protestant states in Europe. The English were, however, divided. The death of Charles II brought his brother, the Catholic James II to the throne. James had fought in the French army while exiled following the Civil War. With the restoration of his brother he was made lord high admiral and led the English Navy as an ally of France against Holland. In fact the English White squadron had been entirely composed of French ships. He was quite pro French in his sympathies, and attempted to lead both the English state and church in a French and Catholic direction.

He failed to realize that the majority of his countrymen were committed to the English Church and to an independent foreign policy. He had learned nothing from his father's civil war. In 1688 the English again chose to rid themselves of an unwanted king and drove James out of the country. They invited William of Orange to take the English throne and this he did to unite the two countries in his war with France.

So in this the final quarter of the Seventeenth Century England and Holland, two of the most powerful maritime empires were united and at war with France. For all of these countries trade was the source of wealth. Hence controlling the Seas of the World was strategically essential in order to protect one's own commerce and to interfere with that of the enemy. It is in this setting that John Benbow rose to become Vice-Admiral of the White, and commander-in-chief of all his majesty's ships in the West Indies.

In this capacity Benbow made two voyages to the West Indies: the first in 1698-1700 during a brief respite in the French-English war; and the second, in 1701-2, at the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession. In 1701 Louis XIV of France moved against Austria to support his grandson Philip as heir to the Spanish throne. At the same time Louis declared his backing for James Edward, son of the deposed James II, as King of England. William III of England feared for the safety of English possessions in the Caribbean, so dispatched his fighting British bulldog, John Benbow, to protect English interests, to court the Spanish colonies and prevent their treasure fleet from falling into French hands. The French, equally interested in the West Indies sent three powerful squadrons, intending to attack British holdings and capture the Spanish treasure. The combined Spanish-French naval forces outnumbered Benbow three to one.

Nevertheless Benbow successfully interfered with French designs, preventing any major attack on English colonies, and sought out the French squadron led by Buccaneer Admiral Jean du Casse. The two forces met off the coast of the Spanish Main near Cartagena. It is this battle that caused generations of sailors to sing his praises as "Brave Benbow", and to vilify the perpetrators of what has become known as "The Benbow Mutiny".

So here's to John Benbow, who loved the salt sea,
Was never a seadog more merry than he.
So gallantly fought he, so roundly he swore,
The like of John Benbow we'll never see more.

THE ADMIRAL'S MUCH DISPUTED ANCESTRY

No one was indifferent to Admiral John Benbow. He was either hated or loved by his contemporaries and through this duality of perspective much fiction has arisen. He was seen by his friends and admirers as bravest of the brave, a model of British seamanship and courage. But his enemies and detractors, of which there were not a few, saw him as foolhardy, hot headed, and a poor leader. His notoriety and his fame stem for the most part from the mutiny of his Captains in 1702. What has subsequently been written of him must be seen in light of this action.

Much of the controversy centres on the Admiral's origins, with some authors attesting to his gentlemanly status, while others affirm he sprang from yeoman and burgher stock. Neither genealogy need be spurned. The significance is in the interplay of his roots with interpretations of the mutiny. The Navy was divided into two classes in the Admiral's day: the "tars" who rose by merit and worked their way up through the ranks, and the "gentlemen" who owed their rank to family connections and parliamentary preference. It has been suggested by some that the Admiral's disagreement with his captains was rooted in this division. It is argued that he treated them "roughly" and that this was a result of his "mean parentage". Unfortunately no written record remains of this criticism by his contemporaries. What we are left with is the extensive refutation of this suggestion by his earliest biographer, Dr. John Campbell, and subsequent historical analysis. The Admiral's ancestry is thus the fulcrum of much that has been written about him.

Dr. Campbell wrote of the Admiral in "Lives of the British Admirals", and "The Naval History of Great Britain" (1742) and in an article he contributed to the "Biographia Britannica", published in 1747. He used as his sources several of the general historians of the day, newspaper accounts, the Admiral's journal, and most importantly, interviews with Mr. Paul Calton, Esq., who married one of the Admiral's daughters, Katherine. Much of the anecdotal information recorded about the Admiral comes from Mr. Calton and is much quoted by later authors.

Campbell states that the Admiral was born "about the year 1650 and was descended of a very ancient worthy and honourable family in Shropshire". (Biographia, p.676) He says that he was not, as some have suggested, of mean parentage. His father was Colonel John Benbow and

the family lost their wealth and status because of their loyalty to Charles 1 and 11. He gives an account of how John and his brother Thomas, both men of estates, joined the King's service in 1642 as Colonels. He believed that the two were captured at the battle of Worcester on September 3, 1651, by the Parliamentary forces and Thomas was shot on October 19 with several other notable gentlemen. Campbell thinks that this "sufficiently shews that the Benbows were then, or had been lately, a very considerable family in Shropshire; for otherwise the Colonel would hardly have been sent out of the world in so good company." (Biographia, p.681)

According to Campbell the Admiral's father, John escaped and survived till after the Restoration of Charles 11 in 1660, and accepted a position in the Ordinance of the Tower of very low income. He tells a tale from Paul Calton, which he attests has been confirmed by several other persons of credit. It is to have taken place a little before the 1665 Dutch war. The King had come to the Tower to examine the magazines. There he spotted the good old colonel, whom he had not seen in twenty years and who now had a fine head of grey hairs. The King immediately embraced him.

"My old friend Colonel Benbow, what do you here?"

Benbow replied: "I have a place of fourscore pounds a year, in which I serve your majesty as cheerfully, as if it brought me in four thousand."

"Alas!" said the King, "is that all that could be found for an old friend at Worcester? Colonel Legge, bring this gentleman to me to-morrow, and I will provide for him and his family as it becomes me." (Lives, p.205)

Unfortunately the old man was overcome with the King's gratitude and goodness, and sitting down on a bench, there breathed his last, before the King was barely out of the Tower. Campbell quips "And thus, both brothers fell martyrs to the royal cause, one in grief, and the other in joy. Campbell alleges that all the father left the son was his love for the sea, although he sternly denies that the Admiral "was ever a waterman's boy as some writers have asserted." He doesn't explain where his love for the sea originated. He does add that the boy would have been about 15 then and was "bred to the sea". Benbow's apprenticeship is however referred to in "The Historical and Political Mercury" for February 1703 which states:

"This Rear Admiral John Bembo was born at Shrewsbury in the County of Salop, and bred up in the Free School there: and tho' the family of the Bembo's were none of the meanest, yet were they so reduced for their Loyalty that he was bound Prentice to a Waterman: Afterwards he us'd the seas and set up for a Privateer in the West Indies."

Interestingly, this earliest written reference to the Admiral's youth suggests that though he had a common upbringing, he was not of low birth in that his family had suffered because of their loyalty. It thus supports Campbell's thesis though he was not pleased with the waterman apprenticeship. Actually this would have been an excellent beginning as it entailed working on

river boats on the Severn which was the life blood of trade and led to the sea. John if 15 when his father died might well have needed to work as an apprentice, especially if the family had lost their estates and had no family business to fall back on.

Campbell further supports his claim that the Admiral sprang from a noble family by stating that King William "granted the Admiral an augmentation of arms which consisted in adding to the three Bent Bows, he already bore, as many arrows, which single act of royal favour, sufficiently destroys the foolish report of his being of mean extraction." (Biographia, p.676)

Campbell was accepted for many years as the authority on the Admiral and was much quoted and utilized in subsequent histories. Just 30 years after Campbell's account, T. Phillips made a significant addition to Benbow lore, when he published in 1779 his HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES OF SHREWSBURY. He follows Campbell for the most part, stating that Admiral Benbow was descended of an ancient family in Shropshire, but adds "and born on Cotton-Hill in this town, about the year 1650." This is the earliest reference, I have yet come across, to the Cotton Hill tradition. Thanks are due to antiquarian Harry Owen for bringing this early reference to my attention.

The next major author of interest is John Charnock who wrote his *Biographia Navalis* in 1795. Much of what we know of naval captains of that era is due to Charnock's scholarship. He follows Campbell in suggesting the Admiral is descended from a noble family.

"Many persons have taken uncommon pains to represent this very brave and ever-to-be lamented commander as a person of very mean and despicable origin...The very reverse, however of what has been industriously circulated by many, relative to his origin, is the fact. He is said to have been descended from a family both ancient and honourable." (Charnock, vol.ii, p.221)

He adds that his grandfather was John Benbow, deputy clerk of the crown in the reign of King James I, an office he held for forty years. Charnock attributes two sons, Thomas and John, to this Clerk of the Crown. Following Campbell, he states both were colonels in the service of Charles the First, and both were captured at the battle of Worcester. He describes Thomas as the Colonel shot in the Castle, and John as the Admiral's father, who escaped, lived privately till after the restoration, and then obtained a small appointment in the Tower.

This grandfather John Benbow was a member of a particular branch of the Benbow family that lived in Newport a town several kilometres from Shrewsbury. This Newport Benbow family is specifically mentioned in the Naval Chronicle of 1809. The author of this memoir of Admiral Benbow commissioned an engraving based on a painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller and added to this the Admiral's Arms. In researching this he had the Herald's records searched and concluded the following:

"All our naval historians and even the editors of *Biographia Britannica*, have stated that, on the Admiral's return from the West Indies, in the year 1700, King William, 'as a signal mark of his kind acceptance of all his services, granted him an augmentation of arms, which consisted in adding to the three bent bows, which he already bore, as many arrows'. This is an altogether

erroneous statement. The Newport branch of the Benbow family, from which the Admiral sprang, bore two bows, and two bundles of arrows, as far back as the year 1623; and, on diligently searching the books in the Herald's Office, we find that no augmentation whatsoever has been granted to any of the family since that period." (p.192)

This is the first scholarly criticism of Campbell's facts and clearly shows he was mistaken with regard to the augmentation, a story he received from Paul Calton. However, it should be noted that this author, after careful research, did not conclude that Admiral Benbow was not entitled to armorial bearings, only that Campbell's description was incorrect. And he specifically links the Admiral to the Newport branch of the Benbows.

About the same time Archdeacon Hugh Owen reinforced this Newport connection in his work Some Account of the Ancient and Present State of Shrewsbury (1808). Owen describes the Benbow family as originating in Newport and mentions John, the deputy clerk of the crown in chancery, as the first recipient of a grant of arms. This he described as "Sable, two bows or, stringed argent, between as many garbs of five arrows, of the second, barbed and fleched of the third." He too notes the difference with Campbell's description of Benbow's coat of arms and augmentation by William. He also clarifies that it was John's brother Roger who fathered Thomas and John:

"His eldest son the brave Thomas Benbow, who was born in 1603 rose to the rank of Colonel in the service of Charles 1 and was shot in this town [Shrewsbury] on October 19th, 1651, by sentence of a Court Martial...This may perhaps account for the omission in St. Mary's register of the baptismal entry of his nephew John, the Admiral, who is said to have been born about 1650."

Owen further adds that tradition has uniformly placed his birth in the ancient house at the foot of Cotton-hill. He follows Campbell in giving his father as John, the second son of Roger, also a colonel, who lived privately in Shropshire until the restoration when he obtained a small post in the Ordinance at the Tower. With Campbell he relates the death of the Admiral's father, leaving him an orphan at about age 15. Unlike Campbell he allows that he is said to have been reduced to the necessity of becoming a waterman's boy.

Owen includes another enticing piece to the puzzle of the Admiral's family. He describes a flat stone at the entrance to St. Mary's church which has the inscription:

Here Lyeth the Body
of Mrs. Elinor
Hind, Relick of the
Late Mr. Samuel Hind
Grocer and Sister of
ADMIRAL BENBOW.
She departed
this life 24th May
Aged....

To this he adds the entry in St. Mary's Register: "Elianor Haynes widow buried 30 May 1724." (Owen, p.419) He notes she kept a coffee house near the church with a portrait of her uncle Colonel Thomas hanging over the fireplace. As well, he relates a tradition that when one of Colonel Thomas' judges visited her coffee house, he pulled off his glove, and discovered it was covered in blood. The divisions of the Civil war were not lightly forgotten in the Shrewsbury area. These oral traditions clearly support the connection between Admiral Benbow and the Newport branch of the family.

A few years later the Archdeacon joined forces with John Blakeway, Prebendary of Lichfield and published their History of Shrewsbury in 1825. In this work Blakeway and Owen pursue the Cotton Hill connection to Admiral Benbow. As a result of their further researches they became quite convinced that Campbell's information was erroneous and so attacked his source, namely Paul Calton.

"The story is extremely well told by Dr. Campbell, but unfortunately is little to be depended on, and some of it, we are sure, cannot have been founded in fact...How such errors should be derived from a source apparently so authentick, is difficult to say...If there has been any intentional misrepresentation in the case, (and it is really not easy to avoid such a suspicion,) one would rather impute it to the weakness of his descendants, than suppose a sturdy seaman capable of being ashamed of his humble origin." (vol.i, p.470)

Blakeway and Owen base their theory on the gravestone referred to by Owen, in St. Mary's churchyard, Shrewsbury. At the time of their writing the stone had disappeared. They state it was demolished in 1808. They give the inscription with one addition: where Owen originally could not make out the age, they now have it as unequivocally "79". This is quite intriguing, since the stone had long since vanished. Based on this age of 79 or 78 they claim to have deduced her birth must have been in 1646. They then point to an entry in St. Mary's parish which gives for the 7th of July, 1646 "Elinor, daughter of William Benbo, baptized". They add:

"Her identity is further ascertained by the licence granted by the official of St. Mary's, March 15, 1672, for her Marriage with John Pernell (her first husband), in which she is called 'Helen Benbow, aged 26': so that when we read in the records of the corporation that "Wm. Benboe the younger, of Shrewsbury,

tanner, was admitted a burgess on the 17th May 1648, having issue Margaret aged about four, and Elianor aged about two years...we cannot doubt that this was the lady commemorated in the epitaph, and consequently that her brother, Admiral Benbow, was son of William Benbow, tanner, but born after May 1648 when his father had no other issue than the two daughters mentioned above." (vol.i, p.391)

Furthermore the poor books of St. Mary's list William Benbow of the Tan-house at Cotton Hill from 1652 to 1664. So Blakeway and Owen supported and developed the tradition that Admiral Benbow was the son of the tanner of Cotton Hill and ran away to sea rather than stay in the family business.

Unfortunately, Blakeway and Owen make a common error of some genealogists, they assume there was only one Elinor Benbow born around the year 1646. This of course is an assumption that cannot be made, as is evident similarly by the many John and William Benbows of the day. As well, Elinor's age at death is not quite so firm, if we follow Owen's original record of the inscription. They may indeed have discovered the actual baptismal registration of the Admiral's sister, but on the other hand the registration may well be of another person entirely. The English Civil War was raging at the time and parish records suffered greatly as puritans attacked the established Church. No birth record has been found of the Admiral himself. I believe it is quite an assumption to discount Campbell's information solely on the basis of their inferred premises.

Blakeway and Owen compound their error by mixing the Newport Benbows with those of Cotton Hill. As Owen had previously held they accept the Admiral's relationship to the Cavalier shot in 1651 as a Royalist. However, they make much of Campbell's having got his name and rank wrong. They refer to his tombstone which is inscribed: "Here lieth the body of Captain John Benbow who was buried October 16, 1651." As well the St. Chad's parish record supports this: "1651, Oct. 16. John Benbowe, Captaine, who was shott at the Castle B." (vol.i. pp.469-470)

However, Blakeway and Owen go on to claim that there were no estates held by the two Benbow brothers and that the name does not appear in lists of Nobleman and Gentlemen of the day. Furthermore, they initiate a search of the Herald's College and conclude, as did the Naval Chronicle, that there is no evidence of an augmentation of arms. Unfortunately, they make another quantum assumption based on this fact, namely, that the Admiral did not use the Newport coat of Arms. They acknowledge that there was a Shropshire family who bore two bent bows and two sheaves of arrows but hold that the Admiral was not related to them. They conclude, "This is another proof of the extreme incorrectness (to give the lightest term) of Mr. Calton's communication." (vol.ii, p.391)

Blakeway and Owen develop a family tree for the Admiral which starts with Lawrence Benbow of Prees, yeoman, whose son William moves to Shrewsbury, marries Eleanor and is admitted a burgher in 1628. This couple have a son William Benbow at Cotton Hill who is baptised at St. Julian's on October 15, 1615. This they maintain is the Admiral's father. They list William's brother John baptised at St. Julian's on August 20, 1623 as the Captain John Benbow shot on October 16, 1651. It is remarkable that Archdeacon Owen who earlier described this

Cavalier as a member of the Newport line should now place him in the Cotton Hill line, to fit Blakeway's theory.

The import of Blakeway's theory is summed up in his conclusion regarding class prejudices as a cause for the Mutiny. "The two classes divided the navy into violent parties after the Revolution; and to this, rather than to cowardice, by which British sailors have been rarely tainted, we would attribute the scandalous desertion of our admiral by the captains of his squadron." (vol.ii, p.393)

Their point of view was accepted as fact by many subsequent authors. Sir John Laughton, in the prestigious Dictionary of National Biography, published in 1885 follows this view unquestioningly and joins the attack on Campbell and his source Paul Calton. As well he takes a most disparaging view of the Admiral himself. He describes Paul Calton's information as "extraordinary misrepresentations" and "utterly untrustworthy" and describes him as "foisting on Campbell's credulity a romance, of which the greater part has not even a substratum of fact." (DNB vol.ii, pp.210-211)

In disposing of Campbell's 'Romance' he discounts the traditional admiration of the Admiral and suggests he mismanaged his squadron and "goaded them to crime" by "his own want of temper and tact." He adds that Kirkby and the other captains were officers of good repute and likely their disaffection with Benbow was personal, and due to his rough and coarse treatment of them.

It is interesting that Sir Laughton places the Admiral in the Cotton Hill line and states he has no connection to the family who bore the Benbow coat of arms, yet still maintains he was nephew to that Captain John Benbow who was shot as a royalist in 1651.

These two Benbow lines, the Newport and the Cotton Hill were finally disentangled in 1944 when Sir Geoffrey Callender and C. F. Britton published "Admiral Benbow, Fact and Fiction", in the Mariner's Mirror. They show by the Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, for 1651 that it was indeed Captain John Bendbow who was held a prisoner by Parliament and subsequently shot. They point out that though Campbell erred in naming him Colonel Thomas, there is evidence that he had a brother Thomas and both may have been Colonels in the Royalist Army. It would be natural for Parliament to disrate John to his former Parliamentary rank of Captain when court-martialling him.

They further show that the 1623 Visitation of Shropshire (published 1889 by the Harleian Society) gives a Pedigree of the Benbows of Newport, Salop, which is remarkably like Campbell's information which he received from Paul Calton.

"Here we find quite clearly set forth that John Benbow of Newport, Salop, and Deputy Clerk in Chancery, to whom armorial bearings were granted in 1584, was great-grandson of Roger Benbow of Newport and one of many children born to Thomas Benbow and Elizabeth Peryns of Brockton in the same county. One of John, the Deputy Clerk's brothers was christened Roger after his great-grandfather, and married Margaret Lerkyn of Cheshire. This pair had seven children...the first born Thomas and his brother John, who was shot in the cabbage garden under Shrewsbury Castle and buried at St. Chad's Church, 16 October 1651. (Callender and Britton, p.134)

They conclude that John Benbow the Cavalier was of the Newport line. However, they accept Blakeway and Owen's theory that the Admiral was born to the Cotton Hill line. What then of the long tradition both local and written that he was nephew to the Cavalier. Callender and Britton try to solve this inconsistency by speculating that,

"there is the strongest probability that, when John Benbow the Admiral became world famous, he would in local estimation be indissolubly linked with John Benbow the romantic figure of the Great Civil War; the tragic circumstances of whose death seemed to foreshadow and anticipate his own." (p.136)

I am not persuaded.

I believe it is much more likely that Blakeway and Owen may have erred in assuming that they had discovered the Admiral's sister Elenor's baptismal record, and in so doing had irrefutably linked him to the Cotton Hill line. The tradition that he is of the Newport line has much more historical evidence both in the writings of his admirers and detractors. As mentioned earlier, in the earliest reference to his origins, the Dutch obituary of 1703 in the Historical and Political Mercury, it states that though his family were not of mean birth they were reduced because of their loyalty to the crown during the Civil War. Moreover the similarity of the 1623 pedigree and Paul Calton's information is extremely persuasive. It is probable that the Admiral's daughter Catherine told her husband of the family tradition concerning the brothers Thomas and John. The tale having passed from her grandfather to her father and then through her to her husband it is not surprising that precise relationships became blurred and names transposed. It is unlikely that Paul Calton could have fabricated information so close to the documented facts such as the names of John and Thomas. Such a background would help to explain how the Admiral managed to start his career in the Navy as a Master's Mate and would also account in part for his rapid rise.

As well it is worth noting that there is substantial evidence he used a coat of arms. Callender and Britton are particularly helpful in describing this coat of Arms. They cite as the most important evidence an Alms Dish preserved in the Church of Milton near Abingdon. They describe it as follows:

"The silver alms-dish, which bears the London hall-mark of 1679-80, is engraved with the shield and crest of Benbow. It appears that Paul Calton, of the Manor House at Milton, who was baptised at Milton Church in 1664, married Catherine, a daughter of the famous Admiral John Benbow, and that she gave this dish to the church. She died in 1744. The dish has a deep depressed centre and a wide rim with a ribbed edge...The arms displayed on this silver dish may...be described as follows: Arms. Sable, two strung bows endorsed in pale Or, garnished Gules between two bundles of arrows, in fesse, three in each Or, barbed and tipped Argent, tied Gules. Crest. A harpy close Or, face proper, her breast pierced with an arrow Or. (p.137)

The dish remains still in the Milton Church, and the church wardens will upon request gladly display it. Callender and Britton point out that this coat of arms differs from that of the Naval Chronicle in that the latter has the bows front to front whereas the Alms Dish has them back to back, with the strings nearly touching. As well the Chronicle's Crest has a wreath of red roses on the head of the harpy and lacks the golden arrow through her bosom. They point out that the Newport Benbow Arms, that is, those granted to John Benbow, Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, in 1584, have the bows back to back with the strings closest and the Harpy has a wreath of roses rather than an arrow through her breast. They suggest that the Naval Chronicle erred in its rendition of the Arms due to a poor understanding of heraldry terminology. They appear to be unaware that the Coat of Arms used on Benbow's tomb in Kingston Parish Church is identical to the Naval Chronicle's. Most intriguing is the fact that the tomb Arms differ from the Alms dish not only in having the bows reversed, but also in lacking the arrow through the Harpy's breast. This suggests a fluidity even in those days of Arms interpretation.

As the dish dates from 1680 and was donated to the Church by Catherine, the Admiral's daughter, it is logical to assume it belonged to the Admiral and is an accurate representation of the Arms he used. The addition of the arrow echoes Paul Calton's statement that the Admiral was granted an augmentation of Arms consisting of an addition of arrows. It is not unlikely that Paul Calton's understanding of heraldry was limited and he may well have gotten the details wrong by assuming that the original Arms consisted only of bows to which were added the arrows. His information about the Cavalier similarly lacked this accuracy of detail. Why then is there no record of this augmentation. Callender and Britton speculate that the Admiral may have applied to the College of Arms for such an addition to the Benbow Arms and have received a preliminary drawing but was possibly ordered to sea before completing the transaction. He may even have been encouraged by his King as Calton suggested. I would surmise, however, that it was offered not as a reward for his first West Indian expedition as Calton indicates, but rather as an unfulfilled promise for undertaking a second West Indian voyage.

Because Callender and Britton place the Admiral in the Cotton Hill line they assume he 'borrowed' Arms that were not his own, from the Newport line, and had them modified so as not to offend the rightful owners. This seems most unlikely given Paul Calton's account as one is not likely to make a family tradition of such unethical 'borrowing'. A more plausible explanation is that he was indeed entitled to use the Benbow Arms but either wished or was encouraged to make them more uniquely his own. I believe it is probable that King William led the Admiral to believe that he would be rewarded with a knighthood in return for his undertaking another hazardous voyage to the West Indies. This was a common reward granted to high naval officers following a successful campaign. In this particular case the King had some difficulty finding an Admiral willing to go to the West Indies. It would be natural for the Admiral to engage an artist to prepare an augmentation of arms. The death of King William and the Admiral's own untimely end would terminate the project. However, his family and friends may well have seen to it that the proposed coat of arms was utilized in 1708 on his son's stone in St. Nicholas Deptford, and on the silver plate donated to the Milton Church by his daughter. The addition of an arrow in the Harpy's breast is particularly significant. The Harpy is a classical monster and slaying it is symbolic of destroying the enemy, a fitting addition to an Admiral's coat of Arms. Its lack on the

Admiral's tomb in Kingston may be the result of official involvement in the commissioning of the stone, resulting in a more traditionally correct version.

The Admiral's own use of a coat of arms is referred to by Nathan Dews in his History of Deptford where he describes the Admiral's house with a coat of Arms over the door. (p.189) One further note about the coat of Arms. Callender and Britton mention that the Benbow Arms probably predate the 1584 grant to John Benbow, Chancery Clerk. In "A Display of Heraldrie" published in 1610,

"we find a medieval display of Arms, similar to those on the Milton Church alms dish with one exception; the bundles of arrows comprise eight weapons apiece. No family name is mentioned: but the author writes, 'The field is Sable, two long bows bent in Pale, the strings counterpoised, Or, between as many sheaves of Arrows, banded, Argent. This coat standeth in Kirton (Crediton) Church in Devonshire. This sort of bearing may signifie a man resolved to abide the uttermost hazard of Battel, and to that end hath furnished himself to the full, as well with Instruments of Ejaculation, as also of Retention.'" (Callender and Britton, p.140)

More research needs to be done on the Newport Benbow line. We do know that John Benbow, Clerk of the Crown, was born in Newport in 1565, and had three wives Dorothy, Katherine and Elizabeth. His duties brought him to London where the records of St.Martins in the Field suggest that he had five children, Ann in 1615, Robert in 1616, John in 1617, Margaret in 1618, (father listed only as Benbow) and William in 1621. Katherine told the Admiral's first biographer, John Campbell, that her grandfather's name was John Benbow. No doubt she became somewhat confused in recounting the family's history when she came to the captain who was shot in Shrewsbury and who she had been told was the Admiral's uncle. She naturally assumed her grandfather and her father's uncle could not both be called John since they would be brothers. Her solution was to assume the captain who was shot was not named John but Thomas. The problem would not have existed if she had surmised that the captain was her grandfather's cousin rather than brother. It would not be uncommon for the Admiral to think of his father's cousin as a courtesy uncle. Katherine also told Campbell that her grandfather worked in the Tower of London at the time of his death.

An interesting statement is made in the HISTORY OF SURREY by Manning and Bray, in 1804.(vol.1. p.228) It states that Admiral Benbow was born not in Shrewsbury but in the London village of Rotherhithe, on Wintershall Street which was also known as Hanover Street, and is now Neston Street. This is located across the Thames and not far from the Tower, and thus supports Katherine's account that her grandfather lived and worked in London following the Civil War. Parish records of the area show several Benbows at that time, but are incomplete, as are many church records of that period. As for the Shrewsbury connection, the family must certainly have lived there prior to the civil war, and possibly off and on during Cromwell's rule. It would, as well, be natural for the future Admiral to have been sent there to be raised by relatives, following the death of his father.

There are thus two theories of the Admiral's ancestry. The first, initially presented in the 1740's by his daughter Katherine and her husband Paul Calton, through Benbow's first biographer Dr. John Campbell, links him to the Newport Benbows, who were at one time landed Shropshire gentry. A leading member of this family, John Benbow Deputy Clerk of the Crown in Chancery, had been granted a coat of arms in 1584. This John Benbow is said to be the grandfather of our Admiral, and is buried in the parish of St. Martins in the Field, London. No record of the Admiral's birth has been found so we do not know the precise details. The Civil War obliterated many parish records and indeed made it difficult to register baptisms. The Admiral's other link to this family is the widely held belief that he was related to the Cavalier John Benbow who was shot as a Royalist in 1651 very close to the time of the Admiral's birth. A connection to London has been suggested by both his daughter and subsequent lore.

The other theory suggests that he is of the Cotton Hill line and was first referred to by T. Phillips in 1779 and later supported by Hugh Owen in 1808 and in 1825 by Blakeway and Owen. They based their assertions on the 1724 gravestone inscription of the Admiral's sister Elinor and a baptismal record of a similarly named person dated 1646 and giving her father as William Benbo. There is ample evidence that William Benbow, the tanner of Cotton Hill did indeed have a daughter Elinor born about that year. Whether this is the same Elinor as that buried in 1724 is not established. Blakeway and Owen make the assumption based on the similarity of age and name. The Cotton Hill line does not include the Cavalier shot in 1651 but is derived from Lawrence Benbow of Prees, Yeoman. So was born the tradition that Admiral Benbow was the son of a tanner and ran away to sea leaving his house key on the tree in front of the tannery house on Cotton Hill.

I believe the weight of evidence still leans towards the Newport line and that this account is more consistent with both oral and written traditions. There may of course be some connection between the two lines. However, I do not believe the roots of the Mutiny can be found solely in Class jealousy or prejudice as suggested by some authors. Let us then move on to his history at sea.

So more and more famous John Benbow he grew;
They made him a captain, and admiral too;
In battle and tempest for years he was tossed,
Yet never a battle he fought but he lost.

THE EARLY YEARS

John Benbow grew up during the Restoration of Charles II. The English had grown tired of Cromwell's dictatorship and had brought back the monarchy in 1660. Charles' power was however restrained by Parliament so there was not a complete restoration of all those who had lost lands and influence in his cause. The Benbow family according to Campbell did not regain their lost possessions. The Historic and Political Mercury for February 1703 states that the young Benbow was bred up in the Free School in Shrewsbury after his family lost their wealth due to loyalty to the crown.

This ancient market town was the county seat of Salop or Shropshire. It owed its prominence to the river Severn which winds around it in a horse-shoe bend forming an "island" with only one narrow land approach. Shrewsbury Castle guards this from a hill top vantage. This strategic situation was utilized from the time of the Welsh princes of Powys, who made it their seat in the 5th and 6th centuries. It was engulfed in the 8th century by the Anglo-Saxons and for several hundred years was involved in wars along the Welsh border. Roger de Montgomery was granted the county by William the Conqueror and continued to use Shrewsbury as his headquarters in the continuing battle to subdue the border country. As the March country was gradually stabilized prosperity grew through trade in Welsh wool and flax. Shrewsbury remained quite loyal to the throne and was Royalist during the Civil War in the mid 17th century. Charles 1 made his headquarters there in 1642, but it was captured by Parliamentarians in 1645, with one of the leading officers being John Benbow, our Admiral's uncle. As mentioned earlier John returned to the Royalist fold, was caught and shot in 1651 after the battle of Worcester.

Much of Shrewsbury's 17th century charm is still visible. The central Square has as its focus the Old Market House built in 1596. The town is full of halftimbered, overhanging black and white houses, narrow cobbled streets and little passages. Charles Dickens' description could be contemporary.

I am lodged in the strangest little rooms, the ceilings of which I can touch with my hands. From the windows I can look all downhill and slantwise at the crookedest black and white houses, all of many shapes except straight shapes."

Benbows had lived in the area for centuries. The name is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means strong bowman. Benbows had become yeoman farmers in the Prees area about 14 miles north of Shrewsbury, and landed gentlemen in the town of Newport just 14 miles east. In Shrewsbury itself some had become town burghers as tanners, and of course there was the military tradition of Colonel or Captain John Benbow of the Civil War.

The 17th century was a time of growing prosperity for the English. The great merchant ships of the East India Company now brought not only saltpetre for gunpowder, raw silk, and spices, but now added tea and coffee as well as manufactured silk goods and porcelain from China. Agriculture still occupied four-fifths of the population, but a growing number were engaged in trade or industry. The normal entry into industry was apprenticeship. This was the only legal means of entering a trade and lasted for seven years. The apprentice became part of his Master's family and so developed not only craftsmanship but discipline and character. The main industry of the time was cloth making and it made up two-fifths of England's exports. It is thought that this staple trade commodity gave England a substantial advantage over her Dutch competitors for the world's trade. The Dutch were carriers between other nations whereas the English had achieved some renown for its cloth and could so fill its outgoing ships. The competition for world commerce led in Charles day to wars with Holland and later with France in the reign of William.

Journeys were made on horseback along soft roads, often no more than one and a half yards wide. Each parish was responsible for maintaining its roads with six days of unpaid labour. The lack of a central administration of the roads kept them in general state of disrepair. With commerce growing a system of turnpikes was gradually developing wherein the users paid for the roads upkeep. Stage coaches were becoming more common but were quite expensive and often unable to travel in winter and bad weather when the roads became seas of mud. Freight was usually conveyed by pack horse trains so that horseback riders set out early to get in front of them as the narrow causeways made them quite difficult to pass.

Naturally the sea and river traffic held a great advantage over the inferior road system, especially for heavy goods such as coal. The government made use of this necessity by taxing it for the rebuilding of St.Paul's after the Great Fire and to pay for the French war.

Information was controlled by the Government's official Gazette. News letters did circulate but had to be licensed and censored. They were avidly read in coffee houses and pubs. It was not until 1696 that censorship was lifted and an Englishman could print whatever he chose subject only to the laws of libel and sedition.

Movement was somewhat restricted by the Poor Law and the Act of Settlement. By this every Parish in which a man tried to settle could send him back to the parish of which he was native. The reason being that nearly one fifth of the whole nation, or one million persons were in occasional receipt of alms, mostly in the form of public relief paid by the parish. Poverty, sickness, and starvation were such that in the period 1650 to 1700 the population of England actually declined. It is little wonder that some sought a career at sea.

Campbell believed that shortly before the 1665 war with the Dutch, Benbow spent some of his youth in London, where his father was employed in the Ordinance department of the Tower. London was then a teeming metropolis of 500,000 but was devastated by the Plague of

1665 and the Great Fire of 1666. Samuel Pepys, Clerk of the Acts of the Navy Board kept a diary of those years and describes London at the height of the plague in the summer of 1665.

"My meeting dead corpses of the plague, carried to be buried close to me at noon-day through the City in Fenchurch Street. To see a person, sick of the sores, carried close by me by Gracechurch in a hackney coach. My finding the Angel Tavern, at the lower end of Tower Hill, shut up; and more than that, the alehouse at Tower Stairs; and more than that, that the person was then dying of the plague when I was last there, a little while ago, at night. To hear that poor Payne, my waiter, hath buried a child, and is dying himself. To hear that a labourer I sent but the other day to Dagenhams, to know how they did there, is dead of the plague; and that one of my watermen, that carried me daily, fell sick as soon as he had landed me on Friday morning last, when I had been all night on the water, and is now dead of the plague...and that Mr. Sidney Montagu is sick of a desperate fever at my Lady Carteret's, at Scott's Hall. And lastly that both my servants, W. Hewer, and Tom Edwards, have lost their fathers, both in St. Sepulchre's parish, of the plague this week, do put me into great apprehensions of melancholy, and with good reason."

If young Benbow had remained in London at that time, even at only age 15 or 16, he would have soon been prey to the press gangs which were desperately trying to reman the English fleet which had been badly beaten in the Four Days Fight of June 1666. Pepys described there plight.

"But, Lord! how some poor women did cry; and in my life I never did see such natural expression of passion as I did here, in some women bewailing themselves, and running to every parcel of men that were brought, one after another, to look for their husbands, and wept over every vessel that went off, thinking they might be there, and looking after the ship as far as ever they could by moonlight, that it grieved me to the heart to hear them. Besides, to see poor, patient labouring men and housekeepers, leaving poor wives and families, taken up on a sudden by strangers, was very hard."

Pepys added that within a few days there was scarcely an able-bodied man to be seen in the City, though there were plenty of women. The City faced yet another trial at the end of the summer. On September 2, 1666, Pepys was awoke at three in the morning by his maids who reported there was a great fire in the City. He went to the Tower that morning and was able to see the Fire spreading down towards the houses on London Bridge. Apparently it had started in a baker's shop in Pudding Lane and with no rain for weeks and a brisk gale, was driving westward along the Thames and into the heart of the City. Pepys took a boat and surveyed the conflagration.

"Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river, or bringing them into lighters that lay off: poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs, by the waterside, to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconies, till they burned their wings and fell down...the streets full of nothing but people; and horses and carts loaden with goods, ready to run over one another...River full of lighters and boats taking in goods, and good goods swimming in the water...with one's face to the wind, you were almost burned with a shower of fire-drops. This is very true: so as houses were burned by these drops and flakes of fire, three, four, nay, five or six houses, one after another...When we could endure no more upon the water, we to a little alehouse on Bankside, over against the Three Cranes, and there stayed till it was dark almost, and saw the fire grow; and as it grew darker, appeared more and more; and in corners and upon steeples, and between churches and houses, as far as we could see up the hill of the City, in a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire. We stayed till, it being darkish, we saw the fire as only one entire arch of fire from this to the other side of the bridge, and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long: it made me weep to see it. The churches, houses, and all on fire, and flaming at once; and a horrid noise the flames made, and the crackling of the houses at their ruin."

A period of rebuilding followed. Most of the poor lived in overflowing slums in the outskirts of the city so benefited little from this. The rebuilding with brick and panelling and increased use of carpets probably helped eliminate the plague. As the main population centre of the nation it surpassed its nearest rivals Bristol and Norwich by at least fifteen times in size. In a sense all roads led to London as it sucked the vitals of trade from the rest of England and its overseas contacts. The Thames was naturally the main avenue of commerce and was usually a forest of masts unrivalled except for Amsterdam. The era can be summed up with the thought that where religion had divided the nation prior to the Restoration, trade now united it.

As mentioned earlier the Historical and Political Mercury for 1703 relates that the Admiral was apprenticed to a waterman, that is, to work on the river boats. He may have been so employed on the Thames itself, or following his father's death, he may well have returned to relatives in Shrewsbury, possibly to escape the Plague, the press gangs, or the Fire. The Severn River was the artery of commerce which carried the fruits of the land through Salop, Worcester, Gloucester and thence to the Bristol Channel and the open sea. The Severn was said to be an excellent nursery for seamen and many who made voyages to the Channel were transhipped to men-of-war or signed on to merchant ships to broaden their horizons. Bristol at the Severn's mouth was the Gateway to both Mediterranean trade and the Atlantic colonies including the Caribbean. It is most likely then that Benbow did begin his sea going career in just such a manner, probably with Bristol as his home port. Following the Dutch incursion up the Medway with the capture of the Royal Charles, and the treaty of Breda in 1667, Benbow would have had a

period of relative peace to learn his trade. Then in 1672 war erupted again against the Dutch, this time with England and France as allies. Benbow probably completed his apprenticeship about this time, just when England again urgently needed seamen to man its merchant and fighting navies. We know little of his actual progress except that he excelled as a navigator, and did so in an age when navigational aids were quite primitive.

It is likely he perfected these skills on merchant ships and probably operated in both the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. He may even have been a Privateer as the Mercury suggests. If so he would have been a contemporary of Henry Morgan and his Port Royal band of brothers. He may well have learned some of his fearless and fierce fighting tactics from this chief of Privateers. His character fits in well with this background for he would have learned to lead by example as privateer captains were elected and chosen by merit. As such their discipline could not be arbitrary. Instead they depended on group cohesion and persuasion to forge a cooperative fighting force. This meant boastfulness in one's own prowess and scorn for the faint hearted. Ferocious and outlandish deeds were part of the arsenal. The most unforgivable crimes in such a company were desertion, cowardice and concealing loot. Good clean ships and good seamanship were essential for success. It certainly would have been an opportune occupation to restore the Benbow family fortunes. Whether as a Privateer or Merchant Trader Benbow's world was thus immense, compared to his fellow's who remained land bound. However, on the other hand, he lived and worked in a small floating wooden world which was ever at the mercy of the elements.

The wooden warship was designed basically as a floating battery. The object was too fit as many as one could of these powerful guns along each broadside of the ship. A third rate ship such as the Bredah built in 1692 had a gun deck 151 feet long and a breadth of about 40 feet. It carried twenty six 32 pounders, twenty six 12 pounders, four 3 pounders, and fourteen light guns. To endure the disorder and shock of its own discharges and the short range battering of her opponents the ship was constructed of stout timbers with sides often two feet thick at the water line and buttressed by knees two or three feet thick every twenty along the gun decks. Guns were lashed to adjoining timbers with ropes and pulleys to take the recoil, for if they broke free on a heaving deck they would wreck havoc. Because of the great weight of armament they carried, ships tended to be quite cumbersome and clumsy. They were easily forced to leeward in a breeze and kept becalmed in light airs. The steering wheel wasn't invented till the early 1700's so ships were steered by a whipstaff attached to the tiller which could move the rudder barely a few degrees. The whipstaff had been developed to steer much smaller vessels and was quite inadequate for the ships of Benbow's day. In bad weather the tiller had to be rigged with pulleys to each side of the ship to assist the helmsman. This meant that major changes in direction were really accomplished by trimming the sails.

Being under-canvassed, as well, they were slow and with mostly square sails could make only 6 points off the wind; that is, they could not sail much closer to the wind than at right angles to the direction from which it came. It was not until the addition of more fore and aft sails such as the jib and better use of stay sails that ships could handle a contrary wind. So their manoeuvrability was quite limited and they were extremely dependent on wind direction. They often waited weeks for a fair wind. Reef points had been added to sails so their size could be increased or reduced quickly in case of squalls or storms. Even so in bad weather they could be driven into a bay and rendered unable to weather the headland. It was not unusual to have to let

out all anchors and cut away masts and yards in order to reduce windage and prevent the ship being cast on to the shore.

In merchant ships the head of this wooden world was the Master, who was also the Captain and controlled the whole life of the ship. His most essential duty was to get the ship from port to port. He controlled the sailing of the ship, the trimming and the setting of her sails, the storage of ballast and provisions and everything that kept the ship in good working order. Each day he calculated the ships position by dead reckoning--based on the course steered and the distance run. He was assisted by observations of celestial objects, coastal outlines, and soundings and bearings. His navigational skills enabled him to determine latitude to within 10 miles of accuracy but the calculation of longitude was not well established until the mid eighteenth century. Consequently shipwrecks were common as land frequently appeared where it was least expected. The Master's mates kept the log book, trimmed the fore yards, hove the log each hour, attended to the hold when provisions were shifted, and learned what they could of the Master's art.

In the Royal Navy the Master served under the Captain. The Captain was responsible for the ship and all on board. His word was law, and there was no appeal. He had absolute power over his subjects, including physical punishment. No one addressed him except on matters relating to running the ship. He stood no watch, lived alone, walked the weather side of the quarter deck, and occasionally invited his officers to dine with him.

The Captain was assisted by as many as six Lieutenants. The most senior or First Lieutenant was responsible to the captain for the working of the ship, the preservation of discipline and commanded in his absence. The lieutenant of the watch oversaw the helmsmen, saw that the log was hove each hour and the board marked with the ship's course and speed, supervised junior officers such as midshipmen and master's mates, ensured men were at their stations and lookouts alert, and reported any strange sails or shifts in wind. He also received reports from the master-at-arms and his corporals who kept the men in line, the carpenter and his mates who sounded the well and maintained the masts and yards, the boatswain and his mates who kept up the rigging, and the gunner who saw to the security of the guns and their lashings. In battle lieutenants commanded batteries of guns and kept men at their stations and in fighting spirit.

To qualify as a lieutenant a young man had to serve first as a midshipman or master's mate. These appointments were at the favour of the captain and were often younger sons of gentlemen. They were given the social distinction of being permitted to walk the quarter deck and were expected to dress and behave like officers.

Other naval officers included the Gunner who received his warrant from the Ordnance Board, the Purser who saw to the victualling of the ship, the Boatswain who was responsible for seamanlike activities such as the rigging, sails and tackle, the Carpenter or Shipwright, the Surgeon, and in some cases a Chaplain and Schoolmaster.

In The British Sailor Peter Kemp describes the Restoration Navy. Much credit must be given to Samuel Pepys who brought professionalism and accountability to navy practices. He insisted on exams for promotion of midshipmen to lieutenants and on to Captain, thus ensuring that gentleman status alone could not lead to a commission. As well he insisted on proper returns of accounts and journals before pay. He brought more efficient payment to sailors and

gave closer supervision to victualling contracts. He improved pension pay outs from the Chatham chest and established hospital services. Pepys wrote:

"Englishmen, and more especially seamen, love their bellies above anything else, and therefore it must always be remembered in the management of the victualling of the Navy that to make any abatement in the quantity or agreeableness of the victuals is to discourage and provoke them in the tenderest point, and will sooner render them disgusted with the King's service than any other hardship that can be put upon them".

Court martials dealt harshly with anyone caught cheating the men of their food. In July 1701 Henry Noble, assistant to the cook of the Chichester, was found guilty of diminishing the men's pieces of meat. He was sentenced to be carried through the fleet with the beat of a drum and a piece of "diminished" meat hung about his neck, and to receive nine lashes on his bare back with a cat of nine tails by the side of each of the English flag ships at Spithead, and thirteen lashes by the side of the Chichester.

Still, ships were foul and overcrowded. A third rate ship of the line required 400 men who lived crammed into the lower gun deck. There in near darkness they ate in messes on tables between the guns, slung their hammocks and tried to sleep in shifts of four hours on and four hours off. Food was mostly pickled in brine and months, if not years old. Water went slimy, bread deteriorated and was infested with weevils, butter went rancid and cheeses became hard enough to carve into buttons. There was much drunkenness and little sanitation. Sickness was an ever present enemy and decimated crews especially in the hotter climates. Rear Admiral William Whetstone reported in January 1703, that on the Bredah, which had arrived in the West Indies a year before, 174 men had died and 62 deserted out of her complement of 400. In the 1726 West Indian expedition, of 4750 men who went to sea only 750 returned. The dead included the admiral, his successor, seven captains and 50 lieutenants. In the Seven Years War (1756-63) 133,700 men were lost to disease and desertion, while only 1512 were killed in battle. Accidents were numerous with one in seven sailors requiring trusses. Discipline was maintained by a three, five or nine stringed whip, and by ducking, keel-hauling and lashing to the capstan-bars or rigging with heavy weights hung around the neck. Yet, we are told there was some merriment with fiddle, flute, singing and dancing.

Particularly while in port, which was at least 50% of the time, ships were often crowded with women and peddlers, making a menagerie of the gundeck. One Admiral wrote "let those who have never seen a ship of war picture to themselves a very large low room (hardly capable of holding the men) with 500 men and probably 300 to 400 women of the vilest description shut up in it, and giving way to every excess of debauchery...and they see the deck of a 74 gun ship the night of her arrival in port." Not all left when the ships put to sea. Reginald Rees writes in THE LADY (June 1981) of Parson Teonge who was on the Assistance in 1675. Teonge described how they sailed from the Downs to Dover with a cargo of sweethearts and wives with so much singing, revelry, and rum punch consumed, "that our ship was that night well-furnist but ill-manned; few of them being able to keep watch had there been occasion". He added that when they reached the choppy seas of the channel and he came to preach his first Sunday sermon "all

our women and old seamen were sick: I was only giddy." The women were finally put ashore at Dover three weeks later, with three cheers, seven guns, and trumpets sounding. Some officers took their wives with them to foreign stations and there are many accounts of seamen who turned out to be women in sailors clothes. Rees recounts one Yorkshire Nan served as a carpenter's mate at the Battle of Beachy Head, while in the same battle, Miss Anne Chamberlayne was in the Griffin with her brother, the Captain. Samuel Pepys told of a court martial he conducted in 1669 on a gunner who through carelessness caused the Defiance to be burnt at her moorings. Pepys wrote "his neglect, in trusting a girl to carry fire into his cabin, is not to be pardoned."

Venables had taken women on the Western Design expedition which captured Jamaica in 1655. He justified their presence as "the necessity of having that sex with an army to attend upon and help the sick and wounded, which men are unfit for. Had more women gone I suppose that many had not perished as they did for want of care and attendance. In battle women on board would usually assist the surgeon on the Orlop deck. In June 1703 Rooke ordered the commanders in his troop ships to receive three women to each company of soldiers and to victual them. Under William III each hospital ship was allowed six nurses and four laundresses, though none under the age of fifty years. It was recommended that they be seamen's wives or widows, and they were to be paid as ordinary seamen. In 1703, in response to their reported drunkenness, an effort was made to prohibit such use of women, but it was found to be so inconvenient and unreasonable that it was cancelled shortly afterwards. In 1705 the hospital ship in the Mediterranean carried five nurses and three laundresses.

Rogers writes that many senior officers were known to have kept mistresses or left bastards in foreign ports. As well there are many cases known of officers carrying loose women to sea with them, especially during peace time. On a cruise to Tangiers Sir John Mennes wrote to Samuel Pepys on April 19, 1666 that the ships are "pestered with women" and there are "as many petticoats as breeches" on board some of them and that for weeks together. During Admiral Herbert's sojourn on the Tangiers station in the 1670's and 80's there was apparently a good deal of laxness in the matter of women, with Pepys being particularly shocked by the goings on. Benbow served on this station, and Rees writes it is highly probable that his wife Martha accompanied him to the Mediterranean and that their first two children were born afloat.

Some contemporary accounts of life at sea paint a more dismal picture. In 1691 Henry Maydman, a discontented purser who was caught cheating by his captain, wrote in *Naval Speculations and Maritiame Politicks* that many a captain was "a Drundard, Swearer, Curser, Lyer, Cheater, Gamer, profuse Spendthrift, riotous Reviler, libidinous Whoremonger, and flagitiously wicked."

Seamen often suspected they were being cheated by unscrupulous pursers of their rightful rations, and by Captains of their proper share of prize money and plunder. In 1702 Charles Hore sent a petition to Prince George, the Lord High Admiral, titled *A True and Exact Account of many Great Abuses committed in the Victualling of Her Majesty's Navy*. He complained of "considerable frauds and mismanagements in the victualling of Her Majesty's Navy, by which the health and lives of the seamen are in danger." His witnesses, all employed in the Victualling Yard at Tower Hill, swore they often had been ordered to cut up diseased hogs for the sea service, and that many were dead before they reached the slaughter yard. They alleged

that officials of the Victualling Office carried away all the best cuts of beef and pork for their own private use. These complaints resulted in a Parliamentary committee being formed and it did in fact find fraudulent practices.

Also in 1702, an anonymous author wrote *The Seamen's Case, An Essay on the Navy*. He listed seven complaints against service in the Navy. Firstly, Captains promised those they recruited that they would be raised to Master's Mates and Midshipmen, but rarely lived up to these promises. Secondly, seamen were subjected to cruel treatment on board, including extremely abusive language and whipping. Thirdly, men were turned over from ship to ship rather than discharged as promised at the end of an expedition. Fourthly, they were kept many years out of their wages. Fifthly, payment of wages was uncertain and difficult. Sixthly, men were listed as Quered when left ill on shore, which froze their wages. Seventhly, men were forced to run by these many hardships. A brief quote should suffice to illustrate his points.

"First, of the new invented names wherewith some of their commanders and officers constantly call them, viz. Sons of eternal whores, Bloods of eternal bitches...Damn their bloods, they would roast their souls in hell. Others tell the men they would make them curse God and die...Secondly, as they esteem, call, and curse them, so they use them, having with their new invented oaths, new invented punishments, viz. that sordid and slavish punishment of whipping, or rather (as themselves term it) fleaing (flaying) them alive and then pickling them. The manner whereof is to fasten or tie a man with his arms or legs extended to the blackstakes, capstan, or jeers of the ship, and strip him to the waist, and with whips of cord, called cats of nine tails, divers have had so many lashes as have made the punishment worse than death (as some have told them beforehand). And being thus whipped, or rather flead, a tub of brine or pickle from their salt meat, into which some (Nebuchadnezzar-like to make the punishment the greater) have caused more salt to be put, with which they have washed their flead bodies, and whipped and pickled them again. The dread of which punishment has not only caused many to desert the Service but also to endeavour to destroy themselves. And this punishment (how cruel soever it is) is now become so common that men are often thus treated on frivolous occasions."

The men were driven about their duties by the Boatswain and his mates who used canes to encourage them. It is recorded that in 1701 on board the H.M.S. Monmouth a seaman tried to grab hold of the boatswain's cane to prevent its being used on him. He was brought before the captain who ordered that he be ducked three times from the yardarm. Following this he was flogged and pickled to a degree that none believed he could live.

It is not surprising that many men ran. To keep the ships manned the navy had to resort to press gangs and subterfuge, bribing men to enlist.

But there does seem to have been quite some dispute within the navy over this growing cruelty. Some Captains learned that a happy, healthy and satisfied crew performed better. Sir Cloudesly Shovell, one of the leading sailors of the day is known to have encouraged the use of

hospital ships and fresh food. Perhaps in response to growing complaints, Prince George issued a rather moderate code of punishment at the turn of the century. No mention whatsoever is made of whipping. All persons convicted of swearing, cursing, or blaspheming the name of God are to forfeit one day's pay. Seamen are to undergo the same punishment for drunkenness, however, any commission or warrant officer found guilty of drunkenness was to lose his office and forever be held incapable of serving. Seamen convicted of lying were to be hoisted up upon the main stay. Those found guilty of theft must make restitution and those away without leave were to forfeit two days pay, and then four, and then a week, and finally to be discharged as a runaway. One also forfeited a day's pay for neglect of watch. Perhaps the most odious crime on board the crowded ship was that of fouling the decks and for this the commander could use his own judgement in order to fit the punishment to the crime.

N.A.M. Rodger, in *The Wooden World*, maintains that life at sea was not as bad as some writers have pictured it. He believes that as the Navy was always hard pressed for men it would not be foolhardy and callous in its treatment of them. He states that men-of-war were healthier than communities of similar size ashore. The British especially emphasized cleanliness as they believed foul air spread disease. It was thus routine to wash the decks frequently, as well as men's clothes and hammocks. He argues that wise officers led by persuasion. Moreover officers and men were bound by mutual ties of obligation and dependence in their isolated world. Christian morality and duty and honour were predominant. Discipline was maintained more by the necessity of keeping the ship afloat than any cruel punishment. However, physical punishment was acceptable and prevalent in English society as a whole; that is, flogging, caning and hitting. Pepys upon being called late one morning by his servant Will, wrote that "I reckoned all his faults, and whipped him soundly, but the rods was so small that I fear they did not much hurt to him, but only to my arm, which I am already, within a quarter of an hour, not able to stir almost." The degree of violence which was permitted was defined by public opinion on the lower deck and codified in court martials of cruel officers who were so charged. Rodgers holds that generally, skilled seamen who worked aloft were not caned, rather the Boatswain and his mates used their rods to herd the untrained landsmen whose coordinated strength was required to pull on halliards and tackles. Such caning or starting would be used mostly during a crisis such as in tacking, wearing or in a chase. Generally the ship like the navy as a whole was run on patronage and rewards rather than punishment.

Still Rodgers quotes an old sea proverb: "he that would go to sea for pleasure, would go to hell for a pastime".

It was this wooden world that young Benbow entered. The earliest official record of his career in the navy is that on 30 April, 1678 he signed on as a master's mate, or junior navigator, on the *Rupert*, at Portsmouth. He must have come with considerable skill and experience to enter at this level. It was customary for those who had served in merchant ships to be signed on at one rank lower so it is quite likely he had already been a master of a merchantman. He served under Captain Arthur Herbert, later to be Earl of Torrington and a promoter of Benbow's rise within the navy. Herbert acted as vice-admiral or second in command in the Mediterranean station under Sir John Narbrough. Benbow was thus well placed for action. Their task was to protect British trade and their main base was Tangier. This port had been given to Britain in 1662 as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza, daughter of the King of Portugal, and Roman

Catholic wife of King Charles 11 of England. Perhaps because of its distance and isolation from England the Tangier station became a focus for discontent with the Stuart monarchy and in particular its Roman Catholic leanings. Many of those who served with Herbert in Tangier were later to join him in overthrowing James 11.

Shortly after the Rupert's arrival in 1678 she engaged a large Algerian ship of 40 guns. The battle was extremely vicious as the Algerian did not surrender till it had lost about two hundred men and another English ship was approaching. The Rupert suffered about fifty casualties with Herbert himself losing an eye. The Rupert continued to patrol the Mediterranean and had several similar engagements with Algerian pirates. In May 1679 Narbrough returned to England leaving Herbert in full command of the squadron. He must have been impressed with Benbow for on June 15, 1679 he promoted him to master of the Nonsuch. As such he served successively under Captains George Rooke, Clowdesley Shovell, and Francis Wheeler. All three, like Herbert, subsequently became Admirals. Wheeler had signed on to the Rupert with Benbow in April 1678, as second lieutenant and became Captain of the Nonsuch on September 11, 1680 so must have known Benbow well. Unfortunately he died in a shipwreck in 1694. Herbert, Rooke and Shovell all were instrumental in furthering Benbow's career, as was another of Herbert's lieutenants, David Mitchell.

During these years Benbow married Martha and began a family. Although his daughter, Martha, appears in the parish records of St. Botolph without Aldgate, London, baptised on 8 April 1684, Blakeway and Owen give her birth as 1679. This would place her conception shortly before Benbow's departure on this Mediterranean voyage. She was followed by a son Richard in 1680, John in 1681 and later William. These dates suggest that Martha may have accompanied her husband on his Mediterranean voyage. This was apparently not uncommon, particularly under Herbert's command.

It was at this time that an unfortunate incident occurred which nearly ruined Benbow's naval career. He was already showing some of his characteristic tactlessness and impatience with other commanders. On March 28, 1681 the Adventure, commanded by Captain William Booth, was cruising with the Callabash Fireship when she sighted and gave chase to the Algerian Golden Horse. The next day the vessels engaged at pistol shot range. They fought all day and long into the night. By 5 a.m. both ships were in shambles and broke off to make repairs to masts and riggings. The Golden Horse fled but the Adventure pursued and re-engaged her about 10 that morning. The battle continued until mid afternoon when a sail was spotted by both ships on the horizon. As the antagonists made out her Turkish colours cheers arose on the Golden Horse and the men on the Adventure lost heart. The Golden Horse fought with renewed vigour until about 6 p.m. Booth broke off and signalled his fireship to attempt to burn the Golden Horse. Captain Peter Pickard of the Callabash Fireship informed Booth that his boat was damaged so the attempt was postponed while repairs were made to both ships' boats. The sacrifice of the Callabash was however never made, for in the dawn light Booth discovered that the stranger was not a Turkish ship coming to the aid of the Golden Horse but the Nonsuch, under Captain Francis Wheeler.

His relief was short lived for he also saw the battered and outnumbered Golden Horse surrender to Wheeler. Normally all ships in sight of a vanquished enemy participated in the spoils. However, when Booth and Pickard boarded the Nonsuch they learned that Wheeler had

no intention of sharing the prize. An acrimonious dispute thus arose between the officers and men of the two ships as to their relative share in the capture. When the ships returned to Tangier the conflict escalated with Herbert supporting Wheeler, his former Lieutenant and the Governor, Colonel Edward Sackville siding with Booth. Sackville argued that Wheeler's action in flying Turkish colours was unprecedented in a situation where ships were already engaged and that Wheeler's action was solely to acquire a share of the prize. In so doing he endangered the other English ships. Indeed, the Callabash was nearly sacrificed unnecessarily. The Nonsuch's men exacerbated the quarrel by indulging in rude witticisms at the expense of the Adventure's crew. In the heat of the dispute John Benbow, master of the Nonsuch, was heard to repeat some of these which reflected on Captain Booth's conduct. His imprudent remarks brought him to the fore of the conflict between the two captains and Booth brought charges against him.

On April 20, 1681 Benbow appeared before a court martial held on board the New Castle, in the bay of Gibraltar. Admiral Herbert of the Bristol presided, and was joined by Captains Russell, Carter, Rooke, Shovell, Wheeler, Pickard, and Lieutenant Hastings. The evidence was well attested to so there was no avoiding a conviction, despite Herbert's sympathies. The Admiral did however devise a means of mitigating the punishment. The court determined that Benbow

"upon examination hath been found only to have repeated those words after another. It is therefore ordered that for repeating these publickly he shall forfeit three months pay--as master, to be disposed of for the use of the wounded men on board the Adventure. And shall likewise ask Captain Booth pardon on board his Majesty's ship Bristol declaring that he had no malicious intent in speaking those words, all the commanders being aboard, and a boat crew of each ship's company." (Adm.1/5253)

This was, no doubt, the most difficult thing Benbow ever had to do: he never forgot it. He was a meticulous and proud man. Throughout his life he was particularly short tempered with anyone who reminded him of Booth's inadequate effort.

The dispute festered for months. On July 8, 1681 William Jenkins, a sailor of the Adventure was court martialled and sentenced to be flogged for scandalous words concerning Captain Wheeler. Charges of coward and incompetent were flung back and forth. Booth complained to the Admiralty which disregarded and overruled Herbert and ordered him to see that Wheeler handed over the Golden Horse's colours. Booth refused to cooperate with Herbert's investigation on the grounds that the matter was in the hands of the Admiralty. Herbert was forced to order Wheeler to hand over the colours but criticised Booth in his own correspondence with the Admiralty, stating he was maliciously creating faction in the fleet. Wheeler sent the colours to his father in England. Upon his return home he persisted in refusing to give them up even after his pay was stopped by the Admiralty. Booth appealed to friends in the Admiralty and Court. Wheeler finally acquiesced when ordered by King Charles in May 1683 to surrender the colours. Peter Le Fevre suggests the bad feelings between Booth and Herbert led to Booth blackening his commander's reputation to Samuel Pepys. Later, while Herbert and his friends supported William of Orange, Booth acted as an agent of the exiled James II and

attempted to bolt with his ship the *Pendennis*. In the end he was forced to flee empty handed to France.

Benbow, the chastened scapegoat of the Golden Horse affair, did not suffer lightly. In November of 1681 the *Nonsuch* was ordered back to England where her entire company were paid off and disbanded. Benbow, still stinging from his public humiliation, joined the crew of a merchantman, trading between London, Bristol, Italy and Spain. No doubt he kept in touch with his old comrades at Tangier and Gibraltar. It is also quite possible that Herbert assisted him financially to buy into a ship, for Le Fevre points out that Herbert made a practice of loaning money to some of the officers under his command in the 1680's. By 1686 Benbow was owner and commander of the Benbow frigate and had amassed a sizable personal fortune. His family now kept the home fires burning in the parish of Stepney St. Dunstan and there on June 22, 1686, John and Martha baptised their son Solomon, who subsequently died in infancy. This was the year of another significant event in the future Admiral's life. But for it he would probably have remained a merchant trader.

The story originates with Mr. Paul Calton so may err in some details. It is told by Dr. Campbell in his *Lives of the British Admirals*. The British had pulled out of Tangier in 1684, leaving it to the Moroccans. The Mediterranean was again overrun with North African pirates. In 1686 Captain Benbow, in his own vessel, the Benbow frigate, was attacked on the way to Cadiz by a Sallee rover. The Benbow, though unequal in the number of men, fought bravely, but could not hold off the enemy. The Moors grappled and boarded the Benbow but soon realized their error as Benbow rallied his crew and fought so fiercely that the pirates fled, leaving behind thirteen of their mates. Captain Benbow ordered their heads cut off and pickled so that he could collect the bounty on pirates and also play a rather ghoulish practical joke on the Spanish Revenue officials at Cadiz with which he had numerous altercations on the subject of duties. His behaviour is reminiscent of West Indian pirates who used similar tactics to develop a reputation which would strike terror in the hearts of their enemies.

He landed at Cadiz and had his African servant, Caesar, carry the sackful of heads. He pretended to take it ill that the customs men wanted to view the contents and would not accept his word. He claimed they were 'salt provisions for my own use'. The customs agents insisted on seeing the contents and indicated that only the magistrates could grant any dispensation. So they went off to the custom-house, Benbow in the front, his man in the centre, and the officers in the rear. The magistrates treated Captain Benbow very civilly, and said they were sorry to make a point of such a trifle. However, they were obliged to demand a sight of the contents, and as they doubted not that they were indeed salt provisions, the showing them could be of no great consequence one way or other. "I told you," retorted Benbow, "they were salt provisions for my own use. Caesar, throw them down upon the table; and, gentlemen, if you like them, they are at your service." The Spaniards were suitably impressed at the sight of the Moors heads, and that Benbow had been able to defeat such a number of barbarians with so small a force. They sent an account of the matter to the Spanish King, Charles 11, at Madrid, and he sent for Benbow. He was so taken with the Englishman that he not only gave him a handsome present but wrote on his behalf to the English King James. So it was that Benbow was again offered a commission in the royal navy. Even Blakeway and Owen accept this Calton tale as probable on the basis of a

Moorish skull cap which was in the possession of descendants of Richard Ridley, husband of the Admiral's sister Elizabeth. The cap is inscribed

"The first Adventure of Capt. John Benbow and gift to Richard Ridley, 1687."
(Blakeway and Owen, vol.ii, p.392)

Charnock in his *Biographia Navalis* mentions there were several similar incidents wherein Benbow's fortitude was noted. He refers to an incident which took place the following year, in May 1687, when Benbow was master of the Malaga Merchant. On his passage to England, near the mouth of the Straits, he was attacked by a Saltee cruiser. The pirate fired a broadside and a volley of small shot, then rigged his spritsail yard fore and aft, in preparation for boarding. Benbow however gave him such a reception that he was forced to sheer off, having lost a number of men. Benbow gave chase but the corsair proved the better sailer. Still by this and similar incidents his renown grew. There is however no evidence that he was offered a commission by King James in 1687.

According to Blakeway and Owen, 1687 brought John and Martha another daughter, Katherine. However, on the world stage a revolution was under way. James II, having replaced his brother Charles II in 1685, had antagonized his subjects by unilaterally trying to force toleration of Roman Catholicism. On July 10, 1688 his opponents invited the Protestant William of Orange from Holland to come to England in force to restore their religion and liberty. Chief among these revolutionaries was Charles Talbot, later the Duke of Shrewsbury, and soon to be one of Benbow's promoters. He was a convert from Catholicism and demonstrated his loyalty to William by mortgaging his estate for ,40,000 to help finance the invasion. William, a grandson of the English king Charles I had married his cousin Mary, daughter of James II, and so together they had some claim to the English throne.

Benbow did not officially re-enter the navy till after the revolution and his first recorded commission is dated June, 1689, as third lieutenant of the Elizabeth, Flag ship of Admiral Herbert, under Captain David Mitchell. Both Herbert and Mitchell were active in William's invasion fleet. William picked Herbert to be Admiral of the fleet and Captain Mitchell is mentioned on a list of officers seeking employment in 1688 as "having gone to the Dutch service." When Mitchell arrived in the Hague in September 1688 he brought news to William that his invasion would not meet very great opposition when it sailed, and that others in the English Navy would come over. Mitchell was one of William's favourites, and was later appointed one of the grooms to his bed-chamber. Sir John Laughton conjectures that Benbow too may have been in the service of his old friend and former captain, Arthur Herbert, during the critical months of the revolution, and possibly piloted the fleet which landed William III in Torbay on November 15, 1688. Major Michael Ranson mentions in his article "A Seventeenth Century Combined Operation" that William utilized some twenty English pilots to guide his invasion fleet. Given Benbow's subsequent employment and associations it is highly likely he was among this group. Supporting evidence is suggested in the fact that on his march to London William spent some time in Milton Manor near Oxford. Benbow later developed close ties with Milton and there is a local tradition that he first came there in William's entourage. From his connections with the

anti-Stuart Tangier group of naval officers led by Herbert we can assume that Benbow was sympathetic to William's cause and kept in contact with his supporters.

Admiral Herbert had been dismissed from all his employments because he refused to support the Catholic King, James, by declining to vote to repeal the Test act. This act had effectively prevented Catholics from holding any government office or commission. In July 1688 he had fled to Holland and offered his services to the Protestant Prince of Orange. William hoped for a bloodless invasion so placed Herbert at the head of his fleet in the hopes of maximizing his support in the English Navy. He also utilized another senior naval defector, Edward Russell in developing disaffection in the English fleet.

The invasion is well described by Major Michael Ranson in an article in William and Mary, "The Revolution That Shaped The World" Ranson shows how the decisive and clear cut leadership of Admiral Herbert safely executed the transportation of 15,000 infantry and cavalry, several thousand horses, 21 artillery pieces, hundreds of tons of provisions and fodder, together with ammunition and all manner of military supplies. As in the D-day landings on the Normandy beaches the invaders misled the defenders. James held his troops in reserve and kept his navy at the mouth of the Thames waiting to see whether William would land in the North or the South-West. William made a feint to the north and then following the advice of his English pilots sped down the Channel to Torbay. The English navy under Lord Dartmouth never caught up.

Led by John Churchill, and the colonels of the Tangier regiments, Kirke and Trelawney, James' army officers deserted and William marched from Brixham to London almost unopposed. The desertion of his youngest daughter, Ann, must have further devastated him. James fled to France. There was much contention over how to legitimize William's presence. There was great reluctance to depose James so a compromise was effected. In February 1689 the Convention Parliament ruled that by his flight James had abdicated, and offered the vacant throne to his daughter Mary. This was not satisfactory to William, so the Commons and more reluctantly the Lords came round to the necessity of offering the throne to both William and Mary. This recognized William's de facto control of the country but left many uncommitted and troubled. In particular many wondered where this left the new Prince of Wales, who as Archbishop Sancroft pointed out, had been prayed for since his birth as the rightful heir to the throne. With the crown, however, a Declaration of Rights was presented which applied the Test Act to the monarch, who now had to declare against Roman Catholicism, and who was now prohibited from marrying a Catholic.

One of William's first acts was to reward Herbert by promoting him to first lord of the admiralty in March 1689 and commander-in-chief of the fleet in the Channel. With William, England's foreign policy changed dramatically. France, which under Charles and James had been allied with England against the Dutch, now became the enemy. A French fleet of thirty ships of the line set out from Brest in March 1689 to convey James and his 5000 troops to Kinsale, Ireland, in an attempt to recapture his throne. Herbert was ordered to take what ships he could from Portsmouth and intercept the French. He sailed for Cork with 12 vessels in early April but was unable to locate the French fleet. He crossed the Channel and searched the Brest area and then returned to Ireland. On April 30 he sighted a supply fleet in Bantry Bay. The French under Comte de Chateau-Renault had 24 ships of the line and 5 frigates and 10 fireships. Herbert's fleet was now made up of 19 ships of the line and 3 fireships. Four of these ships later played an

important part in Benbow's last battle: the Defiance, the Pendennis, the Ruby and the Greenwich. Captain David Mitchell commanded the flagship Elizabeth. Benbow may well have been with him as he received his official commission to serve with him as third lieutenant just one month later. May 1st found the English to leeward of the enemy and with their line poorly formed. They struggled to engage the French who formed a much more orderly line. Herbert put about to take the line out of the bay in hopes of manoeuvring to windward. He could not, however, get the best of the better sailing French ships so that the English were badly mauled. The French failed to press their advantage and withdrew, returning to Brest. Herbert had lost one captain, one lieutenant and 94 men killed, and 300 officers and men wounded.

Despite their narrow escape the English were satisfied that the French fleet had left Irish waters. William visited Portsmouth and rewarded Herbert by making him Baron of Torbay and Earl of Torrington. He knighted Captains Ashby and Shovell and gave each seaman a gratuity of 10 shillings. As a result of Bantry Bay war was declared. Herbert took a fleet of English and Dutch ships to cruise the French coast but the French did not show themselves. The English were building up their navy, replacing Roman Catholic captains and drawing upon their reserve of seasoned merchant seamen. Benbow was one of those who responded and so officially re-entered the navy in June, 1689.

The opposing navies had interesting differences some of which were well illustrated at Bantry Bay. French ships were built longer, broader in the beam, and deeper in the hold. Rate for rate the French ships outweighed the English and consequently were better suited to carry their complement of heavy guns. The English ships, being over gunned for their size, were poor sailers. French ships easily outsailed and out manoeuvred them. Moreover, the calibre of French guns was larger than English, so that a French broadside delivered 100 pounds more fire power. Also, the larger French ships had gun ports which were higher above the water and so their guns could be fought in weather that compelled the English to keep their's closed. The English, however, excelled in gunnery. They produced better gun powder and more accurate guns and surpassed the French in rapidity of firing broadsides. And they were an Island nation, a nation of seamen, well trained and well disciplined. This gave them the advantage of manpower. France, with its maritime population restricted to the coasts of Normandy and Brittany, was ever more strapped for seamen and so developed a defensive strategy at sea. The French believed that at all costs they must preserve their fleet in order to be able to fight another day. Hence, whenever confronting an English fleet of equal strength their aim was to cripple its ability to close or pursue, by damage aloft. The English on the other hand tended to slug it out by aiming for the water line. The French preferred the leeward position in battle, so as to better be able to flee before the wind. As well they knew the English would be hard pressed to use their lower guns on the leeward side, because English ships heeled over so much in the wind.

The English were further hampered by rigid Fighting Instructions which were designed to coordinate fleet action in a disciplined battle line. It was intended to best concentrate the combined gunpower of the fleet by having all ships form a tight line with broadsides to the enemy. The English had learned that uncoordinated dogfights endangered friend as well as foe. Unfortunately coordination of fleets was in its infancy. Few signals had been developed to enable the Admiral to communicate with his ships. They were thus dependent on these prearranged instructions codified over the years, during the Dutch wars and in particular by

James when he was Lord High Admiral and then by Admiral Russell in 1691. Most significantly they instructed captains not to leave the line unless permission was granted by the fleet Admiral. They were to follow the wake of the ship ahead of them, keeping within half a cable length (100 yards), and closing any gaps left by disabled ships. They were not to pursue individual enemy ships. Such an instruction greatly hampered individual initiative and delayed battle action as ships formed up, often giving the enemy time to escape. The English were instructed not to open fire until their Van was even with the enemy's. Given the French superiority in speed this was rarely achieved. The French, moreover, perfected the manoeuvre of turning their ships away together to run out of range. This thwarted the English who were forced by their instructions to follow the ship in line ahead, which resulted in their rear being strung out far behind the fleeing French. Thus with the French believing in preserving their ships at all costs and the English bound by rigid Instructions, conclusive battles rarely occurred.

French commanders knew that if ever they met an English fleet of equal force they could always outsail it. Usually the only French ships ever captured in a chase were ones that had been previously captured from the English. Heavy actions usually only occurred in light breezes or in a calm when the adversaries were forced to stay embroiled until exhausted or out of ammunition. Boats were used to tow the participants in or out of range as the ships battled in almost slow motion. The ships themselves were built so stoutly that they rarely sank. Most damage was inflicted on the men by grape and chain shot which swept the decks and rigging and threw up a hail of splinters for 30 yards. Decks became so slippery with blood that they had to be sprinkled with sand. To conceal the blood, the inner side of the ship along the gun decks was painted a dull red as were the gun carriages. Victory often went to the side which could most quickly repair and re-man damaged ships. Disabled ships were particularly vulnerable to the most feared weapon at sea, the fire ship. If such a ship were successfully grappled to another there was little escape possible. Such destruction was however rare as the French were so adept at conducting a fighting retreat.

The French were not alone, however, in avoiding battle. Peter Kemp in *The British Sailor* points out that there were numerous official complaints by the crews of naval ships that their captains were lacking in courage. In many ships' logs of the period it is quite clear that enemy ships got away because they were not chased hard enough or were only half-heartedly engaged. Given the devastation wrought by taking on another ship of the line, it is not surprising that Captains often chose to seek the more lucrative prize of a merchant ship. N.A.M. Rodger in *The Wooden World* adds that cowardice was a real problem in the English navy, especially with admirals, commanders, and masters. He accounts for this on the grounds that the officers of the open Quarter-deck were the most exposed to grape and chain shot and had the greatest opportunity to reflect on their risk. The largest part of the ship's company were below decks frantically busy loading guns, where they were protected by the thick sides of the ship. The boatswain and his crew who handled sail and repaired damaged rigging were exposed in action, but continually active. Only the quarter-deck officers were in the position of standing still to be shot at. Consequently, it was not unusual in action for casualties to be virtually confined to the quarter deck, or much the heaviest there. Nor was it uncommon for some ships to steer clear of the fighting, or to run rather than to engage.

It is not surprising that the Navy tried to counter this with appeals to Honour and Glory, and Duty to King and Country. And perhaps more persuasively they induced "bravery" by rewarding it substantially. In Benbow's day an Admiral was to receive 3/16 of the value of a captured ship, while the Vice Admiral was to get 1/16. Another 4/16 were to be distributed to the Captain, Lieutenants and other commissioned officers. The remaining 8/16 went to the rest of the men. The capture of a 32 gun frigate was equal to 35 years pay for a captain.

This was the naval situation that Benbow returned to in 1689 at the outbreak of French--English hostilities. Under Admiral Herbert, now Lord Torrington, he was rapidly promoted. On September 20, 1689 he was placed in command of his own ship as Captain of the York. He wrote from the York on October 8, 1689 to the Navy Board:

"Lord Torrington has bin pleased to give me an Order to Comand the sayd ship during absence of Capt. Thomas Hopson now in ye Bonadventure which Ship Lord Torrington has bin pleased to give me a Comand for." (Adm. 106/386.f.74)

Only a fortnight later, on October 26 he was transferred to the Bonaventure, and just two weeks later, on November 12 to the first rate 100 gun Britannia. From the Britannia he was appointed master attendant of the Chatham dockyard and in March 1690 he moved to Deptford in the same capacity and continued in this office for the next six years, although frequently employed at sea.

As is evident by his appointment as Master Attendant he was not an ordinary captain. He had not risen to that post through the traditional route of Lieutenant. Rather he had learned his seamanship as a Master and maintained this expertise. In March 1690 he sought and received a Master's Certificate from Trinity House which stated:

"We have examined the bearer, Captain John Benboe, and do find him capable of taking charge as Master of any their Majesties' Ships of the First Rate, from the Downes westward and southward to and within the Mediterranean as high as Sanderoone." (Adm.106/2908)

So John was a sailor and lived merrily,
A-hunting the Frenchman all over the sea.

THE CHANNEL WAR

Captain Benbow was Master of the Fleet in two of the most significant naval actions of this war. The Naval Chronicle points out that in this period it was no unusual thing to appoint a captain of a ship of war as master of the commander in chief's own ship. In May 1690 he was in this capacity as chief navigator for a fleet of 56 Anglo Dutch ships under Admiral Herbert (Lord Torrington) aboard the Royal Sovereign, with Captain John Neville. They engaged a French fleet of twice their number under Admirals Tourville and Chateau-Renault at Beachy Head, off the south coast of England. Benbow would fight two of these French ships again in his last battle: the Apollon and the Agreable. Herbert had not wished to engage the French once he ascertained their overwhelming numbers, and was withdrawing on June 29th when ordered to attack, by the Secretary of State, the Earl of Nottingham. Apparently Nottingham was influenced by Herbert's rival, Admiral Edward Russell, who as Admiral of the Blue was supposed to be with Herbert but instead was intriguing against him in London. Russell had long been an agent of the Prince of Orange and had expected to be made first lord of the admiralty as a result of his political services. In order to force Herbert into an impossible situation, Russell had led Nottingham to believe the French numbered only 60 ships.

On June 30th Herbert counted nearly one hundred French sail of which there were eighty men-of-war. Nevertheless, he obeyed orders and proceeded against the enemy but planned a limited engagement. He intended his rear under Sir Ralph Delavall to engage the French rear on equal terms but directed his van consisting of the Dutch division to stretch along to the head of the enemy's line and engage at such a distance that would prevent the French doubling up on them. However, the Dutch commander, Evertsen, feeling his country's honour was at stake, ran down and engaged the French at close quarters. As a result they were in fact doubled on and suffered heavy losses. They were only saved from total destruction by a turn in the tide which swept the enemy ships away, the Dutch having let go their anchors. Only one English ship, the Anne, was lost when it was dismasted and had to be burnt by its captain to prevent it falling into enemy hands. The rest of the English managed an orderly withdrawal. Captain Benbow is credited with saving the English ships by his brilliant seamanship. Apparently there was little wind and the fleet had to retreat by skilfully using the tides. The Dutch were furious and accused the English of cowardice.

In the ensuing political controversy Torrington was court martialled, with most of the evidence against him coming from Dutch officers. He was however, acquitted. Laughton claims that this was due in large part to Captain Benbow's testimony of his courage and integrity.

However, Mr. Peter Le Fevre who has done considerable research on the life of Lord Torrington has pointed out in private correspondence that Laughton errs since Benbow never testified at the actual court martial of December 1690. His testimony was given at a preliminary Royal Commission in July 1690. Torrington had been accused of never being within gunshot of the enemy. According to Charnock, Benbow deposed that Torrington brought the Sovereign to within one half gun shot of the enemy for over an hour. However, Le Fevre maintains that what probably saved Torrington was the fact that of the 27 officers at the court martial, at least 20 of them owed their start in the navy to him or were friends of his, like rear-admiral Shovell, who had commanded the blue squadron in Russell's absence, and George Rooke, rear-admiral of the red. In his defence Torrington argued that in an engagement the greatest priority must be given to preserving one's fleet. He wrote to Nottingham:

"Whilst we observe the French, they cannot make any attempt, either upon ships or shore, without running a great hazard, and, if we be beaten, all is exposed to their mercy."

He expanded on this concept at his court-martial.

"Had I fought otherwise, our fleet had been totally lost, and the Kingdom had lain open to an invasion...As it was, most men were in fear that the French would invade, but I was always of another opinion, for I always said that, whilst we had a fleet in being, they would not dare to make an attempt."

This 'Torrington defence', that is, the concept of keeping a 'fleet in being' became a standard defence for those accused of not wholeheartedly engaging the enemy. It worked for Torrington, but did not restore his reputation. He had lost his commission and he never applied for another. In December 1690 Russell replaced him as commander of the fleet.

Russell's intriguing did not end here. He is known to have corresponded with the exiled King James and it is thought he avoided the French fleet during 1691 while these secret negotiations were taking place. Russell was not alone in this courting of James by leading Englishmen. Many like Russell wished to insure that no matter which King was victorious, they for their part would not lose their place. They endeavoured therefore to stand well with both Kings. Chief among those with divided loyalties were Godolphin, First Commissioner of the Treasury; John Churchill, Marlborough, who proposed to James that he could deliver the army; and the Duke of Shrewsbury. Churchill fed a constant stream of intelligence to James, detailing the strength and dispositions of the English army, and warning friends of James when they were in danger of arrest. Like Russell and Godolphin he asked for and received a written pardon, to secret away until the day when James returned.

However no concerted action was taken against William, and Russell was forced to face the French when their fleet left Brest and entered the Channel in May 1692. Rumours had reached London, however, that there was a Jacobite party in the navy and that the enemy counted on their defection in the forthcoming confrontation. Through her Secretary of State, Nottingham, Mary sent a solemn appeal to the honour of the officers of her navy. She affirmed

her faith in them and her refusal to believe the malicious rumours. Russell read Nottingham's dispatch on board the Britannia on May 15, 1692. The Queen's sentiments brought forth an outpouring of loyalty. The officers of Russell's fleet signed an address to Mary entreating her to believe that they would do their utmost in defence of her rights.

On the seventeenth of May Russell led a combined English and Dutch fleet of eighty-two ships of the line from Portsmouth to await the French off Cape Barfleur. According to the Dictionary of National Biography Benbow was again Master of the Fleet, this time with Admiral Russell in the Britannia. His old friend David Mitchell was Captain of the Fleet while John Fletcher was captain of the flag ship. Four of the English ships would later participate in Benbow's last battle: the Ruby, the Bredah, the Greenwich, and the Defiance. On May 19 the French under the Comte de Tourville approached Russell's fleet with only forty-five ships of the line. In the hazy weather he did not realize the size of the allied fleet and so rushed to engage hoping for another Beachy Head. The van of the French hotly engaged the Dutch and their centre and rear furiously assaulted the red squadron led by Russell himself. For the moment the French actually outnumbered the English ships they were attacking as the blue squadron was a good deal astern and three miles to leeward.

Benbow was in the thick of things with the Britannia closely engaged by Tourville in the Soleil Royal. Finally a wind change permitted the rear of the red squadron under Sir Clowdesley Shovell to break through the French line. Shortly after the whole of the blue squadron under Rooke passed to windward and circled the French. In late afternoon fog stalled the battle and the French fled in disorder. Several escaped but many were driven westward along the coast towards Cape de La Hogue. Three French ships, including the Soleil Royal, were burnt at Cherbourg by Sir Ralph Delavall, and the rest took refuge in the bay of La Hogue where James' invasion army was awaiting transport.

As at Cherbourg the French ships had sought haven in shallow water. Here, however they were protected by two forts, Lisset and St. Vaast. Russell blockaded the bay and on May 23 and 24 sent in two hundred boats and fireships under the command of Sir George Rooke. It is not unlikely that Captain Benbow accompanied Rooke, since he was quickly acquiring a reputation for piloting in Channel waters. Tourville ordered his seamen into their boats and attempted to repel the English but his boats soon turned in panic and deserted the ships to the English torches. The English had to brave the cannonade from the forts, musket fire from the beach, and even some French cavalry who waded into the surf. Nevertheless they succeeded in burning twelve ships of the line and eight or ten transports. On the cliffs above, James watched the destruction of his hopes for an invasion. This battle of La Hogue has been well depicted in an oil painting by Benjamin West, which was engraved by William Woollett in 1781.

Note: in his 2010 Biography of Admiral Benbow, Sam Willis disputes the earlier information that Benbow was Master of the fleet at the Battles of Barfleur and La Hogue. He basis his contention on letters from Benbow as Master of Deptford Dockyard dated in May and June of 1692. I am not convinced. We know for certain that Benbow performed both duties simultaneously so it would not be surprising for him to send letters pertaining to his Dockyard work during the time that he was at sea.

Again according to the Dictionary of National Biography Benbow was rewarded for his part by a special Admiralty order which directed he be paid both as Master of Deptford Dockyard

and as Master of the Fleet. Russell, however, was thought to have engaged the enemy in a half-hearted manner and was charged with allowing too many of the French to escape. He was consequently removed from the command. He was replaced by a triumvirate of Admirals Ralph Delavall, Henry Killigrew, and Clowdesley Shovell.

On May 4, 1692, in the same month that Benbow was Master of the English fleet facing the French in the Channel, he was granted another singular honour. He was elected unanimously an Elder brother on the board of Trinity House. This prestigious institution was founded by Royal Charter in 1514 and was responsible for the safety and well being of the mariner. As such it was involved in navigation, pilotage, and beacons. In the 17th century it would be difficult to discover any maritime matter in which the Brethren had not some authority or interest. It was their business to erect beacons, to set out buoys, to grant certificates to Pilots, set the rate of pilotage, examine and recommend Masters for the Navy. They also examined the mathematical scholars of Christ's Hospital and even appointed British Consuls in foreign ports. The Elder Brethren were often consulted by the Admiralty on the design and construction of ships of war, and reported on ships to be purchased and on the proper complement of sailors, armaments and stores. Benbow thus took his place as one of the senior professional mariners of the day. His influence and responsibility must have been quite extensive given his positions as Master of Deptford dockyard, Master of the Channel fleet, and now Elder brother of Trinity House.

The Sergison Papers indicate that after the Battle of La Hogue Captain Benbow was lent to Portsmouth to assist in organizing the refitting of the fleet. His talents were such that the Naval Board wrote urging his speedy return to Deptford. "The Shallops at Deptford are to be sent away with all speed, as we hear, so that Captain Benbow's presence will be mightily wanted, therefore you are to hasten him back again so soon as you can spare him." (Sergison, p.37)

Meanwhile, the French, with their invasion fleet badly crippled, stepped up their harassment of English and Dutch merchantmen in the Channel. France abandoned her strategy of massing her naval resources in fleets and released thousands of her seamen to private enterprises. These privateers and corsairs in fast handy ships successfully terrorized commercial shipping and so damaged the English severely. Scores of prizes were taken weekly. More than a hundred were brought into St. Malo alone, that Autumn of 1692. Between 1688 and 1697 the French claim that 3384 English and Dutch merchantmen as well as 162 escorts were taken by St. Malo privateers. The English answer was to attack the corsair bases at St. Malo, Granville, Le Havre, Dieppe and Dunkirk. With his demonstrated skill in navigating fleets in the stormy Channel and ability to harness the winds and tides and accurately pilot ships over and around sand bars and reefs, Benbow was chosen to lead these attacks. He was so enterprising particularly in the use of bomb vessels and fire ships that he became a national hero particularly with the mercantile community. Admiral Russell, like his predecessor Herbert, respected Benbow's professional seamanship and recommended him in a letter to the Earl of Nottingham dated June 17, 1692:

"Capt Bemboe, master attendant at Deptford, is a prudent galant man and is very able to resolve any question you ask him concerning that place (St. Malo) haveing, while in a merchant man, made several voyages thither." (Historical Manuscripts Commission, Finch MS iv.)

Though fire ships had been used for many years against other wooden ships, the English now perfected them with the addition of explosives, into truly floating bombs that could be directed against the wooden forts and other buildings of French ports. Once outlying forts had been torched and under the covering fire of frigates, bomb vessels armed with longrange mortars firing explosive shells, moved in close and bombarded the actual town and any ships unfortunate enough to be in harbour.

Campbell relates how Benbow showed the most intrepid courage by going in person onto the fire vessels to encourage and protect the engineers. They came to appreciate that he would not expose them to danger he would not face himself. These fireships were indeed extremely perilous. They were designed to burst into flame and explode so as to spread conflagration. The ship would usually have its hold full of barrels of gunpowder covered with pitch, sulphur, straw and faggots. Over these were placed huge beams drilled to give air to the fire and upon these were placed grenades, chain-shot, iron bullets, broken iron bars, and broken glass. Holes were made in the decking to act as chimneys for the flames. One can imagine the destructive force such a "machine" would unleash and the terror it could create in the hearts and minds of citizens used to the ineffectiveness of cannon balls fired from distant ships. And naturally it took not a little coaxing to persuade seamen and officers to remain on board, while under enemy fire, long enough to get close enough to do significant damage. Moreover it was not unusual for these ships to accidentally explode, given the amount of gunpowder they carried.

One of Benbow's earliest expeditions utilizing these new "machines" occurred in the fall of 1693. He received his commission and instructions on September 18. He was ordered to accompany engineer Captain Thomas Phillips in an attack on St. Malo and "to use your utmost endeavour to destroy the same by bombarding or setting it on fire, and to burn, destroy or take such ships as you shall find in the harbour." (CSP.Dom.1693) He appears to have led this operation as a supernumerary from the Norwich, 48, the ship of Captain Josias Crow,

Campbell quotes from an original letter to describe the St. Malo action. According to this account Commodore Benbow with a squadron of twelve men of war, four bomb vessels and ten brigantines sailed for St. Malo on November 13, 1693. After a rendezvous at Guernsey they arrived before St. Malo on the 16th and several of the brigantines anchored within half a mile of the town. They fired on the town all that day and the next two, throwing about seventy bombs a day into the town. They landed on an island near the town and set fire to a convent. On the 19th they sent in an extraordinary fire ship of 300 tons which was intended to have reduced the town to ashes. Unfortunately it grounded on a rock within pistol shot of its destination and was exploded there. This shook the town like an earthquake, breaking all the glass within three leagues and blew off the roofs of three hundred houses. As well the greatest part of the sea wall was destroyed. A French account describes the explosion as terrible beyond description, with the most extraordinary thing of all being that the capstan of the vessel, which weighed two hundred weight, was carried over the walls, and bent a house it fell upon down to the ground. The English then destroyed Quince-fort and captured eighty prisoners, before returning to Guernsey. Campbell concluded that this expedition was well timed and well executed as it struck panic into the inhabitants of St. Malo where the most troublesome of the French privateers were based.

Narcissus Luttrell, who kept a diary of current events, records that news reached the Admiralty that Captain Benbow's squadron had burnt 30 privateers at St. Malo, with many merchant ships and transport vessels and had set the town on fire in divers places. As this report was received on November 11, it may have been speculative. Luttrell later records reports on November 23 of 36 flashes of fire at St. Malo and then a continuous flame, believed to be the burning of the town or ships in the harbour. He added on December 5 that some of the men who were with Captain Benbow reported that the great cathedral at St. Malo was laid in ashes, and that there were 60 pieces of cannon in the fort they took.

Nevertheless, Benbow was dissatisfied with the result and court martialled Captain Henry Tourville of the Mortar bomb vessel for not going in close enough. He deposed on June 14, 1694:

"Capt. John Benbow Master Attendant of their majesties yard at Deptford, and lately one of the joint Commanders in chief of their Majesties ships employed on the late expedition before St. Malo in the month of November last 1693. Being examined upon oath concerning the behaviour of Capt. Henry Tourville when he commanded the Mortar Bomb Vessel on the expedition aforesaid, deposes that the said Capt. Tourville was (together with other of the bomb vessels) ordered in upon service before St. Malo on the 17th and 18th of the said month November, and did accordingly go in twice before the place, but with little or no effect, not being near enough, (as the deponent believes), to do execution. And farther saith not." (Adm1/5254)

He was however unable to procure a conviction. Evidence was submitted that the two thirteen inch mortars on board this ship were inferior and did not shoot so great a distance by half a mile or better as the mortars which were on board the other bomb ships. This incident does illustrate Benbow's high expectations of those he commanded and his impatience with unsatisfactory efforts and results. Perhaps at Benbow's insistence, Captain Tourville was replaced in January 1694 by John Smith.

Benbow's co-commander, Captain Phillips fell ill and died on the 22nd of November, 1693. Benbow was in London in mid December to give his account of the attack on St. Malo. He was then sent cruising with 9 men of war and four fireships on the northern coast of France, in order to intercept the French fleet homeward bound from the Baltic with corn and naval stores. By December 30 he had linked up with three Dutch men of war and together they went northward to seek Jean Du Bart's squadron who had gone into the Sound to convoy home the Danzig fleet. Luttrell records on January 24 that there was a report that Captain Benbow had taken some French ships.

When not at sea Benbow tended to his duties as master attendant at the Royal dockyards at Deptford. He was responsible for the fitting out or dismantling of all shipping stationed there. He saw to it that the ships were secure, kept clean and in proper repair. His duties would require remarkable organizational skills given the chronic shortage of naval supplies. He was not reticent in seeking recognition and compensation for his accomplishments. Just prior to his St. Malo expedition he wrote in July 1693 to the Treasurer of the Navy:

"Rt. Honorable

Ever since my being Master Attendant at Deptford which now is well onwards of Four Years--I have given your Office little or no trouble with the Guns, & Carriages which our Sixth Rate Frigotts bring up hither with them, & other Stores, when Dockt or hall'd a Shore, which are alwaies taken out and Secured by me and likewise all the Yachts which is a great Ease to your Office, and no small trouble to me, which I hope you will take into Consideration to give me such encouragement, that I may Continue my Care.

I remain: Your Honorable most Humble Servant, Benbow." (Southam, Herbert, p.viii)

The following year, in June 1694, Benbow was ordered on board Lord Berkeley's ship for the summer expedition against the French ports. John Berkeley had been made admiral of the Blue in July 1693 in the fleet of the Joint Admirals. When they were themselves replaced by Russell in 1694 he was given command of the Channel fleet. He preferred to choose his own officers and complained on June 21 to the secretary of state that the admiralty were interfering with this right. Here began an ongoing dispute between the King's ministers and the admiralty which would eventually involve Benbow. Berkeley wanted Benbow as he had proven his usefulness the previous summer in this new warfare. He utilized him in sounding out the approaches to possible targets such as Havre de Grace and Quince Rock near St. Malo.

The first target, that summer, was the major French port of Brest. Berkeley led a large squadron of thirty-six English and Dutch ships of the line, five frigates and thirteen fireships, as well as assorted transports. As the intent was not just to bombard but to seize the port as well, the fleet included a large body of troops under the command of Lieutenant-General Tollemache. On June 6 the ships passed Ushant and on the 7th were before Camaret Bay. On the 9th a squadron of nine men of war was sent in to cover the landing of troops, under the command of the Marquis of Carmarthen, son of the Duke of Leeds. Included in this squadron was the Shoreham, 32, under Captain John Constable, who would later participate in the Benbow Mutiny. With his expertise in coastal probing Benbow may well have accompanied this squadron into the bay. If so he would probably have sailed in the Monck, 60, with Carmarthen, as a senior advisor. The invasion began at 7 a.m. but met with such fierce French fire from forts and shore batteries that they were forced to retreat. The low tide made withdrawal difficult and added to the great loss of life, with only about one hundred troops escaping of several hundred who landed. Tollemache received a leg wound and later died. In the three hours that the covering squadron was in the bay over a hundred sea men were killed. The ships managed to retire except for the Wesp, which ran aground and surrendered after losing her captain, lieutenant, many men, and taking in five feet of water in her hold. The fleet returned to St. Helens and received orders from the Queen to bombard Dieppe and harass the French coast. Years later, when the records of James II were studied, it was alleged that John Churchill, later Duke of Marlborough, had warned the French. Certainly, James continued to have many friends in England so that the French usually knew where the English would strike, and were always well prepared.

Berkeley's force arrived off Dieppe on July 9th and began bombardment on the 12th. About eleven bombs and incendiary carcasses were fired on the town. The Nicholas machine vessel was exploded against the town pier. When the squadron departed on the 14th most of the town was in flames. On the 16th Captain Benbow led the bomb vessels and machines against Le Havre. They blasted and burned the town for three days, departing on the 19th for St. Helens. On the way they alarmed La Hogue and Cherbourg. On August 7 Luttrell records an incident which shows Benbow was not above some subterfuge. On that date an express message came to the Queen informing her that Captain Benbow had been detached by Lord Berkeley with five small frigates to observe the fortifications of St. Malo. He stood in there flying French colours, enticing a patrol boat to approach, which he took and so gathered valuable intelligence of the harbour. At the end of the summer the larger ships were laid up for the winter and on August 27, 1694, Berkeley resigned the command to Sir Clowdesley Shovell who was now vice-admiral of the red. Benbow's old friend called upon him to lead an attack on Dunkirk. Others had said it could not be done because of the nature of the harbour's defences: a difficult entrance over sand bars and several well placed forts. Shovell wrote on August 29:

"If the machines are to produce the effect designed, it is necessary a knowing seaman be appointed either in joint command with the engineer that is to practise these machines, or to be with him to advise, and that they have absolute power over the commanders and companies in the machines. I know no man so fit for such an employment as Captain Benbow." (CSP.Dom.1694)

Benbow was thus employed with an engineer, Mr. W. Meisters, who had developed "machines" capable, he believed, of breaching Dunkirk's defences. Meisters and Shovell disagreed on the feasibility of such an attack particularly at that time of year. Under Meisters' prodding an attempt was made to send in the flotilla of fire and bomb ships on September 12 and 13. Benbow was again put in charge of reconnoitring the approach to the harbour. However, the French had successfully blocked the harbour entrance with a twenty gun ship and fired hotly from forts as well. An attempt was made to send in bomb vessels and machines but they exploded too far from their target to do any damage. Stormy weather set in so that the attempt was abandoned and Shovell's fleet returned to the Downs.

With Sir Martin Beckman, Benbow continued to probe the defences of various French ports including Calais on September 16. He countered Beckman's hesitation by leading an attack himself in the Kitchen bomb-ketch, finding the way through the sand bars for the rest of the bomb-vessels. He managed to destroy some houses but again wind and low water prevented much success. Captain Benbow returned to his post as Master of Deptford dockyard and December found him organizing a convoy of merchant ships for Cadiz.

In March 1695 he was again ordered to Portsmouth to prepare for "some secret service". He sailed for the French coast in the Saudadoes prize in command of a small squadron whose purpose was to seek out and check the French corsairs who were seriously devouring English merchantmen and in turn do what he could to harass French trade. Luttrell states he commanded a squadron of eighteen men of war and was sent to intercept three hundred French store ships bound from St. Malo to Dunkirk. Near Cherbourg, on March 15, he sighted seven

French merchant vessels and hotly pursued them. He drove two of them ashore near Cape La Hogue and destroyed them. The other five ran ashore in Great Ance Bay. Immediately he sent in his boats to cut them out. They met with strong resistance both from the ships and from land support. Frenchmen in great numbers waded into the sea to fight the English sailors. The fighting must have reminded Benbow of the Battle of La Hogue, just two years past when he participated in the burning of so many French ships. This time, however, they succeeded in getting the French ships off with their cargo of salt and tobacco intact. That night they took another laden with wine. On the sixteenth they chased three ships: one hit rocks and sunk. The other two put in to a harbour near Cape La Hogue under protection of a small fort. Benbow sent in two of his ships and after several hours engagement successfully got them out. On the 25th he appeared before St. Malo, alarming the town and chasing two privateers back into the harbour. He then manned his boats, went ashore near Granville and captured a small fort, taking its guns. These incidents added to Benbow's renown. His daring and spirit made him popular not just with seamen, but with all Englishmen. So much so that Luttrell writes on May 16 that "The King has given his share of the prizes taken by captain Bembo on the French coast to him and his saylors." Such recognition and generosity by the King must have gratified Benbow and fuelled his ambition. At the end of May Luttrell records that "Captain Bembo has framed a project of his own, and sent it to the lords of the admiralty, which is approved of, and he ordered therein." The Lords of the Admiralty at that time were Admiral Edward Russell, Sir John Lowther of Whitehaven, Captain Henry Priestman, Robert Austen, Sir Robert Rich, Sir George Rooke and Sir John Houblon.

In June he was again under Berkeley's direct command as plans were made for another attack on Dunkirk. He was called to report to the King's ministers or Lords Justices. These men ruled England while William was on the Continent. The seven were Tenison, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Somers, Keeper of the great Seal; Pembroke, Keeper of the Privy Seal; Devonshire, Lord Steward; Dorset, Lord Chamberlain; Shrewsbury, Secretary of State; and Godolphin, First Commissioner of the Treasury. The Lord Justices took an increasingly active part in directing the war at sea. Benbow was asked to his opinion of how Dunkirk could be taken. The Lord Justices were suitably impressed particularly since Lord Berkeley sent a letter June 1st of recommendation. On June 3 the Lord Justices called in the Lords of the Admiralty and they were "Acquainted with Lord Berkeley's desire to have Captain Benbow with him. Proposed that he have a ship and the pay of rear admiral, and that he be recommended to the King for the first vacant flag." (CSP.Dom.1695)

On June 11 the Lords Justices received another communication from Berkeley, requesting small ships for the planned attacks against French ports and reminding the Lords of Benbow's need of a ship. They sent for the Lords of the Admiralty and they agreed to Berkeley's requests and suggested Captain Lambert, commander of the Northumberland might be superannuated to make way for Benbow. The Lord Justices also received a petition from Captain Benbow for rear-admiral's pay. At this stage there is no suggestion that the Lords of the Admiralty resented or found Berkeley or Benbow inappropriate in directing their requests first to the Lord Justices. They took a keen interest in delivering the war to the French by attacking the Channel ports which sheltered the numerous and costly privateers and French men of war. Benbow stood out in this theatre because of his lack of timidity and apparent fearlessness in

employing the new "machines" of war. Benbow's growing fame, no doubt, created some jealousies within the service and the Admiralty as he eclipsed his superiors in popularity. The Admiralty did approve payment of rear admiral's pay, £2 a day, for the period March 8, 1695 to April 25, 1695.

June 15, 1695 saw a Council of War at Spithead on board Berkeley's flagship, the Shrewsbury, 80, which included Lord Berkeley, Sir Clowdesley Shovell, Captain Jennings, Captain Benbow, and Colonel Richards, who had succeeded Captain Phillips as the fleet's advisor on mortars and bombs. They settled on a plan to attack the fort on Quince Rock and St. Malo. Before they sailed, a new volunteer joined Benbow's ship the Northumberland--his son, John Benbow Jr., then aged 14.

A combined English and Dutch fleet gathered off the French coast under Admirals Lord Berkeley and Van Almonde on July 4. As commander of all the frigates and bomb vessels participating in the attack, Benbow was allowed to fly his own 'broad pendant' on board the Charles Galley. Benbow transferred to this smaller oared ship to lead the assault in close to the town. On July 6, 1695 he wrote his account to the Secretary of State, the Duke of Shrewsbury.

"About 4 this afternoon I weighed anchor in the Northumberland and stood in and batter'd the Quince Rock with 4 Bomb Vessells Dutch and English, and continued till Dark. One shell fell upon the top of their workes. There was 2 Gallies and 8 or 10 great Boats, with each a Gun, which came out and fired at us. The 5th at 4 in the morning the Wind at N.E. and fine Weather, My Lord Berkeley hoisted an English Ensign at his Fore top Masthead on board the Shrewsbury, which was the Signall to prepare to go in with our small Frigatts and Bombs. By his Lordships order I went on board the Charles Galley, and there hoisted a broad Pendant. About 6 we were all under sayle, and before 7 our Bomb Ships and Men of Warre were laid to pass and played on the Towne, without any visible success till 10 and then sett fire neare the East end, but made no great hast to increase but continued. About 2 in the afternoon an other Fire was blown up about the middle of the towne, which blazed above the tops of the houses, but by their blowing up of houses in the towne, and great help, it was putt out before it was dark. Having received my Lord's orders about 7 this evening we came out, leaving one of our Bombs behind, she being so much disabled by the Enemy, could not bring her off, burnt her. We have been very warmly received by the Enemy both with Canon and Mortars. There was that went in, six English and Four Dutch Men of Warre, and Nine Bomb Vessells English, 14 Well Boats, 2 Brigantines, and one Spy Boat. I cannot tell certainly what men we have lost. There was four Well Boats sunk and 5 or 6 other Boates. My Lord Berkeley will give Your Grace the particulars more at large. I am ordered with Seven or Eight Frigatts and Eight Bomb Ships to go to Granville and bombard that and to joyne My Lord Berkeley at Guernsy." (British Library Add. Ms. 21494 f.93)

On July 6 Berkeley held a Council of War on board his flag ship the Shrewsbury. They debated "whether to go in again or be contented with what we have already done." It was decided to end the attack as Berkeley felt they would receive more damage than they could inflict. He argued that since they had burnt a great part of the town it was no longer necessary to take further risks since enemy fire or bad weather might wreck havoc with the English ships and destroy their ability to harass other ports. He stated that Captain Benbow and Colonel Richards were also of this opinion. Berkeley praised Benbow for his leadership of this action, particularly in his placing of the frigates in that they successfully protected and resupplied the bomb-vessels. Over 900 bombs had fallen on the town in the two days. Berkeley wrote that "a great part of it is certainly beaten down, and we believe there is little part of it free from some share of the desolation." (CSP.Dom.July 8,1695) The operation cost the squadron about sixty officers and men killed and wounded. There is some question however as to the effectiveness of this attack on St. Malo. Sir Laughton in the Dictionary of National Biography suggests that they broke off the attack before any decisive result was achieved. Benbow proceeded to attack Granville on July 8th and left it in flames, rejoining Berkeley on the 9th at Guernsey.

On July 12th the Lord Justices wrote Benbow that they were very well satisfied with his part. However shortly thereafter it becomes evident that his relationship with Lord Berkeley had soured. The Lords Justices called in the Lords of the Admiralty on July 23 to enquire "of them if they had heard of any misunderstanding or anything that occasioned Captain Benbow's uneasiness. Directed that he should have leave to come on shore if his health required it; otherwise that care be taken not to lose his service during this expedition." (CSP.Dom.1695)

Berkeley demonstrated his jealous temper and domineering disposition in a letter he wrote on July 23 wherein he expresses petty jealousy of another of Benbow's former captains and suggests further that Benbow is faking illness:

"Since it has been thought fit to appoint Sir George Rooke to command in the Straits (Mediterranean), I suppose care will be taken that we may not meet at sea without he will obey, for I can own no superior at sea but Admiral Russell. Benbow is quitting his ship. I cannot imagine the reason; he pretends sickness, but I think that is only feigned." (CSP.Dom.1695)

He suggests in another letter on July 29 that Captain Benbow has let his fame go to his head.

"As to Captain Benbow I know of no difference between him and myself, nor have we had any. He has no small obligation to me, but being called in some of the foolish printed papers 'the famous Captain Benbow', I suppose has put him a little out of himself, and made him play the fool...time will show I have not been in the wrong, unless being too kind to an ungrateful man."(CSP.Dom.1695)

Obviously Benbow's impatience and implied criticism were continuing to breed enmity and jealousy amongst his peers. Berkeley's troubles were not over. He was ordered to repeat an

attempt on Dunkirk, which Shovell and Benbow had unsuccessfully made in the previous September. This was done on August 1, but the lack of success and Berkeley's nature led William Meister, the engineer and inventor of the "machines" designed for these attacks, to follow Benbow's example. He slipped away August 4. Berkeley next bombarded Calais on August 17th, burning many houses. He then decided the season was too far advanced for any further action and on August 20th brought the fleet back to the Downs for the winter.

Lord Berkeley was called before the Lords Justices on August 22 to explain the failed attempt on Dunkirk. During this examination he related that he had heard he was under some censure for having called off the ships prematurely in the earlier attack on St. Malo. Obviously someone who had the ear of the Lord Justices had suggested Berkeley was too timid under fire and did not press the attack sufficiently. Berkeley laid the blame on the likely informant, claiming he left it to Benbow to stay as long as he thought fit. (CSP.Dom.1695)

The Lord Justices appear to have sided with Benbow. Moreover they were not satisfied with Berkeley's decision to break off the attacks. The following day, August 23rd, they called Benbow in and "acquainted him with their intentions to employ him upon some service to be done in alarming and annoying the French coast." St.Valertes was suggested but he indicated "he had more mind to Havre de Grace, if there were but mortars enough and small vessels to support them, and did not believe the hazard of it was to be valued." This must have been refreshing given the timidity, negativity and excuses they were accustomed to hearing. He did ask, however, that the same consideration might be given him as was of others, who, when they commanded so many ships were subsequently allowed rear-admirals half pay when decommissioned. The Lord Justices promised not only to do him justice, but to show him favour.(CSP.Dom.1695) It is not unlikely that the Duke of Shrewsbury was favourably inclined to his fellow Salopian and became to some degree his patron.

On August 30th the Lords ordered the Admiralty to grant him a commission to lead an expedition of bomb ships against the coast of France. It appears that at this point Benbow's case got tangled in political jostling between the Lord Justices and the Lords of the Admiralty. With both bodies issuing instructions to Admirals it is not surprising that confusions and jealousies arose. Just such a dispute occurred between Admirals Rooke and Russell wherein the Admiralty's instructions appeared to contradict those of the Lord Justices. In the midst of reasserting their authority over Admiral Rooke they raised the subject of Benbow's pay. Here the Lords of the Admiralty decided to dig in their heels and assert their own prerogatives. They explained to the Lord Justices that it was not usual to grant a commission to one in Captain Benbow's circumstances to command in chief, that is, to permanent rear-admiral status. The Lord Justices then recommended the Lords of the Admiralty be favourable to Captain Benbow's request for rear admiral's half pay when not employed at sea. The Admiralty did not give any ground and responded that though he would be paid as a rear-admiral while on duty, he could not claim the usual half-pay while on shore because he did not possess a commission from the Lord High Admiral. Thus he was only entitled to the half-pay of a captain of a third-rate when not on active duty. The dispute was somewhat defused by the lack of available ships so that the Lords Justices were obliged to postpone their design of sending Benbow on another mission to the French coast. (CSP.Dom.1695)

At the same time Benbow was receiving recognition from another quarter. The East India Company petitioned the Lord Justices, asking them to place Captain Benbow in command of their homeward bound convoy. The request was denied as Benbow was needed to protect the Channel trade, but his reputation was indeed growing.

Two other events of this period are significant. Intrigues against William continued to surface perennially. Informers were plentiful and late in 1694 a plot of some magnitude was alleged to be hatching in Cheshire and Lancashire. Search warrants were issued but by the time they reached the north country many of the accused had fled while others had hidden their arms and incriminating papers. Nevertheless some evidence was found: a commission signed by James behind the wainscot of an old Roman Catholic mansion and a cache of arms behind the false back of a chimney in another house. A trial was held but public sentiment and the informer's testimony that he had sworn falsely against the accused led to acquittals. Lancashire remained, however, a fertile ground for those discontented with William.

The King had a deeper sorrow, however, to bear. Small pox was particularly severe towards the end of 1694. The Queen became infected and within days died. William was devastated as was the nation. As a lasting memorial William began work on Greenwich hospital. Following the Battle of La Hogue Mary had wanted such a hospital built for England's wounded. It still stands as a testimonial to England's seapower, Mary's concern for the men who fought for her, and the victory of La Hogue. With his well demonstrated organizational abilities Benbow was appointed one of the early commissioners of the hospital. (Adm.67/1)

During the winter of 1696 it was discovered that plans were afoot to assassinate William and restore James to the throne with the help of a French invasion. Several men were tried and executed, chief among them Sir John Fenwick. This gentleman, in an effort to save himself accused several of the leading politicians of the day of giving secret support to James. In particular he named the First Lord of the Treasury, Godolphin; First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Orford (Russell); Secretary of State, Shrewsbury; and the currently out of grace General, Marlborough. As the charges were unsubstantiated William wisely chose not to believe Fenwick, but rather to court these fickle men with his trust. He utilized the fears of an invasion to fan popular support. The House of Commons drew up a statement by which all who signed could form an 'association' for the defence of their Sovereign William and their country. The majority in both houses of Parliament signed and invited all Englishmen to join them. The common folk by the thousands flocked to the county towns to sign. It is estimated that the great majority of the adult male population of England signed. Many wore a red ribbon in their hat embroidered with "General Association for King William". Jacobites could no longer openly voice their objections to William. So the country rallied, militias were called out, and seamen actually volunteered for naval service.

William immediately launched a strong naval presence in the Channel. As soon as weather permitted, Benbow was dispatched to renew the bombing of the French Channel ports, this time under the command of his old friend Sir Clowdesley Shovell. They attacked Calais on April 3rd. About noon Benbow took in the bomb vessels and a covering squadron of small frigates and brigantines, to protect the bombs from the enemy's boats and galleys. They fired between three and four hundred shells into the town and caused several fires both in the town and the harbour but with limited success. They withdrew about 8 p.m., having suffered much in

damage to their masts and rigging. About fifteen men were killed and wounded and Benbow himself received a flesh wound in his leg and was laid up for a fortnight.

The dispute over granting Benbow a commission was finally resolved amicably, for on April 26, 1696, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty sent a memo to his Majesty, recommending that five Commanders be appointed, one of which was Captain Benbow, now Master Attendant at Deptford, at ,300 per annum. So he received his flag rank of Rear-Admiral of the Blue and was given the command of the squadron before Dunkirk. This caused no little jealousy as others were passed over. A Captain Fairborne had, like Benbow, been petitioning Shrewsbury, but was not as successful. (CSP.Dom. May 12,1696) Two Lords of the Admiralty were also rewarded at this time. Edward Russell continued as First Lord of the Admiralty, but now also sat as a Lord Justice. Sir John Lowther was made Baron Lowther.

The Royal Navy at that time was composed of three major divisions, the Red, White, and Blue. Each had a rear-admiral, vice-admiral and admiral. The White squadron had been historically used for allied ships under British command; the French in the Dutch wars, and the Dutch in this war. The Admiral of the Red was also the Commander-in-Chief of the whole fleet. These senior officers were given commands geographically, such as those at Plymouth, Portsmouth, the Nore, the Channel Fleet, the squadron before Dunkirk, before Brest, before Cadiz, in the Mediterranean, the West Indies, etc. Rooke was commander-in-chief in the Channel at the beginning of the summer and then took up his post as one of the lords of the admiralty. This left Berkeley in command but he was ordered to patrol the western mouth of the Channel and the Bay of Biscay, leaving Benbow at Dunkirk. By the end of July Berkeley returned to Spithead to take leave, and shortly thereafter contracted pleurisy, of which he died in February 1697. Shovell took up the command in the Channel and off Brest as Admiral of the Blue.

In May 1696, as Rear-Admiral of the Blue, and commander-in-chief of the squadron before Dunkirk Benbow used the Suffolk as his flag ship. He had been given the task of protecting English and Dutch trades and containing the French squadron under the famous Jean Bart. French warships and privateers operating out of Dunkirk had been extremely detrimental to English trade during the course of the war. Campbell states that these cruises in the Channel were at the request of the Dutch and English merchants as Benbow excelled in protecting their ships, annoying the enemy, gaining intelligence of French Ports and shipping and forming schemes for disturbing French commerce.

When Benbow arrived at Dunkirk that Spring of 1696 he found the French squadron ready to sail and his own ships too few in number to guard both avenues of escape. Jean Bart leading a squadron of nine ships managed to slip out in a fog and escape Benbow as his ships were cleaner and so faster. As well in a foreshadowing of future events the Dutch balked at giving chase and refused to follow Benbow, claiming their orders did not include pursuit. This resulted in Bart intercepting the Dutch Baltic fleet on its way home, on June 8th. He successfully captured thirty merchant ships and five frigates, but was forced to flee when met by the Dutch outgoing Baltic fleet.

Benbow wrote the Lord Justices suggesting he be empowered to pursue and search for Bart and requesting support from the Dutch. The Lord Justices concurred with Benbow's plan of actively seeking Bart and wrote on May 14 to the Dutch squadron off Dunkirk "desiring them to accompany Rear-Admiral Benbow in following Bart." (CSP.Dom.1696)

As well they wrote to the King requesting that he direct the Dutch commanders to put themselves under English command during such emergencies. The complex politics of the Dutch/English alliance is evident in the Dutch Commander's reply, discussed by the Lords Justices on May 21st. He wrote that he would not accompany Benbow in pursuit of Bart unless he had direct orders from the King or Dutch States. To further complicate matters the Lords Justices found the Lords of the Admiralty still somewhat truculent in matters concerning Benbow. On the same day they noted in their minutes that the Admiralty's orders to Rear Admiral Benbow only conformed to the Lords Justices' directions when initially proposed by the Admiralty themselves. (CSP.Dom.1696)

The object of this politicking, Rear-admiral Benbow, was next sent East in June 1696, with his squadron, guarding an English convoy from Yarmouth Roads to several Baltic ports. With his flagship the *Suffolk*, his squadron included the *Pembroke*, the *Woolwich*, the *Monk*, the *Pearl*, the *Portsmouth*, the *Pendennis*, and the *Chatham*. He successfully shepherded the merchantmen to their destinations dividing his squadron as some ships made for Hamburg while others headed on for Norway and Sweden. He was thwarted in his plan to seek out Bart by extremely bad weather. They were buffeted about the Kattegat Sea between Denmark and Sweden and had to seek shelter at Gothenburg Sweden for nearly two weeks. When the storm abated Benbow made for Kristiansand on the southern tip of Norway where he believed Bart was now based. He writes:

"We have had the wind ever since from N.W. to S.W., blowing hard, with bad weather, till the 11th inst., when at 4 a.m. little wind came up at S.S.E. We weighed and got out to sea, and in the morning of the 12th were far aboard the Skaw (Skagen, Denmark), the wind at N.E. blowing hard. We stood off the Naze to inform ourselves of Bart, and at 4 p.m. came before the harbour where we judged he was; but the weather was so very bad that no boats could come off, neither could we hold it, but were put away. Since then I have spoken with a Dane from Christiansund, who had aboard several of the Dutchmen Bart had taken. He reported that Bart was at the Cow and Calf...they heard he had got fifty guns ashore." (CSP.Dom. July 23,1696)

With Bart so well defended, his own supplies running short and his ships badly damaged by the gales, Benbow made for home, reaching Yarmouth July 23. The *Monk* needed a new fore-mast and other repairs, the *Woolwich* leaked from a defect in her stern, and he had replaced several deceased officers. He clearly was vexed at failing to stop Bart and perhaps faced some criticism. The Duke of Shrewsbury wrote on July 28 to reassure him of the government's continued faith in his efforts, and of his own personal favour.

"I do not doubt but you have done all that was in your power for the finding out of Dubart, but if you have met with contrary weather it ought not to be imputed to you, and you may be assured I shall be ready to serve you on this or any other occasion." (CSP.Dom.1696)

After a very brief refit he was sent cruising with seven third and fourth rates, including the Russell, to protect home bound merchantmen from Hamburg and other eastern ports. At the end of August he replenished his stores at the Gunfleet, but was not allowed time to clean his ships bottoms. The government viewed Bart's threat with such urgency that they ordered Lord Berkeley to send ships to reinforce Benbow and resolved that Benbow be sent out as soon as he was resupplied with provisions and men. On September 19th he successfully intercepted Bart in his dash for Dunkirk but again English ships were no match for the speed of the French. He wrote on September 21:

"On the 19th inst. at noon we saw (off the Texel) ten sail to the W.N.W. of us, the wind being north, and made what way we could to speak with them. At 2 p.m. we plainly discerned it was Bart's squadron. We used all possible means to get up with them. They steered S.S.W.; as we were to the eastward of them we steered away S.W. by W. and neared them apace. Four of our ships came within two miles of them, the rest being astern two leagues. Bart made all the sail he could from us, and, when we began to steer the same course as they, I soon perceived they went away from us very much. As soon as it was dark we lost sight of them...Had our ships been clean, we should have given a better account of him, having had six or seven hours' fair chase, but the worst of his sailing ships wronged the best of ours. I used my utmost diligence and best endeavours in this affair, nor has anything been wanting but good sailing ships." (CSP.Dom.1696)

His ships were indeed in bad shape for he adds that the Suffolk was leaking so badly that continual pumping was necessary, and the Russell had sprung her foremast. Benbow was next sent to meet and convoy home the fleet coming from Russia. In September he sailed with his squadron to Holland with some of the King's yachts to await his majesty. That month he was instrumental in the safe arrival of three East India ships, the Martha, Dorothy, and Sarah. Luttrell indicates that in gratitude the East India Company voted Admiral Benbow a present of 1000 guineas. At the same time Benbow sent an express to the Admiralty telling of his taking a French cruiser, with news that Bart had gone into Dunkirk for a reinforcement of frigates and intended to come out and fight the said admiral. Benbow remained on station all that winter and was kept busy on board his new flagship, the Shrewsbury, in command in the Soundings, protecting winter commerce and reconnoitring the Channel ports to better predict the enemy's intentions for the spring campaign. Despite ferocious winter storms he executed this task quite satisfactorily and brought back accurate reports not only of numbers but also of the state of all the ships in the main French ports. Near the end of December he was sent with a small squadron to probe the port of Brest and gathered valuable information of all the shipping there.

In early Spring 1697 he was back at Spithead, with his flag on the Lancaster, with Captain Henry Martin. Then in April, with Rooke in command of the Channel fleet, Benbow sailed from Spithead in the 80 gun Duke with Captain John Worrell as his flag captain, seven third-rates and two fire-ships, to protect the western entrance of the Channel. His squadron included the Charles Galley, Poole, Falmouth, Burlington, Dragon, Adventure, and the Vesuvius (Captain

William Passinger) and Crescent fireships. He successfully brought in the Virginia and West-India fleets and in May met the remnants of George Symonds squadron which had been decimated by the French. In an ignoble battle Symonds had lost two ships: Captain George Walton's Seaford and the Blaze fireship. Walton was to become one of Benbow's staunchest supporters. The Admiral then returned to the Dunkirk area with orders to again pursue Bart. He went in his boat before the pier-heads of Dunkirk and found the road clear of ships, but fifteen or sixteen tall ones within the harbour, one of them with a flag at the foretop masthead. He linked up with a Dutch squadron under Rear-Admiral Vandergoes on July 13 and proposed they position their squadrons to cover both the north and east roads, so as to capture Bart if he tried to pass. The Dutch admiral declined saying his ships were too foul to give chase. This again illustrated the difficulty of coordinating the fleets of the two countries. July 26 Benbow wrote the Lord Justices requesting leave to come ashore for the recovery of his health. They passed his request on to the Admiralty with their approval. (CSP.Dom.1697)

Before such leave was granted, however, about the beginning of August, Benbow formed a plan for capturing Bart. He wrote to the Lords Justices pointing out that Bart's ships had been hauled on to shore to be cleaned. He proposed that he return to the Downs and heel and scrub his own ships as he anticipated Bart would attempt to break out on the next Spring tide with clean ships. The Lord Justices passed along his suggestion to the Admiralty and the Duke of Shrewsbury expressed to Benbow that he was glad his health had recovered. Perhaps still smarting from the Justices' preferential treatment of Benbow, they were slow to respond to his request. As a result, the French got out with five clean ships on August 23. Benbow gave chase and managed to capture one privateer. Shortly after he joined four English and eleven Dutch East India ships and brought them in safely. This was one of the last actions of this war. With his beer, peas, and oatmeal nearly expended and with no water, on September 11 he arrived at Nazeland near Harwich with the Monmouth, Ipswich, York, Yarmouth, Romney, Woolwich, and the Vesuvius and Crescent fire-ships. He was ordered to remain at the gun fleet with his squadron in order to sail for Holland to convoy his majesty home. The King then sent specific orders for Benbow to cruise between Ostend and the Thames. In October he was placed in command of the winter squadron of thirty light frigates, and on October 22 sailed for Holland to shepherd English forces home from Flanders.

Throughout the summer negotiations had been under way in the Dutch town of Ryswick. The peace was signed on September 10, 1697. Louis recognized William's right to the English throne, granted favourable trading rights to the Dutch, accepted a return to the status quo in the French and British colonies and returned several captured areas of the Spanish Netherlands to Spain and several Rhine fortresses to the German Empire. Things were pretty well as they had been prior to the outbreak of hostilities. However, a critical question was left unsettled; that is, who was to succeed the elderly and childless Charles II of Spain. This was vital to the balance of power in Europe and did not bode well for a long peace. It did give our Admiral some time to visit his family.

They continued to live at Deptford, but had moved from their home in Hughes' Fields, marked by the Benbow coat of arms and near St. Nicholas, to Sayes Court, by far the most prestigious house in Deptford. This large estate belonged to Deptford's most prominent citizen, diarist John Evelyn, who wrote on January 18, 1697, "I have let my house to captain Benbow, and

have the mortification of seeing every day much of my former labours and expenses there impairing, for want of a more polite tenant." Evelyn had retired to his country estate at Wotton House in Surrey, so the Benbows were now the social elite of Deptford. Martha must have been in her glory.

Mr. Evelyn suffered a great deal more when Benbow sublet Sayes Court to Peter the Great, Czar of Russia. Peter arrived in England in January 1698 to study British shipbuilding and seamanship. Benbow's old friend, Admiral David Mitchell, brought him from Holland and attended to him during his visit. Peter was quite a handful as is illustrated by Mitchell's account of their channel crossing. Peter had been discussing naval discipline with Mitchell and wished a demonstration of keelhauling. Mitchell declined, telling the Czar that he did not then have an offender who deserved it. Peter replied, "take one of my men." The Captain with some difficulty explained that all on board were under the protection of the laws of England, and he was accountable for every man there according to those laws. Fortunately Peter persisted no further in his request. It was perhaps with some relief that Mitchell recommended Benbow as an expert in naval warfare, particularly as Peter was interested in the new bomb vessels and fire ships. At Peter's request Mitchell gathered other naval authorities to discourse with the Czar, including the eccentric Carmarthen, who became Peter's most frequent English companion. No doubt these gatherings initially utilized Sayes Court because of its elegance and location. To Martha's dismay Peter fell in love with her home and requested it be sublet to him so that he might be close to the Deptford docks. It was, apparently, the only house large enough to accommodate the Czar and his party. Benbow had already filled it with nautical prints, paintings and ships models, which greatly fascinated the Czar. Unfortunately, the Russians made such a mess of the house, furnishings and gardens that both Benbow and Evelyn petitioned the Government for compensation. Benbow wrote to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury,

"May it please your Honours...his Czarish Majestie coming to your Petitioner about Three Months agoe, did request the use of his House during the time of his stay in England as also the furniture in it as it stood. Hee freely consented thereto, and immediately removed his Family out of it and gave him possession: sopping it might be a pleasure to his good Master the King, and that he would have used his house, goods and Gardens otherwise than he finds he hath: which are in so bad a condition that he can scarcely describe it to your Honours: besides much of the furniture broke lost or destroyed. Your Petitioner, therefore, humbly prays that your Honours will please to order a Survey upon the House, to see what damage he hath sustained and that Reparation be made him, that so he may not be a sufferer for this kindness."
(Callender and Britton, p.205)

Sir Christopher Wren was appointed on May 6, 1698 to make an enquiry and determined that Benbow was entitled to ,133 for damages to goods and ,25 for 14 weeks rent. The rent for Sayes Court was 35 shillings a week. Evelyn received ,107 for damages to the house and ,55 for the ruin of his famous gardens. (Treasury Warrants, June 21,1698) These were considerable sums. The Admiral indicated he most regretted the total loss of 'twenty fine

paintings' and several Fine Draughts and other Designs relating to the Sea'. The inventory of damaged goods included Indian silk bedding, Japanese pottery, a crimson bedstead lined with Persian silk, several pieces of walnut furniture, a brass harth, damaske hangings, tapistry, chairs from Holland, inlaid tables, Turkish carpet, leather chairs, several feathered beds and down pillows, fine sheets from Holland, and much more. (Dews, p.35 and 189)

It is also recorded in the Vestry records of Milton Church that in 1697-8 Peter visited Admiral Benbow at his summer home in Milton, near Oxford, on the Calton estate; and that this visit was later commemorated by his daughter Catherine giving a family heirloom to the Milton Church, which was a silver Alms dish bearing the Admiral's coat of Arms. It is not improbable that the silver dish was originally a gift from the Czar to Admiral Benbow in gratitude for his consultations and hospitality. The Alms dish may still be seen, by permission, at the church of St. Blaise, near Milton Manor, which also is open to the public.

Benbow remembered his home town of Shrewsbury and made an annual donation to the poor of St. Mary's parish. Records indicate he contributed 10 shillings towards the Church's bells and chimes in 1694. The Corporation records show that a banquet was given in his honour in June 1698. The Chamberlain's accounts are as follows: "Paid for to treat Admiral Benbow, half-a-dozen of sack, and half-a-dozen of sherry, 24s.; a dozen-and-a-half of claret, 30s. - ,2 14s. 0d." He must not have been a frequent visitor for it is reported his sister, Mrs. Hind, who kept a coffee-house, did not recognize him. This is not surprising as the Admiral now sported a full bottom wig and was noted for his scarlet coat and other finery. He had indeed become quite famous and popular. Campbell notes that although there was much public criticism of the conduct of the war, none of this was directed at Benbow. On the contrary he was the darling both of the seamen and the merchants. He did not rest for long on the land, for in July 1698 he was given command of nine men of war, which were to convoy his majesty to Holland with the French ambassador.

The nation and the navy continued to be embroiled in party politics and in divided loyalties. Tories had evolved from former Cavaliers and were strong monarchists, often landowners, and upheld the traditional Anglican church, particularly in its high church form. It had been a Tory principle of long standing that the hereditary monarchy was inviolable. They believed that to depose or exclude a ruler was a grave sin against God who had sanctioned that ruler. Therefore, not a few saw William as a usurper and secretly sympathised with James and his French allies. Indeed, William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury and six bishops refused to recognize William as lawful king and take an oath of allegiance. William, a Dutch Calvinist was no more Anglican than James, and clearly favoured the Protestant Dissenters. His first Episcopal appointment was of the Scot Gilbert Burnet, to Salisbury in May 1689. In 1696 one hundred members of the Commons and twenty Peers refused to take an oath of Association which referred to William as 'rightful and lawful king'. In 1702 the Abjuration Oath which compelled all office-holders and clergy to acknowledge William as 'rightful and lawful' king passed the Commons by one vote. Sir Edward Seymour, the Earl of Nottingham, summed up Tory sentiment when he agonized that it was 'like swearing against God's Providence and government of the world'. Moreover, many Tories disliked the expense of William's war with England's long standing ally. The Tory party in general believed that England should restrict its involvement in the defence of Flanders and leave that to the Dutch and Germans. She could then greatly reduce

her land forces and the associated heavy taxes. Also, there was a strong underground Catholic movement which yearned for the return of James, particularly in the northern counties. Consequently, as alleged in the assassination plot, many Tory members of the military and government, such as Godolphin, continued their secret correspondence with James.

Whigs, on the other hand, were often former Cromwellians and were backed by merchants and tended to be more accepting of Protestant puritans, presbyterians and nonconformists. They had earlier led the struggle to exclude James from the succession when he was Duke of York, due to his openly professed Catholicism. Generally they were much more supportive of William and his policies. However, to hedge their bets, many leading Whigs, such as Russell and Shrewsbury, also kept up a secret correspondence with James. They were in power for most of the war years and so were blamed for the new taxes and the country's growing debt. The Tories won the election of 1698 and immediately set about cutting back on military expenditures in an effort to constrain William. His army was reduced from ninety to seven thousand men. The commons rejected William's personal plea that he be allowed to keep his famous Blue Guards, the Dutch contingent which had been his body guard since 1688 and had fought valiantly at the Boyne. His naval administration under Russell was so criticised that the First Lord of the Admiralty resigned. The cutbacks were so severe that William even threatened to leave England. His navy was reduced to 10,000 men and 57 ships were decommissioned, and their captains put on half-pay. The country was thus weakened militarily and politically divided between Tories and Whigs; with each of those parties harbouring secret Jacobites.

In May of 1698 the French ambassador, Count Tallard, wrote to Louis XIV:

"The King of England is very far from being master here; he is generally hated by all the great men and the whole of the nobility: I could not venture to say despised, for in truth the word cannot be applied to him, but it is the feeling which all those whom I have just mentioned entertain towards him... King James has still friends in this country."

Campbell made a point of Benbow being loyal to William and nonaligned with either the Whigs or the Tories. Consequently both sides treated him civilly, considered him a good and useful officer, and an able sea-man. It must have been difficult to remain neutral when success in one's career depended so heavily on patronage. Perhaps his assertiveness made up for this. He was never backward in demanding what he felt was due him, whether from the Secretary of the Navy, the Navy Board, or the Lord Justices.

His experience as a merchant in the Benbow frigate gave him a great concern for commerce, so he gave priority to safeguarding merchant ships. This involved not only providing adequate convoy protection, but also ridding the trade lanes of enemy warships. Campbell also notes he was a great enemy of Privateers because he thought they ruined discipline and usually reverted to piracy. He may have been a reformed one himself. Campbell further held that his lack of interest in party politics included a disinterest in influence at Court. He did however give his judgement freely when asked and on occasion when not asked. He particularly tried to persuade the Admiralty of the importance of destroying the Channel ports and of having fast clean frigates with which to give chase rather than merely attempting to blockade. Campbell records that the King consulted him about a question of the times regarding whether to prefer tars or gentlemen

in the navy. He notes that though Mr. Benbow considered himself and was considered by all the world to be a gentleman, yet he told the King "It is safest to employ both, for the danger lies in preferring gentlemen without merit and tars beyond their capacities."

His relations with the Dutch were at times strained but Campbell states he never quarrelled with their commanders and they in turn spoke well of him in their gazettes.

Benbow held discipline to be of utmost importance, especially amongst officers. Campbell reports that in this there were many who thought him a little too severe. He set a strict example and emphasized duty and sea service. He did not encourage shore visits for diversion and amusement and is quoted as saying "Why should people who have other business, or love being on shore, think of going to sea." Campbell believes this made him many enemies and in the end proved fatal.

This is not to say, however, that Benbow was without humour. He is known to have had a ready, if rough wit. The story is told of a comrade fighting beside him, being gravely wounded, and asking the future admiral to carry him below. Benbow shouldered the wounded man and struggled with him to the safety of the lower deck. He arrived not realizing that a second shot had killed his burden. The surgeon, up to his elbows in wounded men grumbled, "What's the use of bringing that poor chap down here? He hasn't got a head." "The liar!" exclaimed Benbow, "he told me it was his leg that was done for."

And there bold Benbow lay, crying, 'Boys', crying, 'Boys,'
And there bold Benbow lay, crying, 'Boys,'
'Let us tack about once more;
We'll drive them all on shore:
I value not a score, nor their noise, nor their noise,
I value not a score, nor their noise.'

THE WEST INDIES

With the question of the Spanish succession still hanging over Europe, Benbow was not long idle. King William wanted to show the flag in the West Indies and so be prepared to strike a powerful blow there, should war resume. It had become increasingly evident during the last war that in any future conflict naval supremacy in that area would be critical. William thus needed a current and accurate assessment of maritime conditions in the Caribbean. He was also anxious to gather intelligence of Spanish sympathies in the area and wished to ensure that Spanish treasure ships did not fall into French hands. As well, privateers who had been quite helpful during the war years were now reverting to piracy and needed policing. This suppression of piracy was given as the "official" reason for the expedition. Benbow was appointed commander-in-chief of the King's ships in the West Indies on March 9, 1698. The choice of Benbow for this critical mission was due no doubt to his navigational prowess, demonstrated battle skills, and well established loyalty. We may surmise that a commander of such an expedition would also have been chosen on the basis of his familiarity with the Caribbean. This suggests that Benbow must have had some experience in that area in his earlier career as a merchant trader or perhaps even as a privateer as suggested by the *Historical and Political Mercury* of February 1703.

He may well have perfected his seamanship among the reefs and islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles. This would place him there at the time of the infamous Henry Morgan who was governor of Jamaica for various periods from 1674 to 82. These were the years that the colony was changing from an outpost of Pirates and Privateers to a lucrative sugar producer and trading centre. With its location in the middle of the Caribbean Port Royal was ideally situated both for privateering and for trading. The town is located on a Cay at the end of a long sand spit known as the Palisadoes that curves out into the sea to form the best deep water harbour in the Caribbean. By 1692 2000 houses of brick and wood were crowded on to this tiny island and joined to the Palisadoes by a narrow land fill. It grew quickly as a boom town servicing over 500 ships annually. A resident in 1683 described it thus:

"The town of Port Royal, being as it were the Store House or Treasury of the West Indies, is always like a continual Mart or Fair, where all sorts of choice merchandises are daily imported, not only to furnish the island, but vast quantities are thence again transported to supply the Spaniards, Indians, and other Nations, who in exchange return us bars and cakes of Gold, wedges and pigs of silver, Pistoles, Pieces of Eight and several other coins of both metals,

with store of wrought Plate, Jewels, rich pearl necklaces, and of Pearl unsorted or undrilled several bushels: besides which, we are furnished with the purest and most fine sorts of Dust Gold from Guiney, by the Negroe Ships, who first come to Jamaica to deliver their Blacks, and there usually refit and stay to reload three or four months; in which (though the Companies Gold may be partly sent home) yet the Merchants, Masters of Ships, and almost every Mariner (having private Cargoes) take occasion to sell or exchange great quantities; some of which our Goldsmiths work up, who being yet few grow very wealthy, for almost every House hath a rich cupboard of Plate, which they carelessly expose, scarce shutting their doors in the night, being in no apprehension of Thieves for want of receivers as aforesaid. And whereas most other Plantations ever did and now do keep their accounts in Sugar, or the proper Commodities of the place, for want of Money, it is otherwise in Jamaica, for in Port royal there is more plenty of running Cash (proportionally to the number of its inhabitants) than is in London."

With these riches it is not surprising that Port Royal became known as the most wicked city in the world. In 1690 a visitor estimated that one out of every four buildings was a brothel, gaming house, tavern or grog shop. In 1688 the population had grown to eight thousand, composed of five thousand whites and three thousand African slaves. To this was added up to two thousand visiting crewmen eager to find recreation ashore. The average life span was between thirty-five and forty years. Malaria, yaws, smallpox, pleurisy, and common fevers took a high toll as did excessive drinking and duelling.

The decade leading up to Benbow's appointment as commander-in-chief was particularly traumatic for Jamaica. The colony had been under constant pressure from both Spanish coast-guard ships and French privateers based on Hispaniola. The slave population was growing swiftly as Port Royal became the main trading port for this trade, not only for the Caribbean but for the American colonies as well. The slave trade had been wrested from the Dutch in 1672 when the Royal African Company had obtained grants of West African lands from which they exported a steady stream of slaves to Port Royal. The hunger of the Spanish colonies for slaves overcame their antipathy towards the English and in 1684 they set up an agent in Port Royal to purchase slaves for their colonies. In 1685 and 1689 there were major slave revolts with many escaping to the mountains. Here they enlarged the growing kingdom of Maroons who maintained their independence for many years. The slave population continued to grow so that by 1698 there were 40,000 and by 1739 100,000. When emancipation finally came on August 1, 1838, there were 311,000 black and coloured people.

The wealth of Jamaica and England's other West Indian possessions naturally attracted assaults by England's enemies. During the war with France, which began in 1689, the island was particularly vulnerable as England's sea forces were engaged in the Channel warfare and little could be spared. The naval presence thus grew sporadically during the nineties. In February 1690 thirteen men-of-war and five hired ships were sent under Captain Lawrence Wright. Included in his squadron were the Mary, Bristol, Foresight, Assistance, Jersey, Guernsey, Tiger, Swan, Antelope, Hampshire and Success. The First Lieutenant of the Assistance was Samuel

Vincent while Richard Kirkby was the commander of the *Success* as well as a Colonel of Marines. Both of these men later played significant parts in the Benbow Mutiny. Wright was instructed to follow the orders of Governor Codrington of the Leeward Islands in land matters and to seek his advice in sea matters.

The fleet arrived in late May and on June 19, 1690 was part of a combined naval and land operation engaged in retaking St. Christopher (St. Kitts), which had fallen to the French the previous August. Under Codrington's leadership the English successfully routed the French and controlled the whole Island by July 16. Codrington then recaptured St. Eustacia of the Dutch Antilles. Conflicts then developed between Wright and the land authorities. Ignoring orders of Governor Kendall of Barbados, Wright chose to avoid a French fleet at anchor in Port Royal Martinique. He then quarrelled with Codrington and caused delays in the attack on Guadeloupe and the neighbouring island of Marie-Galante. The General Assembly of the Leeward Islands complained on March 28 that Wright's habit of doing nothing greatly aided the French.

The attack on Guadeloupe finally got underway in April, 1691 but was aborted in mid-May when the French fleet arrived, under the command of Jean Baptiste du Casse. Kirkby and Vincent would meet this gentleman again many years later, during the Benbow Mutiny. No doubt they learned a good deal from this 1691 encounter. Wright forced Codrington to reembark his troops so that he would have the use of all available ships. The French chose to avoid a confrontation and fled. Wright similarly was reluctant to engage in battle and gave only half hearted pursuit. Codrington later wrote that while chasing a French ship which was adding sail, Wright reduced his own. And then when Wright's ship, the *Mary*, was in position to engage the French flagship, he broke off and chased the *Antelope*, a ship of his own squadron. He pursued her for over an hour, firing guns at her and lowering his topsail to recall her from chasing a French ship. He then made a signal for his ships to form a line of battle, which successfully prevented them individually chasing the scattered French ships. Codrington further reported that Wright had actually told one of his captains that he regretted being in command and would not fight for King William as he did not know which side would prevail. Like many of his countrymen, he still had loyalty and sympathy for James, or at least was ambivalent about William's right to supersede him. His activities so clearly favoured the French that upon returning to England he was arrested for High Treason by the Lords of Trade and Plantations. Not surprisingly colonial authorities developed a good deal of distrust towards naval forces.

Wright left behind a small squadron under Captain Arthur composed of the *Mary*, *Assistance*, *Jersey*, *Antelope*, *Hampshire* and *St. Paul*. The *Jersey* suffered an ignominious fate. On December 18, 1691, she was caught completely unprepared and boarded by the French. Her Captain, John Bomstead, immediately surrendered without a fight. When his men were exchanged for French prisoners in February they vowed to tear their cowardly captain to pieces. Also in 1691, women and children had to be evacuated from the north coast of Jamaica due to French privateer attacks, sent by governor Jean du Casse of Hispaniola. In response to appeals from the Agents for the Leeward Islands a small squadron was sent to their aid, under Captain Ralph Wrenn. The ships arrived in Barbados on January 18, 1692. There was a brief four hour engagement with a French force of 18 ships on February 22. Both fleets separated with little loss, neither side willing to prolong the battle. Unfortunately illness soon decimated the

squadron, killing Wrenn himself on April 20, 1692. The squadron was sent back to England, leaving one ship each at Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, and Barbados.

Then on June 7, 1692 the Sodom of the Indies was struck down. Ever since Port Royal's founding, earth tremors had been felt especially during scorching, windless weather, following a squally spell. Astrologers and prophets had been predicting it would be razed as punishment for its wickedness. That year May was particularly stormy and then everything was becalmed. Within a few short cataclysmic moments the Earthquake destroyed Port Royal killing 2000 souls as half the town was swallowed by the sea. The ensuing epidemic killed 3000 more.

In October 1692, Benbow's Mediterranean Captain, Francis Wheeler, was appointed rear-admiral of the Blue and given command of a squadron for the West Indies. Two men who later played significant parts in the Benbow Mutiny were part of Wheeler's expedition. Cooper Wade was Second Lieutenant of the Resolution while Phillip Dawes was First Lieutenant of the Falcon. As a result of severe losses from tropical diseases, experienced in the squadrons of Wright and Wrenn, Wheeler's squadron included the hospital ship, the London Merchant, under Captain Harris. Wheeler arrived in Barbados in February 1693 and resolved to draw the French attention away from Jamaica by an attack on Martinique. Wheeler's fleet arrived at the Cul de Sac Marine, on the south coast of Martinique on April 1 and began to land troops and probe coastal defences. Colonel Codrington disputed the rendezvous and delayed his arrival till April 9, several days after the attack had begun. On April 17 an attempt was made on Fort St. Pierre, but failed, with some 800 men lost in three days battle. The green European troops were clearly not strong enough for the heat of the Caribbean and the French had ample time to prepare for them. Charnock states that at the Council of War on April 20 Wheeler was for continuing the action, and insisted that each member of the Council put his opinion in writing. The reasons given by those who differed with the Rear Admiral were that the enemy were in greater force and a defeat would endanger the continued safety of the British Leeward Islands. This sounds much like Torrington's 'Fleet in Being' defence. Codrington was foremost in arguing for withdrawal. This concept of a Council of War with written reasons for breaking off an engagement was not lost on Cooper Wade. So they made their way to Santa Domingo for rest and water. However, a much more serious enemy overwhelmed them. Yellow fever, the flux, malaria, scurvy, and a host of other tropical diseases ravaged the unseasoned crews. They went on to St. Kitts and in May Wheeler informed Codrington that he had lost about half his sailors and most of his officers and would no longer remain in those unhealthy waters. He prepared to depart for the healthier waters of Boston. When he reached England in October the squadron was "in so reduced a state that there were scarcely men enough in health to navigate the ships into port." The fleet had lost hundreds of men and accomplished nothing. Captain Thomas Sherman of the Tiger had buried 600 men out of the Tiger, though his complement was but 200. In total Wheeler lost 1300 out of 2100 seamen and 1800 out of 2400 soldiers. However, not everyone was disappointed. As a result of this decimation, Wade became captain of the Owner's Love and Dawes of the Falcon.

A new Governor, Colonel William Beeston was sent to Jamaica in March of 1693 to rebuild. He had engineers map out the town of Kingston on the other side of the harbour where many of the Port Royal survivors had fled. He maintained Port Royal as the key to defence of the harbour and encouraged its re-establishment. Fortunately he directed his attention to building the militia as well. He ordered that every able bodied man be trained in the use of arms.

Beeston also attempted to extend his authority to the naval forces left by Wheeler. The Guernsey had been left to escort a convoy of merchant ships back to England. In May of 1693, while awaiting this gathering, Beeston ordered Captain Oakley to cruise around Jamaica. Oakley, however, was not prepared to accept Beeston's authority and merely sailed out of reach and remained there till the convoy was ready. Beeston complained strongly to the Lords of Trade and Plantations. He was more successful with another ship, the Mordaunt, delaying her departure till the following November. In December Beeston sent two ships in pursuit of a French raiding party. He blamed the escape of the French on the incompetency of one of the captains and so removed him from command.

The French under Governor Du Casse of Hispaniola were slow in taking advantage of the dispirited English. It was not until June 17, 1694 that a French fleet of three warships and twenty-three transports carrying over fifteen hundred troops reached Jamaica and began to destroy and sack settlements and plantations. Beeston routed the French at Carlisle Bay on July 23 with three thousand of his militiamen. Du Casse had managed to destroy 50 sugar works and 200 houses and capture 1000 slaves. Other slaves used the opportunity to revolt but were eventually put down. A small squadron of four men-of-war finally arrived in August and assisted in stabilizing the island's defences. Beeston plead for a larger and more permanent force.

A naval squadron under Captain Wilmot was made ready and sailed January 22, 1695. Beeston understood it would be placed under his orders. In March it was sighted passing Barbados but had not reached Jamaica by July. Beeston was not only perplexed but furious. It turned out that Wilmot had been most interested in improving his own fortune and so had, with Spanish assistance, attacked the French on Hispaniola at Cape Francois. He plundered the area and cheated not only the Spanish but the English army forces as well. He arrived in Jamaica on July 23, 1695 and left shortly after with his plunder. He died on the voyage home. Nevertheless he added to the distaste with which colonial authorities considered naval forces.

Beeston was not used to being crossed by a mere naval captain, as is illustrated by his interaction with the captain of the Hampshire, one of the few ships Wilmot left behind. The Hampshire had raised the ire of the Jamaicans by pressing local men. They complained to Beeston who ordered the arrest of the Hampshire's captain and was going to send him back to England in the Ruby. On November 7, 1695 the captain begged Beeston's forgiveness and so was spared.

Throughout the rest of 1695 and 1696 the few naval ships left in the West Indies were kept busy convoying merchantmen and chasing French privateers. These had grown bold enough to attack Antigua and St. Kitts. With no squadron sent in 1696 the Islands began to fit out and man their own ships to protect their trade. Only six English war ships remained on the West Indian station and these continued to operate under the colonial governors' orders. They were desperately short of men and supplies and so were quite dependent on local largesse. Three of these were attached to Jamaica and had to work closely with Governor Beeston. One of these was the Southampton under Colonel Richard Kirkby, the subsequent leader of the Benbow Mutiny. No doubt these ships had to become quite adept at resupplying themselves from captured merchantmen and learned to survive in a hostile world by "respecting" enemy warships, that is, by avoiding confrontations.

In November 1696 the English decided to send a large squadron under Rear Admiral Neville, to counter a major French expedition under Baron de Pointis. Fifteen men of war under Neville joined several more under Captain George Meese, in the *Bredah*, and sailed in pursuit of the French squadron. They reached Barbados in April 1697 and added several Dutch ships and the local station ships including the *Southampton*. The French were way ahead of them. They had sailed from Petit Guave in March with thirty ships, heading for Carthage the rich capital of the Spanish Main. De Pointis had joined forces with Du Casse governor of French Hispaniola and about 1000 of his privateers. This heavily fortified port had last been sacked by Francis Drake in 1586. After much fighting Carthage surrendered on May 6, 1697.

Du Casse, leading his buccaneers had been the first into the outer fortifications. De Pointis and Du Casse quarrelled over division of the plunder so after de Pointis left on May 31, several of the buccaneers returned and further sacked the city. The French fleet became intertwined with the English just south of Jamaica on the night of June 6. Neville hesitated and waited for daylight to begin his attack. The French sailed through and escaped, with de Pointis reaching France on August 28. Neville in a pique returned to Hispaniola and sent Captain Meese ashore to loot Petit Guave. Colonel Richard Kirkby commanded a marine squadron on this brief expedition. The English soldiers got so drunk in their plundering that the raid had to be aborted.

On the return voyage to England there was much sickness. Both Neville and Meese died as did a large portion of their officers and men. The loss in Captains alone was devastating: James Studley of the *Pembroke* on May 28, Nicholas Dyer of the *Lincoln* on June 4, Robert Holmes of the *Ruby* on July 12, George Meese of the *Bredah* on July 20, John Litcott of the *Pembroke* on July 23, Roger Bellwood of the *Sunderland* on August 11, 1697 are but a few of those who perished to disease. In all 1300 English and 500 Dutch were lost.

With the coming of peace in September 1697 Jamaica recovered and continued to prosper. By 1698 the white population was fifty thousand, with more settlers arriving daily. The Treaty of Ryswick promised to bring some stability to the area by recognizing France's claim to part of Hispaniola and by prohibiting privateering. King William realized England needed a strong naval presence to protect its interests and so we come to Benbow's expedition. Benbow was instructed to make the best observations he could of the Spanish ports and settlements and assist the British Governors as best he could. As well he was to watch the Spanish Galleons as Charles 11 of Spain was ill and William feared the treasure ships might fall into the hands of the French.

In March, 1698, while readying his fleet at Spithead, Benbow was involved in protecting the Channel traffic "for the better security of the homeward bound trade from Virginia and the West Indies." He took an active part in preparations for his upcoming expedition. He knew either from first hand experience when younger, or from research among the returning merchantmen and his fellow officers, that the worst enemy he was to face was sickness. He addressed a letter to the Admiralty with several suggestions regarding stores and provisions; namely, that they should be good and new, for reliance upon the islands for fresh provisions was hopeless, that beer for only thirty-five days be carried with the remainder being made up of rum or brandy since beer spoils quickly in the heat, that each ship carry a water cistern large enough to hold two tuns in order that they might be less dependent on the unhealthy rivers and streams

of the West Indies, and finally, that a hospital ship be provided with a qualified physician and the necessary medical supplies. (Adm.3/14)

The Navy Board, which was responsible for victualling ships, found the ideas much too new, inconvenient and expensive. (Adm.1/3584) The requests do, however, give us some insight into Benbow's character, that is, his concern for the health of his men and his fearlessness in putting forth his requests.

Callender and Britton suggest the squadron's delayed departure from England may have been due in part to Benbow's meetings with Czar Peter at Milton. However, it is equally plausible that Benbow prudently postponed the voyage until the cooler months of winter, in order to avoid arriving in the sickly season, and so give his crews time to harden to the climate. They were ready to sail by early October, but were further delayed by bad weather and bad relations with the army regiment of Colonel Collingwood which was destined for the Leeward Islands. Their relationship deteriorated to the point that Benbow complained to the Admiralty of Collingwood's inefficiency and slowness. On October 21st the regiment was finally loaded. One can imagine the crowded conditions on board ship being further taxed by a regiment of seasick and uncooperative soldiers. Nevertheless they were unable to get out of Port until November 29 when they headed for St. Helens on the Isle of Wight. Benbow sailed from there on December 2 in his flagship, the Gloucester with flag captain Thomas Sherman, a veteran of Wheeler's West Indian squadron, and Captain David Lloyd in the Falmouth, and Captain Barnetts in the Dunkirk; all three being forth rates, and Captain Horatio Townshend in the Lynn (Lynx), and a small French prize, the Germoon under Captain Philip Boyce. He headed south for Madeira, where he put in for wine and other supplies, and then set out west across the Atlantic.

In the months prior to his arrival in the Caribbean an incident of no little significance had occurred there, which underlines the state of naval forces in the Indies. In 1698, a mutiny was attempted on board the Speedwell, 32, against Captain Christopher Coulsea. En route to Barbados several of her men, led by midshipman Jonathan Bear, had plotted to kill her officers and make a privateer of her, much in the mode of Captain Kidd. The plot, however, was thwarted and the ringleaders sent to England for trial. The riches of the Indies were most enticing and no doubt corrupted many.

If Benbow had known Port Royal in its heyday before the Earthquake of 1692, he must have been struck by the mutation wrought by that act of Nature. A contemporary visitor wrote:

"From a spacious fine built town it is now reduced, by the encroachments of the sea, to a little above a quarter mile in length, and about a half so much the breadth, having so few remains left of its former splendour. The houses are low, little, and irregular; and if I compare the best of their streets in Port Royal, to Kent street in London, where the broommen live, I do them more than justice. They have a church, 'tis true, but built rather like a markethouse; and when the flock were in their pens and the pastor exalted to overlook his sheep, I took survey round me, and saw more variety of scare-crows than ever seen at the Feast of Ugly-Faces in England. The generality of the men look as if they had just knocked off their fetters, and by an unexpected providence escaped the danger of a near misfortune; the dread of which hath imprinted that in their

looks, which they can no more alter than an Ethiopian his colour. Everything is very dear and an ingenious or an honest man may meet with this encouragement, to spend a hundred pounds before he shall get a penny. They regard nothing but money, and value not how they get it; there being no other felicity to be enjoyed but purely riches. They are very civil to strangers who bring over considerable effects; and will try a great many ways to kill him fairly, for the lucre of his cargo: And many have been made rich by such windfalls. A broken apothecary will make there a topping physician; a barber's apprentice, a good surgeon; a bailiff's follower, a passable lawyer; and an English knave, a very honest fellow. A little reputation among the women goes a great way; and if their actions be answerable to their looks, they may vie wickedness with the devil. An impudent air, being the only charms of their countenance, and a lewd carriage, the studied grace of their deportment. They are such who have been scandalous in England to the utmost degree, either transported by the State, or led there by their own vicious inclinations; where they may be wicked without shame, and whore on without punishment. In short, virtue is so despised, and all sorts of vice encouraged by both sexes, that the town of Port Royal is the very Sodom of the Universe."

Perhaps Port Royal had not changed all that much. On a more military vein Benbow found the West Indian colonies in a poor state of defence with disputes between settlers and governors exacerbating the situation. The colonists had always been independent in attitude having been forced to defend themselves for so many years. They resented the interference of the English government and in particular military and naval forces, especially when it entailed press gangs and the costs of billeting sailors and soldiers. The powerful planting and trading families of Jamaica resented being dictated to by English merchant families. Benbow must have found this local hostility irritating, particularly when it often originated with the governor himself.

Lediard, Burchett, and Campbell all record that Benbow reached Barbados after a very long passage on February 27, 1699. Charnock states that they are in error and that in fact he anchored in Carlisle Bay, Barbados, on January 7, and by the 12th of the same month had distributed the troops he carried in several places including Nevis. This is confirmed by Governor Grey of Barbados who reported on February 3, 1699 that Benbow had been there three weeks previously. (CSP.Col.1699) Also, the President of the Council of Nevis reported Admiral Benbow's arrival on January 12 with Colonel Collingwood. (CSP.Col.Feb.4,1699) In February he made for the Spanish Main to carry out his reconnaissance. Several Jamaican merchants accompanied him as they hoped he would redress the wrong done to them when the Spanish apprehended several of their ships. In a short time he sighted the high land of Santa Marta, which lies at 12 degrees latitude and is a singular navigational aid for its upper parts are the highest along the coast and constantly covered with snow. He made his way along the coast to the major Spanish port of Cartagena. His navigational prowess is amply demonstrated in his careful recording of the coast, bay, port, and approaches. He noted soundings, shoals, reefs, and sandbars, upon which he found several wrecks. An interesting incident then occurred, which further demonstrates

Benbow's tenacity. He had learned that the Spanish were planning an attack on the recently established Scottish colony at Darien in Central America and intended to use the confiscated British ships in the attack. This area had long been hostile to the Spanish, with the Darien Indians carrying on a longstanding feud. The Scottish settlement was attempting to establish a foothold but was hard pressed by the climate, disease, and Spanish opposition. The English government was unsupportive as they had a peace treaty with Spain and had directed Benbow not to interfere. Nevertheless, with Jamaican ships now involved Benbow positioned his squadron at the entrance to Carthage and sent boats ashore ostensibly for wood and water. The Spanish Governor was uncooperative and would not give permission for these supplies to be loaded. This highly nettled the Admiral who raised the ante by blockading the port and demanding the captured ships. When the Governor procrastinated, Benbow sent a message "that if, in twenty-four hours the ships were not sent him, he would come and fetch them, and that if he kept them longer than that time, he would have an opportunity of seeing the regard an English officer had to his word." The ships were duly released. The Spanish had some revenge, however, for the water the English took on at Carthage made the men ill and Benbow thought it best to make for Jamaica. There Governor Beeston and the merchants persuaded him to attempt a similar service at Porto Bello, where the Spaniards had more English ships, goods and men.

They too had been seized in reprisal against the Scots settlement. Benbow set out with the Gloucester, Falmouth, Lynn, and Saudadoes Prize and arrived at Porto Bello March 22. Their passage had been particularly difficult due to the poor quality of their sails, which Benbow complained of to the Admiralty. As well, Captain Townshend of the Lynn had died March 12 and been replaced by Edward Letchmere on March 16. To the Spanish Admiral he insisted that the English ships had no connection with the Scots and therefore they had no cause to hold them. The Spanish were understandably confused as William was King of both England and Scotland. The two countries did however have separate Parliaments, and in this enterprise the Scots were acting quite independently. Indeed, they were embarrassing the English government which was trying to stay on good terms with the Spanish. The Spanish Admiral did not make this fine distinction between these British countries and refused to comply with Benbow's demands. Several messages passed back and forth and Benbow used the time well to carefully note the ports defences. However, he was forced to depart, empty handed, on April 20 as the Gloucester had become quite leaky.

Benbow received the gratitude of the West Indian merchants and the Scots for his efforts. He then pursued the second part of his mission, that is, to clean the area of pirates who made their headquarters amongst the smaller Caribbean islands and to capture one Captain Kidd in particular.

Kidd was wanted by the English government as he had been outfitted by several notable persons including the King to capture pirates and had found it more profitable to join them, causing great embarrassment to his sponsors. On May 15 Benbow sailed in the Saudadoes Prize, with the Falmouth and Lynn, in search of Kidd, who was reported in the area. Fearing the weakness of his English sails he made a second sortie in a hired sloop and the Germoon Prize. He made an interesting order for the captains of the other ships, directing them to cruise between the east end of Jamaica and Hispaniola, "the better to preserve the health of the men, who are not so much subject of sickness at sea, as when they are committing irregularities on shore."

Sickness carried away the captain of the Gloucester, Thomas Sherman on June 15, 1699. Benbow replaced him on June 26 with Captain William Scally. Captain Rupert Billingsly in the Queensbrough had been searching for Kidd further East around the Virgin Islands. The inhabitants of those islands informed him Kidd had gone West to the Scots settlement at Darian. The President of the Council of Nevis reported the death of Colonel Collingwood on May 28, 1699.

That summer, the arrival of soldiers from the Darien colony brought an epidemic of fever which decimated Jamaica. Indeed, so many of Benbow's officers and men were carried off by this mortal distemper, that he was obliged to lie still and wait for recruits before he could undertake any major expedition. At the end of the summer, having had no success in his quest for Kidd, Benbow transferred back to the Gloucester. On September 4 he sailed from Jamaica with the Maidstone whose captain, Bennett Allen, he had transferred from the Saudadoes Prize. He had appointed Allen Captain of that ship on the 27th of February 1699. The previous captain, Jonathan Kelling, had died on October 20, 1698. Lieutenant Allen took over command. He achieved some notoriety as commander of the Saudadoes Prize when in December 1698 he attacked Port St. Louis, Ile a Vache, a small island just off the south coast of Hispaniola near Les Cayes. His intention was to retake an English brigantine from a French pirate. In the process he robbed the Church and shops causing a bit of an incident. The French governor Beauregar complained to Governor Beeston. (CSP.Col.Jan.1699) There was at the time some dispute between the English and French over the island's ownership, so Allen may have been merely promoting English rights. The inhabitants of Jamaica had used the island for fishing for turtle and hunting as well as for a haven from storms while navigating along that coast. In years past it had been a favourite haunt of Privateers and pirates of many nationalities. (CSP.Col.Mar.27,1699) In any event, Allen was a protege of Benbow's friend Sir Cloudesley Shovel so his career was not impeded. Later, however, in 1706, he was dismissed the service for misconduct. Now, in the late summer of 1699 he and Benbow headed for the Windward Islands.

Benbow learned that Captain David Lloyd of the Falmouth had been lost with all hands on July 25, in a sloop hired to search for Kidd. This meant three of the five captains he had brought with him were now dead, to say nothing of the many other officers and men. He appointed a new captain to the Falmouth, Thomas Mitchell, and being short of men to man her, ordered her back to Port Royal. There, Mitchell ran afoul of Governor Beeston. He had ordered Captain Carey of the St. Antonio to take down her colours, not realizing she was flying the colours of Lord Bellemont, Governor of Boston and New York. Bellemont complained indignantly, with the support of his fellow governor, Beeston. Both governors considered themselves Vice admirals with authority to grant naval commissions. Bellemont protested to the Council of Trade and Plantations; but excused Benbow who had gone to sea, and criticized Mitchell, who he held should be made an example of for his ignorance and impertinence. Beeston was more incensed with Benbow and wrote to Bellomont on September 23, 1699.

"This arises from a mistaken notion of Rear admiral Benbow, who believes no Governor has power to grant any commission whilst he is here. About this he and I have had several disputes. They have got in such a notion of the authority of the Admiralty that they slight and despise all other." (CSP.Col.1699)

Meanwhile, Benbow arrived at Nevis and wrote that he could go no further windward because the trade winds were blowing very hard and his sails were bad. However, on October 17, at the request of the President of the Council of Nevis he showed the English flag at the Danish colony of St. Thomas (Virgin Islands) which was known to shelter and supply pirates. Indeed, Kidd had unloaded some of his effects there. Benbow disputed with the Governor for possession of Crabb Island and demanded of him all English subjects who were non-resident there. The Governor maintained the Port was free, and that furthermore, it was his obligation to protect Kidd's belongings deposited there. He maintained there were no Englishmen on St. Thomas save one Captain Sharp, a noted pirate, who had sworn allegiance to the King of Denmark, and so could not be given up. As Benbow's instructions did not allow for open hostilities he was forced to depart near the end of October. Unable to unsheathe his sword he took up his pen on October 28, and suggested to Secretary Vernon that St. Thomas had an excellent harbour,

"very commodious for ships, and water enough for any ship, and would be of great use to our English nation in case of a war in these parts, and may be made very easy secure, which is now only a receptacle for thieves." (CSP.Col.1699)

He continued cruising between Porto Rico and Hispaniola till the end of November. He sent the Maidstone in to St. Domingo to demand the release of an English sloop but was again unsuccessful. Upon his return to Jamaica he learned of the loss on November 12 of the fifth rate South-Sea Castle with Captain Henry Stepney, and the sixth rate Biddeford under Captain Henry Searle. They had been driven ashore enroute from England.

Shortly however, the Shoreham arrived, under Captain William Passinger who had sailed with Benbow in 1697. He brought supplies from England and orders for Benbow to return home, ranging along the coast from Florida to Newfoundland, to free those parts of pirates. He sailed from Jamaica with the Gloucester, Falmouth, Lynn, Shoreham, Maidstone, and Rupert Prize (Captain Richard Long). He left the Saudadoes Prize and Germoon to attend the Island in place of the South-Sea Castle and Biddeford. Kidd had fled north and was finally captured when he put into New York for supplies, and sent to England where he was tried in May 1701. Burchett notes that the majority of his riches were lodged in the hands of persons unknown. Benbow's patrols were thus successful in clearing the Caribbean waters of pirates. Despite Benbow's enthusiastic activity on behalf of the Islands he continued to run afoul of the governors. The devastation of his officers and men by the unusually severe sickly season forced him to use strong tactics with the colonial authorities. When Governor Beeston thwarted him in replacing the ill he took matters into his own hands. Technically he was not allowed to press men without the governors permission. The needs of his ships, however, were paramount, and he was not about to defer to the obstreperous Beeston. So he pressed men wherever he could, often just outside the port. Beeston wrote in disgust to the Council of Trade and Plantations on August 24, 1699.

"The country has this year held hitherto very healthy, only the seamen on Rear-Admiral Benbow's ships die very fast, to supply which he impresses not

only from the Merchant ships, but also our people of the country, and exercises his authority as if there were no other here." (CSP.Col.1699)

Beeston was clearly not used to a naval commander exercising such authority. He was particularly irked that Benbow totally disregarded his civilian authority. J.G. Bullocke in *Sailors' Rebellion* suggests this is illustrative of Benbow's character and may be at the root of the subsequent mutiny. On the other hand, Beeston had been historically autocratic himself where the navy was concerned and was no doubt smarting with his inability to intimidate Benbow. The Admiral had as well been quite critical of Beeston's preparations for the defence of Port Royal.

He complained again on November 7, 1699 that Benbow was impressing all the Island's seamen, even those with wives and families, which was causing them to desert the island and was ruining the trade. He wrote further of his discontent on January 5, 1700. He pointed out the conflict created by the Admiralty instructing its ships of war to be at his disposal as governor, while at the same time giving an order to Admiral Benbow to command all His Majesty's ships in those parts.

"as soon as he arrived he took the ships from me and told me I had nothing to do with them when he was here...The Rear Admiral also told me that whilst he was here I had nothing to do with anything that moved on the water, not even in the harbour, nor could send out any vessel nor grant any commissions, and that if I did he would take away their colours and hinder them." (CSP.Col.1700)

Benbow was not known for his tact. Beeston went on to complain that when he sent out a sloop, manned by ninety Islanders, in pursuit of Kidd, Benbow ordered his ships to pursue her and if she took the pirate ordered his ships to take her from the Governor's ship. Being unsuccessful this ship returned and was forced by one of Benbow's captains to take down her colours. As a result of this and similar actions the Islanders were afraid to stir for fear of being pressed and harassed.

It was with some relief on the Islanders part, then, that Benbow left the West Indies in the early Spring and sailed up the American coast, reaching Boston April 20. Benbow managed to get along with Governor Bellomont, perhaps assisted by Captain Letchmere of the *Lynn*, a personal friend and Worcestershire neighbour of the Governor. The Governor even saw fit to apologize for his attack on Captain Thomas Mitchell, who had been exonerated by the Lords of the Admiralty. (CSP.Col.Apr.23,1700) They waited in these more hospitable waters for several captured pirates to be brought to them from New York. The squadron sailed for home on June 3 and arrived back in England in the summer of 1700. Luttrell writes on July 2 that "Rear admiral Benbow, with 3 men of war, is arrived in the river from the West Indies, and brought with him 9 pyrates of Avery's crew." These men were housed in the Marshalsea prison ship and examined by the admiralty, with the likelihood that they would be hanged at Execution Dock. Two ships which returned with Benbow, the *Speedwell* and *Maidstone*, were paid off on July 16.

Regardless of Benbow's quarrel with Beeston, Campbell reported that he had left with a good reputation for his efforts on behalf of the plantations and merchants. He adds that because of the successful execution of his duty Benbow was granted an augmentation of Arms by King

William. He describes this as the addition of three arrows to the three bent bows he already bore. Later scholars have not been able to find evidence of such an augmentation in the Heralds' records. However, there is evidence that Admiral Benbow used a coat of arms that differed from the traditional Newport Benbow coat of arms only in the addition of an arrow in the breast of the Harpy. This may well be what Paul Calton had alluded to in his report to Campbell. He may have been unaware of the original coat of arms but knew that something to do with arrows had been added. It is also possible that due to his active service Benbow never took the time to see that this amended coat of arms was properly registered. Or, as I suspect, the addition to the Benbow Arms may well have been a promise tied to his second West Indian Voyage. Such a promise would be a suitable reward for a second dangerous expedition and would have been unfulfilled due to the deaths of William and Benbow. Calton could easily have confused the timing of such a promise, as he did other matters.

Charles Leslie in his 1740 History of Jamaica supports Campbell's view of Benbow's success.

"Benbow discharged his trust in such a manner, as became so vigilant and brave a commander. He continually cruised the coasts, and secured the British trade to this place, in such a way as was never done before, nor has been since."
(p.266)

W.G.Bassett in his 1932 essay saw Benbow's efforts as fruitful intelligence, which strongly influenced government planning and strategy. Basically Benbow found evidence of a marked change on the part of the Spanish, now leaning towards the French, partly in response to the Scottish incursion at Darien. He discovered no overt action on the French to interfere with the Spanish treasure fleet, but warned the government that this would be the first object of the French in the event of hostilities. He further pointed out that the prevention of this depended on English naval mastery in the Caribbean. Benbow's warnings confirmed that England could no longer rely on privateer forces to maintain her possessions and trade in the Caribbean, but must mount significant naval expeditions. Benbow was among the officers who advised the naval authorities on the peculiar needs of ships in tropical climates. He attended a meeting of the Council of Trade and Plantations on December 30, 1700 to inform them on matters relating to the security of Jamaica and they in turn requested his observations and judgements regarding the Island's fortifications be put in writing.

His report of January 2, 1701 outlines the inadequacy of the existing defences and indicates that he discovered a mile wide channel into Port Royal Harbour, quite clear of the battery of guns planted on the East side of the Point. Consequently he recommended a fort at Mosquito Point on the West side of the Harbour entrance. As well he suggested a fort at Port Morant, the easternmost Point of the Island. He envisioned this as a haven for all the surrounding inhabitants. Similarly he advised a fort at Old Harbour, on the large bay west of Port Royal. He proposed such fortifications for every parish, as a place for safe retreat, including Montego Bay on the North coast. He concluded this report by recommending a strong naval and army presence for all the English islands in the Caribbean. He warned that British possessions would

only be safe "provided our forces be so in those parts as to be stronger then theirs [French and Spanish], but whenever that fails, all must." (CSP.Col.Jan.2,1701)

However, the Navy had to cope with severe financial restraints at this time due to the Tories antipathy to the increased land taxes of the last war. As well the framing of naval policy was more and more in the hands of the Lords of Justice and less with the Admiralty. Thus the navy was saddled with insufficient funds and the responsibility of executing projects which they had little share in planning. Nevertheless, the question of the Spanish succession raised the spectre of a new war with France. The dying Spanish King, Charles 11, had willed the Spanish throne and empire to the King of France's second grandson, Philip V. William feared the Spanish Netherlands would be lost to France and endanger the States of Holland. He began to form alliances with Austria and to strengthen his forces. Bassett maintains that Benbow's strategic plans for the Caribbean were supported and promoted by Sir William Godolphin, Alexander Stanhope, George Stepney, William Blathwayt, James Vernon and John Ellis. Unfortunately others in the government were not convinced that a strong naval presence was required so far from home. Also, the Austrian and Dutch allies showed little interest in supporting Caribbean schemes.

Benbow was appointed to the Nore command in the Downs at the mouth of the Thames and continued there through the summer of 1701. On February 17, Benbow wrote to Secretary Vernon from the Winchester in the Downs. "I humbly pray that you will lay my matter before the King, which I understood is at your office. I entreat that you will be my advocate to the King." (CSP.Dom) February 18 saw the reply. "H.M. approves of Rear Admiral Benbow's being allowed pay as an admiral of the blue from the time he hoisted his flag to that of his striking the same at his return from the West Indies." (CSP.Dom)

Benbow was never shy about pleading his own cause. On February 20 he again wrote Secretary Vernon, "with my most humble thanks for all your favours". This time he wished to inform the government of the sorry state of the ships under his command.

"We have here H.M. ships in the margin, with the number of men and guns now aboard, which if commanded on service, as now they are, very little can be expected from them. I have advised the lords of the Admiralty with it, and hope they will give directions that all our ships may be manned to their highest or middle complement at least; and when so the captains will have no room to excuse themselves why they did not perform.

We have nothing of moment more than that we hear Dewbart has lately bin at Ostend, sounded and viewed the harbour, in order to bring the ten men-of-war now at Dunkirk thither, to join five Spanish ships of war which are now there. We have now fair weather. With all gratitude.

(In the margin) Winchester, Salisbury, Worcester (each) 149 men, 46 guns. Hampshire, 149 men, 44 guns. Lowestoft, Poole, (each) 90 Men, 28 guns. Queensbrough, 70 men, 22 guns. Essex prize, 60 men, 16 guns." (CSP.Dom.1701)

Clearly he had little patience for officers who made excuses for poor performance. His comments suggest it was however not uncommon, at least in his experience. As well he continued to be plagued by the perennial problem of manning His Majesty's ships. On March 13 he wrote:

"Men are very backward in coming to our ships here, which are wanting men of their middle complements, and might soon be procured in these parts and in the Cinque Ports if the Lord Warden would send orders to the magistrates, without which they will neither assist nor suffer the men belonging to their towns to be impressed. This was a great evil the late war, and will remain so without a special order.

It would be very conducing to H.M. service if magistrates in all maritime towns were men of that zeal for their king and country that nothing should stand in competition with it. When so we should never want men." (CSP.Dom.1701)

His zealousness was not unrewarded. On April 14, 1701 he was promoted to Rear-Admiral of the Red in the fleet of his old Captain, Sir George Rooke. He sailed in company with another of his earlier Captains, Sir Clowdesley Shovell. Benbow cruised the Channel in the area of Dunkirk as relations with France were rapidly deteriorating and an invasion was feared.

In preparation for the expected war William III began to prepare for a squadron to be sent to protect English interests in the West Indies, and if possible prevent the French from acquiring the Spanish treasure fleet. It was, however, to be considerably smaller than many recommended. Campbell tells of the King's ministers wanting Benbow to lead the expedition but says the King would not hear of it because Benbow had so recently arrived home. However when others were offered the task they declined for various reasons and the King apparently said "Well then, I find we must spare our beaux and send honest Benbow." The King then personally offered the command to Benbow but indicated he was at liberty to refuse it. Benbow is alleged to have replied "that he thought he had no right to choose his station; and that if his majesty thought fit to send him to the East or West Indies, or any where else, he would cheerfully execute his orders as became him." Campbell acknowledges that his source was again Paul Calton

The accuracy of Campbell's account of Benbow's meeting with the King is attested to by R. Rees in a privately circulated manuscript. He points out that on May 16th Benbow was ordered to attend the Lords of the Admiralty at a cabinet meeting to be held the following week at the new palace at Kensington. (CSP.Dom.) Following this meeting he was committed to a second tour of duty in the West Indies and shortly after, on June 30, 1701, he was promoted to Vice-Admiral of the Blue. Correspondence from Whitehall dated May 30, 1701 directs the Admiralty "to add to the instructions to Rear Admiral Benbow, appointed to command the West Indian squadron, that he is to observe such instructions as he shall receive from his majesty during the expedition". (CSP.Dom) No doubt the private details of his Royal meeting and the King's wit were passed on by his daughter Catherine to Dr. Campbell. Luttrell substantiates the Royal meeting with his notations of May 25, in which he writes "The lords of the admiralty have appointed a squadron of 20 men of war, under admiral Benbow, for the West Indies; and on

Wednesday night their lordships, with the said admirall, attended on his majestie in council, to receive orders about their sailing." He adds in early July that Dr. Ogle, physician, will accompany admiral Benbow.

Nicholas Ogle had been appointed Physician of the Blue Squadron in 1697 but like many others had been demobilized at the end of the last war. He must have been pleased at his reappointment, preceding as it did that of his more famous colleague, William Cockburn, Physician of the Red Squadron. Luttrell further notes that in August Admiral Benbow had been before the Lord Justices. One of Benbow's concerns was certainly for the health of his men and perhaps for this reason and no doubt Dr. Ogle's support, his squadron was chosen in August 1701, to test two new medicines developed by Mr. Moses Stringer; Elixir Febrifugium Montis and Salt of Lemons. He claimed the former would cure fevers and calentures, and the latter, scurvy. The surgeons of the various ships were to observe very carefully the effect and operation of the said medicines, and to report their opinions thereof at their return. (Sergison, p.221) Keevil notes that this was the first naval therapeutic trial on record. He adds that as well as directing the surgeons, the Admiralty gave instructions to Admiral Benbow: "You are yourself to observe what success the same shall have, and direct the captains of the squadron to do the like, and report your opinions thereof." (Keevil, p.253)

The use of citrus fruit such as lemons on sea voyages had been recommended as early as 1227 by Gilbertus Anglicus. Lemons had been used as such and were written of as a treatment for scurvy many times through the years: by Richard Hawkyns in the 1590's, and by Hugh Platt in 1607. Platt had provided bottled lemon juice to James Lancaster for his Merchant squadron which opened up English trade to the East Indies. Both Lancaster and the Dutch used lemon juice as a preventative as well as a treatment for this scourge of seamen. The Dutch developed orchards and vegetable gardens at ports along their way to the East Indies and by 1632 were actually growing gardens of lettuce and radish on board. John Woodall first Surgeon-General of the English East India Company wrote of use of the juice of lemons as a treatment for scurvy in THE SURGEON'S MATE in 1617. Still the Royal Navy failed to be convinced of its value for another two hundred years, though individual captains were known to make use of its therapeutic properties. Those who did not, suffered the consequences of the loss of hundreds of their men. John Moyle, a contemporary of Benbow's, wrote THE SEA SURGEON in 1693, a text for junior surgeon practitioners. He stated that "when the succulent herbs and roots, and fruits, as lemons and oranges are freely taken, and good wine drank, there's no fear of the scurvy." Benbow may also have become convinced of its usefulness through his practical experience as a Merchant trader and so pushed for naval acceptance.

On May 21, 1701 Benbow requested that a hospital ship accompany his squadron to the West Indies. The Lewis Hulk hospital ship was attached to his squadron that summer and was in the West Indies in the fall of 1702, so likely went with him. As well he discussed the question of opening a permanent hospital in Jamaica, and subsequently established one at New Greenwich just west of Kingston.

Benbow's first orders addressed him as Rear Admiral of the Red so must have been ordered shortly after his appointment to command the squadron and prior to his promotion. Basically he is authorized to get his ships ready for the West Indies, and then directed to proceed to the Island of Madeira for wine. Thence he is to make his way to Barbados and inform himself

as to the whereabouts of the French Squadron, and then on to Jamaica. The principal design of sending the squadron to the West Indies is described as that of the security of Jamaica and the trade of his Majesty's subjects. He is further authorized to bring all ships on the Caribbean station under his command, and to send home any that require it. (MS 1348 Institute of Jamaica)

The West Indian station was particularly hazardous not only to ships, but to men, because of the many tropical diseases. To this was added the heat, the insects, the isolation and the long time away from home. Ships rotted, supplies were nonexistent and the colonists were hostile. Bourne in Queen Anne's Navy vividly describes the difficulty in recruiting men and officers for the West Indies.

"If it was suspected that the West Indies was the destination of a squadron in a harbor, the men fled from the vicinity and the seamen already on board tried to run away or mutiny. Even the officers were reluctant to go overseas, as all foreign service was looked upon with contempt. At the beginning of the war, when Sir George Rooke was ordered to the Mediterranean, he protested saying that it was a meaner position than the one in the West India expedition, which had been thought 'to small a command for the carracter I have the honoure to beare'"

We do not know how the rest of the squadron was chosen, but it is not inconceivable that Benbow's rivals in the Admiralty saw that it included several malcontents who would do their utmost to undermine him. Their antipathy to the risk and unpleasantness of the voyage was overcome by the fact that it could be extremely lucrative, particularly to bold and aggressive captains who were successful in capturing prizes. It thus attracted its share of fortune hunters. At least one of the captains joining Benbow's squadron was a veteran of several West Indian expeditions and already noted for his interest in "plunder". Richard Kirkby, (captain February 7, 1690), had been charged in 1698 with just such an offence after a tour of duty in the West Indies. He had returned to England in October 1697 with "a great quantity of gold and silver on board", according to a letter sent from Dublin dated October 15, 1697. (CSP.Dom.1697) It is not surprising he signed up for another expedition to the West Indies, especially since he had been out of commission and on half pay since his return. After many appeals to the Admiralty in the years 1699-1701 he was finally re-commissioned on February 14, 1701, and appointed to the Ruby. He continued to complain of those with less seniority being promoted over him, of not having received his back pay, and of his ship being in a sorry state of disrepair.

Several other Captains assigned to Benbow's squadron had been similarly out of commission since the Peace was signed in 1697. They probably haunted the Admiralty and neighbouring pubs in the intervening years and knew one another well. No doubt Kirkby, as one of the most senior captains developed a following and impressed his peers with tales of his lucrative West Indian days. Benbow's flag captain, Christopher Fogg was in this position. Fogg had first made captain on September 8, 1692 as commander of the Mariana Prize. In 1694 he served as Commander-in-Chief in Newfoundland. Then he served as captain of the Oxford and Arch Angel convoying merchantmen from the Americas and the Mediterranean. In 1696 he followed Benbow as captain of the 70 gun Northumberland in the main fleet. As such he not only

inherited Benbow's ship and crew but likely served under him in the Channel war. As well he was responsible for a young volunteer, John Benbow junior, and probably reported on the youngster's progress directly to his father. He became Captain of the Essex in 1697. Like many officers he had difficulty collecting his pay and wrote in June 1698 requesting his pay from the Northumberland. After several years awaiting another command he was appointed to the Bredah in February 1701.

A letter Fogg wrote on May 20, 1701 to the Admiralty indicates Benbow was not entirely pleased with the choice of Fogg as his flag captain. Fogg writes that in the Admiral's letter "he signified to me that he would not willingly carry any man that has a charge upon him to the West Indies, but what should be well acquainted there." In response Fogg tells the Lords that he acquainted Benbow that he never was there and would willingly withdraw if the Admiral so desired, as he believed the Lords would take care of him. (Adm 1/1776) We cannot fault Benbow for seeking captains for his expedition with West Indian experience. However, he later complains that captains who sign on for the Indies are often of the most undesirable sort. He would thus be narrowing his selection to an unsavoury group. Fogg was clearly a well seasoned and experienced captain, particularly in trans-Atlantic expeditions. It may be that Benbow was put out at not being able to personally select his Flag Captain. Fogg's commission to the Bredah did predate Benbow's appointment as Admiral of the squadron. Benbow's lack of tactfulness is extremely evident in this incident, and must have left not an inconsiderable residue of ill feeling.

Like Fogg, Cooper Wade was rescued from inactivity following the last war. He had been employed during the war convoying merchant ships and no doubt jumped at the chance not only to return to full pay but also to emulate Kirkby and make his fortune. Wade already had a taste of this. As commander of the Crown and the Portland, cruisers in the Irish Sea, he had taken several prizes in 1696 and 1697. He had however seen a fortune slip out of his grasp. In July 1697 he was part of a fleet of thirteen ships stationed in St. John's Newfoundland under Captain John Norris. They were assisting land forces to prepare for an expected assault by a large French force when they captured a French boat. They learned that five French men of war had put into Conception Bay, less than twenty miles away, and had sent this boat out to seek provisions from the natives. Initially they suspected this was the advance squadron of the anticipated invasion. However, questioning and a letter they found confirmed that this was the remnant of Pointis' fleet which had just sacked Carthage and was overflowing with gold and silver. Norris and his men were "ravaged" by the thought of the plunder and quite eager to attack the much smaller French force. A council of war was called, which included eleven land officers, responsible for St. John's. Eight of the thirteen sea officers, including Cooper Wade, voted to attack Pointis. The other five and all the land officers outvoted them, arguing that the defence of St. John's was their priority. So Pointis escaped. The House of Lords later chastised Norris for including the land officers in his council of war and for failing to attack the French. Perhaps Wade's disappointment was assuaged by Norris' censure. Certainly, he remembered the Lords' interest in naval affairs and later, during the Benbow Mutiny, threatens "this will be another Parliament Business".

Wade was not a newcomer to the West Indies. He had served on an earlier ill-fated voyage. In 1693 he had been the second lieutenant on the Resolution under Sir Francis Wheeler, then commander in chief of naval forces in the West Indies. Wheeler's squadron was decimated by disease and accomplished little. On May 24th, 1693, as the squadron limped northward to

Boston, Commander Wheeler made Cooper Wade captain of the fireship Owner's Love. Wade learned the cruel lesson that the quickest way to prosper was through the death of one's superiors. By the time the squadron reached England in October there were scarce enough men to navigate the ships into port. Wade was one of the survivors. Still, he would have to be quite desperate to sign on for another such voyage.

His desperation is evident in the letters he wrote the Admiralty requesting a ship, in May, 1699 and again in September, 1699. He was able to say that in the six years he served as Captain there was "no complaint made against me for any misdemeanour". (Adm.1/2637) He finally was recommissioned on March 24, 1701 to the Greenwich.

Like Kirkby and Wade, in 1701 John Constable had spent three long years waiting for a commission. He had first made post in October 1692, as captain of the Katherine storeship. The British were building up their fleet after driving the French out of the Channel at Barfleur. He served in the same fleet as Benbow under Admiral John Lord Berkeley who led the continued assault on the French channel ports. They served together in the disastrous 1694 offensive against Brest. Given his coastal expertise, Benbow may well have piloted the squadron of nine ships which penetrated the bay to disembark the invading troops. John Constable was Captain of the recently launched 32 gun Shoreham in this attack, in which the ships were trapped for three hours under merciless cross fire from forts and shore batteries. As a result Constable probably developed a strong inclination to cautiousness and hesitation in battle. He must have resented the poor judgement of the leaders of the expedition. Great loss of life was caused by the inability to quickly withdraw due to the low tides. If Benbow was involved as advisor to Carmarthen, he may well have been blamed for placing the ships in this predicament.

In December 1696 Constable was Captain of the Sunderland and on August 3, 1697 he was appointed to the newly built Lowestoffe, which was launched at Chatham August 7, 1697. However, he soon had further cause to be resentful. He was dismissed this command in January 1698. The journals of First Lieutenant Nicholas Snow and John Constable give little clue as to the cause of his suspension. They mention that on September 12 he anchored with Rear Admiral Benbow's squadron near the Gunfleet at the mouth of the Thames. The only action the Lowestoffe was involved in occurred on October 3rd. The Roebuck fireship gave chase to a Dunkirk privateer, and the Lowestoffe joined in, though some three leagues distant. At one o'clock Constable called off the chase, when just one mile from the Frenchman, as did the Roebuck. He states that the enemy had his boat over board, suggesting I suppose that the wind had died and they were towing their ship in order to escape. Why Constable did not do likewise is not indicated. The war with France had been over for a month, but no doubt it was still open season on privateers who were now technically pirates. Constable demonstrated a definite lack of zest for the business.

Admiralty records for November 8, 1697 give the first indication of a more serious defect.

"A letter without name read complaining of Capt. Constable's irregular proceedings towards some people of Yarmouth. Resolved that the Bailiff of that place be desired to enquire into the same, and that Mr. Lucey be directed to give an account of what he knows of this matter." (Adm 3/13)

According to Lieutenant Snow's Journal, both he and Constable were summoned to the Admiralty on November 24th. When he returned on January 3rd it was to unrig his ship and sign off his journal. The Admiralty minutes for January 1, 1698, state:

"The Navy Board to be directed to suspend Capt. Constable of the Lowestoffe and he is to be directed to make up his pay books, till his suspension, and his Lieut. is to be directed to take care of the ship during the Capt.'s suspension, or till another Capt. be appointed, and to make up the pay books of the ship during that time." (Adm 3/14)

We have no other clue as to what Constable's irregular proceedings were towards the Yarmouth folk. However, I would hazard a guess that he might have been tempted by common greed, as many were, to turn a profit from naval stores, while outfitting the Lowestoffe in the early fall of 1697. His unnamed accuser may have been part of the crew shortchanged by missing or inferior provisions. Constable maintained his innocence and wrote the Admiralty a year later in February 1699.

"After having faithfully served the Crown 20 years, and his Majesty, all the last war, it was my misfortune when Commander of the Laystoff [Lowestoff] not only to be maliciously, but untruly represented to the Lords, as I have ample proofs to make out. However, I thereby fell under their Lordships displeasure, and in January last was 12 months, was dismissed the said command, and have ever since been out of employ. I entreat your honour to move the Lords to take off my suspension, that I may be entitled to half pay, until their Lordships shall think fit to provide otherwise for." (Adm.1/1588)

In April 1699 he again wrote requesting he be placed on the entitled list for half pay. Later that year Secretary of State James Vernon wrote to the Admiralty.

"Upon your representation of October 25 in favour of Capt. John Constable, his Majesty is pleased that he should be restored to a command in the Navy." (CSP.Dom. 1699)

The Admiralty minutes for November 4, 1699 state only that in response to this letter Captain Constable's suspension was taken off, and it was resolved that he should be restored to a command in the navy, and employed according to his seniority and length of time he had been out of service, and also to the benefit of half pay. (Adm.3/15) Constable wrote in November 1699 thanking the Lords for taking off his dismissal and restoring him to his Post. He expressed his hope for a command. However in March 1701 he wrote again requesting his half-pay. Finally in April 1701 he was given the command of the Windsor and assigned to the unappealing West Indian expedition. Like the other Captains now busy outfitting their ships he found difficulty in recruiting experienced seamen. He wrote in mid-April "we want now almost a hundred men as

the most of those we have are land men." By the end of that month he was provisioned as ordered and sailed for Spithead. However, August 1701 found him still trying to collect his last year's half-pay. (Adm.1/1589)

Two of the West Indian expedition's captains had personal scores to settle with the French. In 1697 George Walton had only just made captain when his 20 gun frigate, the Seaford, was involved in a disastrous engagement. The Seaford was in a squadron of four warships and a fire ship the Blaze, led by Captain George Symonds in the 50 gun Norwich. They were on their way to reinforce Neville and Meese in the West Indies and were convoying the outward bound trade when at 4 a.m. on May 5th just 48 leagues off the Scilly islands they met a force of similar size, flying English colours. Symonds hesitated until it was too late and the enemy ships showed their true colours. The English ships were quite spread out, some having held back with each captain deciding for himself what action to take. The French seeing the confusion of the English attacked the enemy van at 7 a.m. In a heated battle the Seaford lost her mainmast and was taken and burnt along with the Blaze. The rest of the English squadron fled with the French in hot pursuit. After three days the French broke off the chase and went for the convoy of merchantmen which had separated. Interestingly the fleeing English met with Rear Admiral Benbow's squadron, then patrolling off the Scilly Isles. He no doubt was one of the first to give Walton a sympathetic ear. Symonds was court martialled on February 14, 1698 and dismissed the service. The court found that the loss of the two ships was "occasioned chiefly by the Norwich's bearing away with such a brisk sail and not lying by when they first saw the enemy". Walton described the action thus:

"And after a dispute of between four and five hours and having a great many of our men killed and wounded and several of our guns disabled in the great cabin and steering--our rigging and sail's being all shot away and between 4 and 5 foot water in hold, and no assistance from any other ship was forced to surrender...afterward they set our ship on fire." (Adm.1/558)

George Walton had lost his ship due to the ineptness and lack of support of his fellow countrymen. He had learned the smell of betrayal. Perhaps he wanted a chance to even things up. He was made Captain and Master of the Carcass Bomb vessel in May, 1701, and took over the Ruby in the West Indies when Kirkby moved into the Defiance.

Interestingly, George Walton was First Lieutenant of the Restoration in 1695, when the Third Lieutenant was Thomas Hudson. He rose to be Master and Commander of a small brigantine, the Post Boy, on June 26, 1699 but this was not as a "Post" captain. In 1701 he was appointed First Lieutenant of the Bredah for the West Indian expedition. No doubt he anticipated that he would finally reach the coveted rank of "Post" Captain due to the disease and death of other officers. He made Captain on December 21, 1701 when the Scarbrough reached Port Royal after having committed her commander to the ocean depths, and eventually took over command of the ill-fated Pendennis after she lost two captains in the space of a fortnight.

Like George Walton, Samuel Vincent had an unpleasant encounter with the French and was perhaps looking for opportunities to even the score. He too was a veteran of a previous West Indian expedition. In 1689-90 he was First Lieutenant of the Assistance under Captain

Lawrence Wright, who acted as Admiral of the West Indian fleet. This combined sea and land operation was noted for the lack of cooperation between the colonial authority, Governor Codrington and Admiral Wright. Interestingly both Richard Kirkby and Samuel Vincent were involved in the taking of St. Christopher. In the death and disease that always accompanied West Indian expeditions, Vincent replaced his slain Captain as commander of the Assistance. Both Kirkby and Vincent were schooled in Admiral Wright's strategy of avoiding naval confrontations with the French. Wright was the gentleman who chased his own ships to prevent them engaging a French fleet commanded by Jean Du Casse. Vincent was promoted to Post Captain June 1, 1692 and progressed quickly from the St. Paul fireship to the Smyrna Factor and then in 1693 to the third rate ship of the line, the Prince of Orange. It was in that ship employed in Coast convoy duty that he had a most unusual experience, which forever changed his view of Frenchmen and warfare.

It seems he was on a routine patrol in the Channel when he sighted another ship flying English colours. The two ships converged and Vincent was preparing to invite the other Captain on board when suddenly it unleashed a full broadside. In an instant the Prince of Orange was disabled with rigging and canvas shredded and many men dismembered and torn to pieces. With her English colours still flying, the Diligente under the Frenchman Du Guay Trouin sped away. Trouin was not so lucky in his next encounter with English ships and was captured and taken to Plymouth. Vincent brought charges against him for his deceit but he again proved elusive and managed to escape and reached Brittany. Vincent must have vowed never again to be so duped, to be the second to open fire, to be thus betrayed.

Vincent like many of the others was decommissioned after the peace of 1697 and like them he frequently wrote the Admiralty requesting a ship. In June 1700 he wrote to remind the Admiralty of his seniority which dated from his having made captain under Wright in 1690. He wrote again on April 7, 1701 to remind them he had not yet been re-commissioned. This brought results for he received his commission for the Falmouth in May, 1701. He wrote on May 7th regarding the difficulties of attracting recruits for the West Indies.

"I am obliged to acquaint your Honour our people desert as they find opportunity, either in the longboat or otherwise, for no other reasons than that they like not the voyage. Request the favour of you to lay before their Lordships and humbly desire they would please to grant me an order to receive such men from other ships as shall be willing to proceed with me, we having abundance of primary and but few seamen on board" (Adm.1/2624)

Finally, Benbow chose as his second in command or rear admiral an experienced captain who had served with him for many years. Henry Martin would command the only other third rate ship in Benbow's squadron, the 64 gun Defiance. He had actually made captain prior to Benbow, in June of 1689. He had fought at Benbow's side in the major battles of the last war: at Beachy Head in 1690 and again in 1692 at Barfleur, as captain of the 70 gun Berwick. In the spring of 1697 he was briefly Benbow's flag captain on the Lancaster. If he had lived the mutiny may never have occurred. As it was he died in the Indies shortly after the squadron's arrival, one of the first to succumb to the relentless tropical diseases.

We know of two personal events that occurred prior to Benbow's last voyage. Firstly, he made his will. In this he provided for his wife Martha so that she would receive an annual income of seventy pounds for life, unless she remarried. The remainder of his property was to be divided amongst his three sons and two daughters. He specifically directed that all of them should share equally and his heir should not claim more by right of being the eldest. He named as his executors his friends Thomas Waring of London, Merchant, Nathaniel Baskerville of Shrewsbury, Gentleman, and Thomas Minshall of London, Fishmonger.

Secondly, in February 1701, as Admiral Benbow was preparing his squadron for the West Indies his son John was readying for a fateful voyage to the East Indies. Robert Drury mentions in his journal of Madagascar that young John Benbow, son of the Admiral, sailed with them on February 19 as fourth mate on the Degrave merchant ship and noted that they passed the Admiral on their way down the Thames. They were subsequently marooned on Madagascar and John only escaped after several years. Sir Laughton speculates that as the Admiral was commander-in-chief in the Downs and had the power to advance his son in the navy, "it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there was some breach between the two." It is also possible his son merely wished to make his own way in the much more lucrative merchant service, as his father had done before him. He may have been pushed in that direction by less than favourable treatment by the Captain on his last naval ship, the Margaret, where he served as a Lieutenant. It is even feasible that his father's lack of popularity with some of his peers was the cause of some mistreatment or ill-use. For whatever reason both father and son were each launched on their last voyage.

Brave Benbow he set sail for to fight, for to fight,
Brave Benbow he set sail for to fight;
Brave Benbow he set sail
With a sweet and pleasant gale;
But his captains they turned tail in a fright, in a fright,
But his captains they turned tail in a fright.

THE LAST VOYAGE

England was still nominally at peace when Vice-Admiral Benbow sailed in September 1701, under cover of the larger fleet led by Admiral Sir George Rooke. War had broken out on land between the Austrian Emperor Leopold and Louis XIV, but William bided his time while rebuilding his forces and negotiating alliances. The English knew war with France was imminent when James II died in exile that September, and Louis proclaimed the Prince of Wales, James Edward, son of James II, King of England. For the most part this united the country behind William. Some, however, found renewed hope in the Stuart cause. The Jacobites had been praying for just such a show of support from Louis. For his part, he hoped to fan the fires of internal dissent, particularly in William's outlying possessions: Ireland, Scotland, the north of England and the overseas colonies. Both England and France needed funds to finance the war. So the race was on to secure Spanish assets in the Caribbean. To conceal Benbow's destination William intended that the French and Spanish believe that the whole fleet was headed for the Mediterranean and to this end demanded use of Spanish ports. The French King, however, sent orders to the governors of all French and Spanish ports not to allow the English and Dutch fleets to put into any of their harbours for provisions or fresh water, and to fire upon them if they attempted it. Luttrell mistakenly thought Benbow was taking the combined Dutch and English fleets to the West Indies, writing on September 16 that "we shall have a fleet of 62 men of war in those parts, viz. 40 English and 22 Dutch men of war."

In actual fact Benbow's squadron consisted of two third-rates, that is, his flag ship the 70 gun *Bredah* with Captain Christopher Fogg and the 64 gun *Defiance* under Rear-admiral Henry Martin. The *Bredah*, built in 1692, had a wartime compliment of 450 men, but sailed 50 men short. As well there were eight fourth rates; the *Ruby* under Colonel Richard Kirkby, the *Gloucester* commanded by John Hartnell, the *Windsor* captained by John Constable, the *Falmouth* with Samuel Vincent, the *Colchester* under Captain John Redman, the *Greenwich* under Captain Cooper Wade, the *Pendennis* captained by John Vyall (Viat), the *Kingston* under Captain John Leader and in the *Carcass* bomb vessel George Walton. Luttrell says Admiral Benbow was to take two transport ships with five hundred soldiers from Ireland, twelve great guns for West Indian forts and the new governor of Jamaica, Brigadier Selwyn. He further notes that the French court seem concerned for the Spanish flota, fearing the English fleet intend to intercept them.

William's design was clearly to intercept the Spanish treasure fleet. To this end on August 12 he ordered Rooke, to sail to the westward of Ushant, to reconnoitre Brest and ascertain whether Chataux Renault had put to sea, and if so on what service they were designed. In addition he was to detach up to thirty-five ships under Vice admiral Benbow and Rear admiral Sir John Munden, and a Dutch squadron under Baron Wassenaer. Benbow was given secret orders 'not to impart to any person whatever, till he comes to his station'. He was to make his way to the latitude of Cape St. Vincent, taking care not to fall nearer the land than 100 leagues, and then to proceed to the Western Islands (the Azores). There he was to forestall the French in intercepting the Plate fleet, and 'to use the best of his endeavours, either by fair means or by force, to seize and bring the flota...to some port in England.' He was instructed not to impart his orders regarding the Flota to any of his commanders until absolutely necessary, so that if he did not meet the Flota it should not be known he had any such orders. As well he was ordered that in case he should meet any vessel, beyond or near the Western Islands, he was to detain the same to prevent discovery. Luttrell writes that several of the commanders were surprised to find they were to sail for the West Indies. However, Admiral Benbow was given three further sealed orders to be opened at three different latitudes. Luttrell added that Commodore Whetstone, with six men of war, is gone for Kingsale, Ireland, to take on board three regiments of foot for Jamaica. William Whetstone had been appointed to the York in June, 1701 and was intended to have joined Benbow. However, enroute from St. Helens the York sprung her mainmast and had to put into Plymouth for repairs. She was not fit to sail again until September 14, when Whetstone proceeded to Kinsale. He stayed there till the end of October and was back in Plymouth on November 12, having lost his foremast and bowsprit. Finally on December 21 the York sailed for Cork, but again sustained damage and was declared unfit to go to the West Indies.

Meanwhile, Benbow's flotilla separated from the main fleet near the Scilly Isles on September 2 and on September 5 he hoisted the Union Flag on the fore topmasthead of the Bredah, signifying he was commander-in-chief. From September 3 to 9 the wind blew very hard, shattering his ships, springing and loosing masts and splitting sails. The Boyne and the Canterbury had to turn back for port on the 4th and 5th because of their defects. Naval Secretary Burchett wrote on September 12 that the Canterbury left Benbow in Latitude 49.12, eighty leagues west of Ushant, after springing her main mast and suffering other damages. Sir George Rooke was ordered to send her to Spithead to be put into condition to rejoin Benbow with four other ships. (MS 1348 Institute of Jamaica) The Ruby's Master records that they lost their fore topmast, main top gallant mast, and main top mast. As well seaman John Buglas drowned. On the 18th they reached latitude 37 and turned westward. Benbow had his ships spread out abreast to cover 20 leagues. They sighted St. Mary's on the 28th and proceeded to patrol to the westward of the Azores in hopes of sighting the Spanish treasure flota. On opening their sealed orders they had discovered that only Benbow's smaller squadron of ten ships was to proceed to the West Indies. So on October 10, with his beer having run out and water rationed, Benbow separated with his squadron and made for the Indies. Munden and Wassenaer returned to England with the bulk of the fleet. In the mean time the Admiralty received word that the Flota was being held up in the West Indies. Further orders were sent to Benbow to proceed quickly to the West Indies and to take notice of the Spanish Flota; but to endeavour to seize them only if he found himself strong enough to do it with a good prospect of success. The Admiralty and government were

obviously already suffering qualms about the smallness of Benbow's squadron. They further advised him they were seeking William's permission to send a further five ships to reinforce him.

Benbow's voyage was without incident until they approached the Windward Islands. On October 29 Colonel Richard Kirkby in the Ruby intercepted a French merchant vessel, the *Hermoine de Nantes*, bound for Martinique. As ordered by the Admiralty Benbow had her seized to conceal their presence as long as possible. For public justification he wrote that the ship had been taken because she was English built and the French had no proper papers showing how she came to be in their possession. Shortly after, on November 3, 1701, they reached Barbados. The colonists were quite fearful of the coming hostilities and were not pleased with the taking of the French ship. They did not wish to create an international incident with their neighbours in Martinique. Consequently when the French protested the capture of their ship the Barbados colonial authorities returned it with appropriate apologies.

For this and other reasons Benbow found Barbados inhospitable. In a letter to Secretary Vernon on November 6, 1701, he wrote:

"Here has been a very dry time, and the island is very sickly; but now the rains come in, tho' late. The water is said not to be good and gives the flux; we are obliged to take in some of it, having been somewhat straightened...We have had several men down of the scurvy (and some dead of fevers)."(CSP.Dom.1701)

As the Island Governor was returning to England in the *Ludlow*, with Captain Lumly, who had been assigned to protect Barbados, the colonists requested that Benbow leave behind another war ship to defend them. Perhaps he thought it fitting that he assign Kirkby this task since it was his action which had soured relations between Benbow and the colony. So he ordered Kirkby in the Ruby to take up this sickly station until relieved. We do not know whether Kirkby viewed this as punishment or if he actually preferred to be away from the admiral's interference. In either case he successfully ingratiated himself with the President and Council of Barbados who praised him in letters to England.

Benbow moved on to the Leeward Islands of Martinique, Dominica and Nevis in order to assess the state of both the English and French colonies. On December 9th he wrote that the French were busy fortifying their possessions and the English were in health and well provided for. He sailed from Nevis on November 22 and arrived at Port Royal Jamaica December 5 where he joined two more ships to his squadron, the *Fowey* under Captain Thomas Legg and the *Margaret* with Captain Philip Dawes. He found these ships' officers and men decimated by illness. In mid December the *Scarborough* also joined the squadron, having recently been at Porto Bello. Her Captain, Stephen Elliot, had died as had many of her officers and men. This necessitated many promotions and much reorganization. One beneficiary was Lieutenant Thomas Hudson, First Lieutenant of the *Bredah*, who Benbow made captain of the *Scarborough* on December 21, 1701. Hudson must have impressed Benbow on their voyage over. He was made Captain of the *Pendennis* on March 28, 1702 after the March 4, 1702 death of Captain Vyall and barely two weeks later, on March 17, the death of his successor Captain Richard Paul.

In his letter of the 9th Benbow stated: "The people here are in great expectation of war, and are putting themselves in the best posture they can for defence." Port Royal had not changed much since Benbow's last visit. Another visitor that year wrote:

"It is the dunghill of the universe, the refuse of the whole creation, the clipping of the elements, a shapeless pile of rubbish confusedly jumbled into an emblem of chaos, neglected by the Omnipotence when he formed the world into its admirable order. It is the nursery of Heavens Judgement, where the malignant seeds of all pestilence were first gathered and scattered to punish mankind for their offenses. The town is the receptacle of vagabonds, the sanctuary of bankrupts, and a close-stool for the purges of our prisons. As sickly as a hospital, as dangerous as the plague, as hot as hell, and as wicked as the devil."

It is not surprising that Benbow continued to discourage his officers and men from taking shore leave. He frequently took his ships out on patrol for the "health" of his men and exercised them vigorously. Immediately upon his arrival he put out feelers for news of the Spanish 'flota'. It was his opinion that due to seasonal northerly winds it would not sail for some time. He learned that the Spanish were quite suspicious and jealous of the French.

On December 24th he wrote William Blaithwate, the Secretary of War, that he had gathered intelligence that the flota was still at Vera Cruse and that the Spanish in Mexico were not willing to let it sail under a French convoy. He requested needed supplies and men in anticipation of war.

"The agent victualler here has refused to give any more credit. I have ,5000 on the Governor, but he boggles at the matter, and says he can put his money to better use. If a war ensues here will be a great consumption of stores, provisions, and men. I humbly pray that timely care may be taken to supply them, that there may be no excuse on our parts to put in execution what is expected from us. We have now 150 sick ashore, most of scurvy and flux, which Dr. Cockbourn's medicine will not answer. I have bought boards and timber to build a hospital, and intend to set it up near Kingston."
(CSP.Dom.1701)

Dr. William Cockburn, Physician of the Red Squadron, had managed to gain somewhat of a naval monopoly for his dysentery concoction, called 'pulver. contra Diarrhoeas'. It's effectiveness was questionable, but Shovell was a strong patron and insisted that all hospital ships carry it. It was Cockburn who attributed scurvy to idleness and recommended repeated bleedings for fever. The summer of 1701 had been a particularly severe fever season, but unlike other years, the sickness did not abate with cooler weather. Benbow's choice of Kingston to set up his hospital was understandable, given Port Royal's atmosphere. Unfortunately Benbow's good intentions were somewhat thwarted by the closeness of a mosquito breeding swamp. It stood about a mile from Kingston, in full draught of the land wind blowing from a large extensive marsh, and near low swampy ground. Patients entering the hospital generally contracted Yellow

fever, no matter what their original complaint. With its dismal record it was later converted to a prison with equally devastating effects even on the soldiers sent to mount guard. The hospital was eventually moved to Port Royal and now holds an Archaeological Museum.

On October 23 the Lords Justices, on William's direction, sent further instruction to Benbow. They warned him that the Spanish and French governors had been sent orders to attack and seize English and Dutch ships. Consequently Benbow was ordered to likewise attack and seize their ships, and annoy them at land where possible, and treat them as enemies in retaliation. And of course, he was ordered to particularly look out for the Spanish Flota.

The heat, disease, poor food, and hostility of the Indies began to take their toll. Death and sickness did not bypass the officers. From the small group of Captains alone we know of the death of Stephen Elliot the commander of the Scarbrough in December 1701, of Captain John Leader of the Kingston on January 17, 1702 and of Captain Martin on February 19, 1702, and in March of Captain Vyall and Captain Paul of the Pendennis and of the Captain of the Benjamin in April. One can but wonder at how difficult it must have been to maintain order and discipline under those conditions. Tempers must have flared and jealousies and grudges formed even among the officers as they waited out the long months of sickness, inactivity and isolation. It is instructive to examine the Courts Martial which were conducted by Benbow to maintain discipline as they must of necessity carry the stamp of his character. (See Adm.1/5262)

Upon his arrival he was faced with a grievous situation. Governor William Beeston greeted Benbow with a charge against Captain Philip Dawes of the Margaret, or Margate, for not prosecuting the Governor's orders of the 5th of November, 1700. In the absence of a naval Commander-in-Chief ships on Colonial Stations came under the command of the Governor. Benbow conducted the Court Martial on Captain Dawes on December 11, 1701 and found him guilty. He was dismissed from His Majesty's service and the Lieutenant of the Fowey, Barrow Harris, took his place. Clearly, Admiral Benbow wished to demonstrate his strong adherence to the principal of obedience to one's superior officer. Given the long history of tension between Colonial and Naval authorities Dawes difficulties are understandable. His fellow Captains may well have found his punishment extreme. He had served with several of them; with Cooper Wade under Sir Francis Wheeler when Governor Codrington had proven so uncooperative. Like Wade he had taken command of his ship the Falcon when his Captain died, and like Wade he was one of the few survivors of that West Indian expedition. They must have developed a not inconsiderable bond. In 1696 he had preceded John Constable on the Sunderland. Like most of them he had been decommissioned in 1697 and waited out the long years of inactivity with them in the environs of the Admiralty. The bond they felt as brother Captains must have resulted in no little resentment to the harsh architect of his sentence. Benbow's harsh judgement, particularly on the question of insubordination, is evident in successive Courts Martial. One further note is of interest, however in the matter of Dawes. Admiral Benbow's son John had served as Lieutenant of the Margaret in March 1700 under Philip Dawes. It is intriguing that following this service he quit the Navy and joined a merchant ship.

On December 10, 1701, a more clearly personal matter was brought to the court. William Berry, a boy belonging to the Greenwich brought a complaint against Peeter Amarin "that the said Peeter Amarin did commit upon the body of him the said William Berry that unnatural and detestable sin of Sodomy." Amarin confessed and was sentenced to death by

hanging. The XXXII Article of War allowed no leeway. "If any person or persons, in or belonging to the fleet, shall commit the unnatural and detestable sin of buggery or sodomy with man or beast, he shall be punished with death without mercy." In his statement Peeter begged "to be left in private to prevent people coming in to disturb me." The journal of the Pendennis indicates that on December 16, "the Captain's Steward of the Greenwich who was condemned to die by Court Martial was hanged on board the said ship."

Also on December 10th Henry Bell and John Castleman of the Windsor were found guilty of going to shore without leave. They were sentenced "to be carried along every Man of War's side in the squadron with a halter about their necks and there receive each one blow on his bare back with a cat of nine tails."

On December 11, 1701 Richard Frost, Boatswain of the Colchester was acquitted of the charge of Embezzlement of the ship's stores.

More interestingly, another test of obedience to one's superior officer was heard on December 23. Edward Willis, Thomas Wheatly, Henry Land, William Orange, Thomas Blair and Richard Terill all of the Defiance brought a complaint against Mr. Henry Partinton, the Second Lieutenant. They claimed he beat and misused them, swearing that on different occasions he struck them about the head 40 or 50 times for no reason. In his defence Partington stated it was for drinking and burning a light late at night. Benbow's Court found that Lieutenant Partington had been too busy with his cane for which he was adjudged to be severely reprimanded by the Court, and so to be acquitted. Benbow must have been sorely taxed by the predicament of enforcing obedience to superior officers while at the same time limiting abuses of such power. Partington was shortly thereafter promoted to First Lieutenant of the Greenwich.

Desertion was rampant in the West Indies and dealt with harshly. John Howell of the Fowey was found guilty of desertion on January 20, 1702. Benbow's court sentenced him-

"to be carried in a boat from ship to ship with a halter at his neck, and receive on his bare back alongside of each of his Majesty's ships in Port Royal Harbour three blows with a cat of nine tails, and in six days after, to suffer the same punishment in like manner."

A deserter from the Kingston was not so lucky. On that same day Benjamin Butling was sentenced to death. He claimed he swam from his ship to escape the abuse and beatings he received from the Boatswain's Mate Thomas Bells. Perhaps desertions were getting out of hand and the severe sentence was deemed necessary to stem the flow. Or perhaps the Kingston needed a particularly strong message. Captain Leader, commander of the Kingston had died on January 17. The Captain of the Margaret, Barrow Harris, was moved to the Kingston on the 20th, and Lieutenant Charles Laton became Captain of the Margaret. Benbow was not without the quality of mercy and wrote Secretary Burchett on April 13, 1702 requesting a pardon for Benjamin Butling, of the Kingston, who had been condemned by court-martial. (CSP.Dom. July 4, 1702)

An intership dispute was also heard on January 20th. John Moore, Midshipman of the Bredah brought a complaint against Midshipman Alexander Sutherland of the Defiance for uttering seditious and scandalous words when ordered on service. Apparently boats from the Defiance were engaged in delivering timber for the hospital at Kingston. The Bredah crew was at

the site stacking the wood on high ground. Harsh words were exchanged when Moore accused Sutherland of not assisting sufficiently. The use of the word "seditious" is noteworthy, and may underline the antipathy some felt towards the Flagship. The Midshipman of the Bredah was gratified to see his counterpart of the Defiance reprimanded and ordered "to declare his fault publicly on the Bredah in the hearing of the Ship's company and ask pardon for the same." This could not have improved relations between the ships crews.

A further complaint of disobedience was heard that day. Captain John Redman of the Colchester charged his Second Lieutenant, Conningsby Norbury, with being disobedient to his Commander and remiss in his duty. He had, it was deposed, gone on shore without leave, against the expressed wishes of Captain Redman. The court found to be remiss in his duty and in paying the respect due to Captain Redman. He received a severe reprimand but was acquitted. Perhaps a finding of guilty would have required a more serious sentence such as dismissal; a loss the shrinking officer corps could not easily endure.

Court was not reconvened until March 30, 1702 when Thomas Langridge, First Lieutenant of the Windsor brought a complaint against the Master, Jacob Tilley, for contradicting his orders. Again the question of obeying one's superior officer was put to the test. The Master had contradicted an order that the First Lieutenant had given to use a good sail for a smoke diverter. The Court found the Lieutenant at fault in terms of his seamanship, but still reprimanded the Master for disputing his superior officer's command. Benbow was clearly reiterating the principle that the superior officer's word was law and unquestionable. He did reduce the opportunity for further friction between these gentlemen by moving Langridge to the Bredah as Second Lieutenant.

A somewhat stereotyped drama was acted out on April 21, 1702. Cooper Wade of the Greenwich charged his surgeon, Thomas Hollier, with neglect of duty due to drunkenness, debauchery, and want of instruments and medicines. He was dismissed from employment. It would appear the navy did not attract the most competent men of medicine. Still, one wonders, with war imminent, how they would make do.

Crimes of theft were also not uncommon. On April 21, 1702, the Master of the Gloucester, Andrew Maller, and two accomplices, the Steward Charles Jones and his mate Thomas Wright, were charged by the Purser John Thomas Jordan with the unauthorized sending of provisions ashore. The Master was ordered to make restitution and fined one month's pay, while his lesser accomplices were whipped from ship to ship, three blows apiece alongside each ship in the harbour, "with a cat of nine tails well laid on".

The Purser was not above temptation however, and on the same day was charged by his Captain, John Hartnell, with forgery and breach of trust. He was dismissed with his wages forfeited to the Chatham Chest. Like many of his office he had been altering the Muster books so as to claim dead men's wages.

Another test of obedience verses physical abuse was faced by Benbow on June 27, 1702. John Winch, the Boatswain of the Bomb ketch Carcass brought a complaint against his commander Frances Gregory, for beating him with a cane. Gregory had recently taken over from George Walton who had moved to the Ruby. The change of command must have been most unsettling for the junior officers. Gregory's methods resulted in the Boatswain's losing the sight of one eye. The Court again trying to walk the line between obedience and abuse found that the

Captain had been provoked by mutinous behaviour and language. However it found that the captain had erred in his handling of the matter by not immediately informing the Admiral of the Boatswain's behaviour, and so confiscated all his wages from the date he took over as commander to the date of sentencing. As Francis Gregory never reached Post Captain rank it is reasonable to assume that this terminated his career as a captain, and that the Admiral replaced him. Thus Benbow clearly indicated such physical brutality would not be tolerated. One wonders how Gregory's brother Captains reacted to this sentence. Some must have felt it undermined their authority and respect. Combined with Benbow's treatment of Captain Dawes it may well have bred considerable discontent. Campbell in his *Lives of the British Admirals* states that Benbow treated "Captain Kirkby and the rest of the gentlemen a little briskly at Jamaica when he found them not quite so ready to obey his orders as he thought was their duty; and this it was that engaged them in the base and wicked design of putting it out of his power to engage the French." (1812, p.379)

The Captains were not the only ones treated a little briskly. On that same June day the court heard of another desertion from the Kingston, the charge brought by Captain Barrow Harris. This time John Harrison was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.

Also on that day the court heard a complaint brought by Captain Fogg against carpenters Benjamin Hopkins and George Ven for letting in water which damaged the ship's powder. It is difficult to imagine a more serious injury to the ship and its supplies. They were sentenced to be whipped from ship to ship, with five blows apiece at each ship. The *Bredah* was later to find itself extremely short of powder. This brings us back to international developments.

In England, on the 18th of January 1702, King William reorganized his Naval administration by replacing the cumbersome and inefficient Board of Admiralty with one man, Thomas Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery, who became Lord High Admiral of England and Ireland and all the foreign plantations. According to historian Burnet, the appointment was due to the factious disputes at the board.

Benbow wrote on January 17, 1702, that he had sent the *Gloucester*, *Falmouth* and *Margaret* to cruise off the Island of Ash (Isle a Vache) off the coast of Hispaniola. He reported that the hospital was completed and added that he would not have lain so long in Port but that his sails were bad, and he judged it best to save them for a more pressing occasion. (MS 1019 Institute of Jamaica)

The French were equally interested in protecting their interests in the West Indies and sent three squadrons to shepherd the Flota and harass the British. One of these was commanded by Admiral Jean Baptiste du Casse, late governor of French Hispaniola. He had started out as a trader in slaves and later as a privateer. Louis XIV had rewarded him for his successes by promoting him to lieutenant in the French Navy. He became a leader of French forces in the West Indies and in 1691 was made governor of Santa Domingo, Hispaniola. The local Buccaneers accepted his leadership and after the 1692 earthquake levelled Port Royal Jamaica, it was he who led 1500 men and 22 ships in an effort to seize the British base. After they were repulsed du Casse concentrated on wresting more of Hispaniola from the Spanish. In 1697 he joined Baron de Pointis in a raid on the major Spanish port Carthage and successfully sacked it. The Spanish recognized France's claim to Santa Domingo in the treaty of Ryswick later that year. Du Casse

was made a knight of the Order of St. Louis and promoted to Admiral. With the rising tension over the Spanish succession he was sent to Spain in 1701 to gain Spanish consent to his conveying reinforcements to the Spanish possessions in the West Indies. While these negotiations were proceeding, the French fleet that had been forming at Brest under the Marquis de Coetlogon sailed in April 1701 for the Caribbean. This was strengthened with the addition of fourteen ships of the line and sixteen frigates under the command of Count de Chateau-Renault who sailed in October 1701 to meet the Galleons. Du Casse concluded his talks with the Spanish and followed shortly thereafter with his squadron.

Secretary Vernon forwarded further orders from William dated February 22. Again reinforcements were promised. Benbow's letters of November 3 and December 24 were acknowledged but had not been discussed in cabinet because of a minor accident the King suffered the previous Saturday, when he fell from his horse in hunting. The King's orders were for Benbow to try diplomatic means to encourage the Spanish colonists to withdraw from subjugation to France, and come over to the Austrian succession. He was further ordered to endeavour to prevent the sending of supplies to the Spanish West Indies by the French, particularly to cut off the slave trade. If they are uncooperative Benbow was to pursue his earlier instructions to annoy them as best he could until they were reduced to a better temper.

Campbell states that there was much criticism of the government for the long delay in sending reinforcements to Benbow. Luttrell notes on December 16 that the government was planning to send reinforcements of a squadron of thirteen men of war under Captain Stewart in the Shrewsbury. He was mistaken. Then in July 1702 he states that reinforcement for Benbow's eighteen men of war at Port Royal are underway: "ten men of war are sheathing with all expedition to reinforce Benbow in the West Indies, and carry with them men, money and provisions." Rear admiral Graydon was to command this belated support. Ironically, he writes that on August 19, 1702 "there was great impressing of men upon the river Thames, in order to man the squadron for reinforcing admiral Benbow in the West Indies." On that very day Benbow would sorely need those reinforcements. Campbell adds that despite the lack of reinforcement and the growing French strength, Benbow successfully harried the enemy, took many prizes, protected British merchantmen and effectively thwarted the enemy's schemes. Campbell quotes from Dutch accounts which indicate the French were forced to act only on the defensive and were unable to pursue their plans of attacking Jamaica and the British Leeward Islands.

Dutch accounts in the Mercure Historique for 1702 state,

"the English Admiral with a small squadron, remained a long time master in those seas, alarmed and insulted the French settlements in Hispaniola, took a great number of prizes and so effectually protected the British commerce, that, notwithstanding the great superiority of the French, they were not able to do any thing considerable."

In April Josiah Burchett, Secretary to the Admiralty, received word from Richard Kirkby stationed at Barbados, that the French fleet had been sighted sailing under four flags heading W.N.W. to leeward from Guadeloupe. Kirkby wrote in February:

"Since that I have taken the men from the sick quarters who were unsuspected of infection (I had 60 ashore sick). I must leave about nine behind, being about to sail to join Admiral Benbow." (CSP.Dom.Ap.17,1702)

On February 9, 1702 Benbow wrote to Secretary Burchett and emphasized his stretched resources with some wit:

"We have had information M. Cotelogon, who commanded the French squadron at the Havanna, has joined Chattereno (Chateau-Renault) at Martenico and are put to sea. The inhabitants of Barbados are in great apprehension of his coming there. If a war comes, nothing here can stand against him, for he has 40 sail of as good ships as there are in France. I cannot go there 'unless I take this island in a tow'. If he comes here we will give him the best reception we can." (CSP.Dom.May 11,1702)

And then, for Benbow, a major catastrophe occurred. He lost his second in command. Captain Henry Martin, his rear admiral, died on February 19, 1702. On February 20 he promoted Philip Boyce to Captain of the Defiance. However, Colonel Richard Kirkby in the Ruby, having been relieved at Barbados by Captain Maugham in the Kinsale, arrived at Port Royal on March 8. He was now the most senior captain on the station. He demanded he be given command of the second most powerful ship in the squadron and on March 11 replaced Boyce as captain of the Defiance. Benbow did not however consider Kirkby his second in command as he was expecting the arrival of the marginally more senior Captain William Whetstone to take up the post of Rear Admiral. George Walton of the Carcass Bomb vessel took command of the Ruby.

The heavy toll in dead and sick exacerbated an ongoing conflict with the Governor of Jamaica over the Admiral's pressing of colonists into the Royal Navy. The Admiralty and government received frequent complaints from Governor Sir William Beeston and his successor Governor Selwyn who had arrived in January 1702 in the warship Bristol captained by Edward Acton. Prior to this voyage to the West Indies Benbow had asked for and received two assurances: firstly, that privateers would be required to fly a distinctive 'Jack' or flag from that of the Royal Navy; and secondly, that he could press (with the consent of the Governor) seamen and landsmen that have served at sea. (CSP.Dom. May 8, 1702) Naturally the governor was pressured by local colonists and privateers to protect them from such a draft as it interfered greatly with their commerce. Nevertheless, Benbow persisted in keeping his ships manned and ready, writing that "necessity has no law".

The Governor appealed to Nottingham who passed along this letter to the Lord High Admiral on May 5th, 1702.

"My authority reaches no further than the sight of the island and harbour of Port Royal for protection. Now whenever I deny him to press, tho' unreasonably demanded, he may, and will, take men where he can find them, out of sight of the island...This point absolutely ruins the whole business of privateers settling here, and will make them all run to Curacoa, by which the Dutch will

reap the benefit from the English unless independent from the king's ships, and secure from pressing." (Adm.1/4087 p.588)

Brigadier Selwyn died on April 6 and his place was taken by his civilian deputy, Peter Beckford. As a prominent colonist Beckford continued to limit the Admiral's freedom to press. However Benbow continued to lose officers and men. On March 5 the Bredah's Third Lieutenant died and on March 23 Benbow lost his Chaplain. On April 19 Lieutenant Bara of the Defiance died. The Colonial Council's minutes for April trace the erupting conflict between Benbow and the colonists. Benbow wrote on April 11, 1702 to the new Governor, a polite note requesting assistance:

"Since my being come into these parts we have lost near five hundred men (by death and desertion) and when came out of England was man'd but to our middle compliments. It being a time that most of the seamen which belong to your Island are at home our necessity earnestly calls for a supply; therefore, desire you will please to direct that the King's ships may be supplied with two or three hundred men or so many as you shall think fit with regard to our loss."

The Council procrastinated, asking for a survey of available seamen in port, but did allow the Admiral to "take out of every ship and vessel coming into the harbour from all foreign parts every fifth man." Benbow lost patience and wrote on the 27th of April that having lost six hundred men and with two hundred sick ashore, he now desired the Governor forthwith order that he be supplied with three or four hundred men. He also objected to an act just passed by the Council prohibiting the export of provisions, as he expected this would drive away a good many ships and men. The Council determined there were 56 ships in harbour with but five hundred and seven sailors, or approximately nine per ship; allowing for scare any to be spared. With no satisfactory response, on the 28th Benbow's anger boiled over and he wrote that having lost one quarter of his men already, and with little replacements, he judged it prudent not to remain at Port Royal for the hot season, but would immediately set sail, and so requested pilots for the Island of Hispaniola. He included his intention to inform his Majesty of the civilities of the Island. The Council began to bend and offered to loan Benbow one hundred soldiers. On the 30th Benbow turned aside the offer of the soldiers and again requested seamen, this time asking for every fifth man out of every ship in the harbour, giving him one hundred seasoned sailors and another hundred from Port Royal itself. The Council caved in, authorizing Benbow to take every fifth man of the ships in the harbour and ordered the Regiment to present itself at Port Royal in the morning to assist in the impressing of all loose men not attached to the ships in the harbour. They must also have warned all their friends, acquaintances and constituents. (Institute of Jamaica-Benbow Biographical file)

Benbow wrote to Secretary Burchett on April 30th, complaining of his shortages and the short sightedness of the colonists and the new governor. Benbow sent Vernon, the Secretary of State, a similar letter in two copies, one in the Fowey, and another in the Margaret.

"We have as yet no certain news of the French. 'Tis said they are sailed for Havanna, also that they are still at Legan. (Leogane)
 I have sent several out to know the truth, but still 'tis doubtful, so that this day some of our ships are sailed and I in a day or two will follow and join them, though not in a good condition, having lost above 600 men.
 This Government, since the death of Mr. Selwyn, make great difficulties about giving us men, though it is in their power to do so, and they at the same time are sure that if war comes nothing but our shipping can protect them. But, if they do not, necessity has no law, and I will do my endeavour while I live, to keep 'the King's ships' under my command in the best condition as men-o-war, which I humbly conceive is the intent of our coming into these parts.
 I intend to cruize with the Bredah, Defiance and eleven other ships between the east end of Jamaica and Petit Guave for the health of my men and to inform myself how matters go in those parts, and to stay there till we have news from England, which will be welcome--peace or war.
 I repeatedly asked the Governor for men, and, being as often refused, (he) at last issued orders that I should take every fifth man from every ship in the harbour and have from the shore what strength were there. However, the news got out and the result was that in this seeming favour I could not get above 60 men, and some of our own hurt by shot from the sloops. Nor can it be otherwise while a merchant commands Port Royal and a Planter governs."
 (CSP.Dom.Ju.30,1702)

In his letter to Secretary Vernon he mentioned the death of another captain, that of the troop transport Benjamin. He praised the great service of the new hospital but lamented the daily loss of so many men, more he wrote than if they did battle monthly. He deplored the fact that scarce one in three of his Europeans survived in the Indies twelve months. He proposed and requested permission to send some of his ships to New England during the sickly months, since otherwise he believed he would lose most of his men. He included a table showing the state of his ships. The Bredah which should have 450 men could only muster 344. All of his ships were similarly depleted by a quarter to a third of their required complement. Benbow's need for men was thus urgent. His anger with the Colonial authorities was such that the Council noted on May 6 that "the Admiral, as if he had been by us disobliged has ever since estranged himself from any communication with the Governor or any of the Council".

In May Benbow shook the dust of Port Royal from his feet and set sail. Acting on intelligence that the French squadrons had split up, he sent out patrols to cruise between Jamaica and Hispaniola. He led a squadron himself to search for M. Chateau-Renault, but almost immediately met the in-coming squadron of Captain Whetstone who was to take up the post of Rear-admiral on the station. His reinforcements and supplies could not have been more opportune. Whetstone was months overdue and had taken an inordinately long time to reach the Caribbean. He had suffered several catastrophes while marshalling his ships in harbour, and had a new bride to boot. His lineage was, however, quite impressive in that he was a son of John

Whetstone, master of William Penn's flagship the *Swiftsure*, during the 1655 expedition which captured Jamaica from the Spanish. Despite his tardiness, Benbow must have welcomed him as a much needed ally.

The combined squadrons proceeded to Jamaica to review their orders. Whetstone brought with him the *Canterbury*, *Dunkirk*, *Dreadnought*, *Seahorse*, and *Strombolo* fireship. Benbow left some of his ships to continue cruising in the Petit Guave (Hispaniola) area in order to seek intelligence and to pick off stragglers. The *Ruby*, *Falmouth*, and *Experiment* under Captain Hercules Mitchell took four prizes, including one mounted with twenty-four guns but capable of carrying forty. Kirkby must have been a little irked to see his old ship reap these rewards.

In May Benbow effected the King's orders to try diplomacy and sent the Captain John Hartnell in the *Gloucester* and William Russell in the *Seahorse* with letters to the Spanish governors of Carthage and Havana, to try to persuade them to side with the Austrian-English alliance. Therein he offered his services and friendship to the Spanish to assist them in throwing off the yoke of France. Unfortunately the French were in such force that the Spanish reluctantly fell in with them.

In June Benbow again wrote to Naval Secretary Burchett of his difficulties in getting supplies from the colonists who were resentful of the burden the additional seamen and soldiers placed on them. The antagonism had grown such that even fresh provisions for the sick were hard to come by. Benbow wrote scathingly of their greed and disregard for the King's service. Earlier his ships had brought word that seventeen tall ships had been sighted going for the west end of Cuba. He then learned that on the 12th of May *Chateau-Renault* was at Havana with twenty-six French men-of-war, waiting for the *flota* from Vera Cruz, in order to convoy them to Europe. Knowing he lacked strength to intercept them Benbow sent word to England by the *Trial* longboat of their imminent departure which he expected by the end of June. (CSP.Col.Jun.1,1702) Two of his ships were in grave condition and would need to be sent home. The *Bristol* needed repairs to the knee of her head and the *Scarborough* had been in the Indies twelve months. He ended his letter with a personal note: "I have not had my health since I came here, and should like to come home if I can do so without prejudice to the service." (CSP.Dom. July 12, 1702) Benbow suffered from recurring bouts of illness and had made similar requests in the past.

Events in Europe reached a climax that spring of 1702. William's fall from his horse, which had stumbled on a molehill, had caused an injury that festered and eventually resulted in his death. The Jacobites toasted the little gentleman in velvet (the mole) who had rid them of the usurper. The political division of the country was inflamed by renewed charges against the Tories of being Catholics and Jacobites. The succession fell to James second daughter, the Protestant Anne. As fear of the French grew the Tories were swept from Parliament. The Whigs saw the growing French-Spanish alliance as a severe threat to British trading interests, particularly in the West Indies. Queen Anne was persuaded to publish the formal declaration of War on May 4, 1702. The Whigs sent her Majesty thanks for beginning "so just and necessary a War, on the good Success whereof, under God, the welfare of these your Kingdoms and the Liberties of Europe doe entirely depend."

On June 23, upon hearing of the death of King William, the ships at Port Royal fired their guns in salute, and then again on the 24th to celebrate the coronation of Ann. Word arrived that four victuallers were shortly to leave Petit Guave to take supplies to the French at Havana. The Admiral sent three men-of-war to intercept them by cruising between Cape Mayers and Cape Nichols (the two Capes of Hispaniola and Cuba). Benbow suffered the loss of his surgeon, Joseph Cloak, on June 30. He was killed while on shore in Port Royal. He was soon replaced by John Byard of the Colchester. (Adm.33/226) On the same day, learning that a small French fleet under Du Casse was expected at Port Louis, Ile a Vache, and then Carthagena, he dispatched Rear-Admiral Whetstone with a small squadron to search for him on the coast of Hispaniola. Du Casse was expected to pick up the new Spanish Governor designed for Carthagena at Santa Domingo. Whetstone's group included the Canterbury, Dreadnaught, Bristol (Captain Edward Acton), Dunkirk, Kingston (Captain Barrow Harris) and the Hermon (Germoon) Fireship (Captain Philip Boyce). They did not return to Port Royal for 62 days.

In his report to Vernon on June 30 he wrote that the Gloucester and Seahorse had not returned from Carthagena and he intended to take the remainder of his squadron there if Whetstone was unsuccessful in finding Du Casse off Hispaniola. He added that the Indies were continuing to take their toll of men and ships. The Bristol had undergone the much needed repairs and the Scarbrough he was sending home with this report. He included a copy of his orders to Rear-Admiral Whetstone, dated June 26, in which he outlines the information that Du Casse is expected at Port Louis with four French men-of-war, and from thence is designed for Carthagena to interrupt the Assento--the Dutch and English trade supplying Negroes to Spanish colonies. Whetstone was to cruise for forty days no more than forty leagues to the eastward of Port Louis nor to the westward of the East end of the Ile a Vache. He ordered him to treat Du Casse as an enemy and to do his utmost to bring him to Jamaica. (CSP.Col.1702) On July 9th the Scarbrough under Captain Henry Foules departed for England with Lady Selwyn.

George Harwar, First Lieutenant of the Pendennis, records on July 3rd that in company with the Experiment, under Captain Hercules Mitchell, they took a thirty gun ship with one hundred men and on July 7th a merchantman of sixteen guns and brought them to Jamaica. According to the Journal of Captain Fogg of the Bredah news of the Declaration of War reached Admiral Benbow on July 4. Thomas Legg, previously of the Fowey, had returned with this bulletin and further orders in the advice-boat Express. Governor Beckford wrote to the Council of Trade and Plantations on July 10, reporting that the Declaration of War against France and Spain was made public on the 11th. He added that the following day all of the island's seafaring people came unanimously to offer their services against the French and Spaniards and to desire commissions as Privateers. Beckford wrote that the squadron stationed between Hispaniola and Cuba had sent down one very rich ship designed for France and three Victuallers intended for Chateau-Renault at Havana. His report described Chateau-Renault's fleet as decimated by illness, with more than half his men dead and the rest sickly and in want of provisions, while they waited for the Flota. Admiral Benbow, his officers and men, he indicated, were healthy and well, and his ships in order. So much so that Beckford put in a plea to keep them on station.

"Since this fleet is in so good a state of health, it will not, I hope, be judged reasonable to change them; the ships we may, but not the men, who are now so

adapted to the climate, that there will be no fear of them, and new comers will be subject to the distempers of the West Indies." (CSP.Col.July 10,1702)

Apparently Benbow and his men rose considerably in Beckford's estimation once war was declared. Benbow himself sailed in the *Bredah* on July 11, 1702 with a squadron which included the *Windsor*, the *Defiance*, the *Greenwich*, the *Falmouth* and the *Ruby*, the *Strombolo* fire ship, the *Carcass* bomb, the *Cresswell* tender and the *Recovery* Sloop. They planned to search for Du Casse in the area of Logon (Leogane) near Port-au-Prince, Hispaniola, and link up with Whetstone. Local tradition has it that the *Benbow* took his squadron westward to rendezvous at Negril Bay, and then proceeded along the north coast of the island and on to Hispaniola. The *Colchester* and *Pendennis* joined them on July 14, with two French prizes. The *Experiment* had gone with her prize to Port Royal. July 21 they took a small sloop near Cape Tiburon, Hispaniola. Their fireship, the *Strombolo*, under Captain Charles Smith, suffered an accident on the 24th: its gunroom blew up, quite disabling her. It was another loss that Benbow would sorely miss in the very near future. She was escorted by the *Pendennis* back to Jamaica with the slower boats, the bomb vessel and her tender. On July 27 in the Gulf of Leogane the *Bredah* and the *Ruby* gave chase to a French ship of war of thirty to forty guns. Working in conjunction they forced her into shore where she ran aground and blew up. They reached the town of Leogane on the 28th, took three merchant ships of sixteen, six and thirty guns, sunk a fourth of sixteen guns and set fire to a fifth of eighteen guns. This latter ship had been hauled ashore under a battery of twelve guns so that boats had to be sent in under heavy fire to burn her. Benbow fired on the town of Leogane on July 30th and the town answered with sharp fire killing four men and wounding 14. They continued to patrol that bay till August 2 when they headed west to get fresh water. The *Colchester* was sent back to Jamaica with the three prizes.

On August 5th Benbow had reached Cape Donna Maria on the southwest coast of Hispaniola and sent boats ashore for wood and water. The Master of the *Ruby* recorded on the seventh that one of their seamen was shot in the thigh by a French hunter, and later bled to death back on board. On the 10th they weighed anchor and soon spotted a brigantine and two sloops. These turned out to be from St. Christopher and brought word of having seen a French convoy enroute to Santo Domingo. Benbow presumed that this was Du Casse en route to pick up from that place the new governor and convey him to Carthagen. He reasoned that Du Casse would head due south from Santo Domingo to the Spanish Main, and then follow the coast to Carthagen. Consequently Admiral Benbow immediately set his own course southward, to intercept Du Casse on the Spanish coast just east of Carthagen. By six at night on the 12th the English squadron had passed Cape Tiburon and was soon out of sight of Hispaniola. The ships' journals record the weather as foreboding: rain, lightning, and thunder. The hurricane season was upon them, as foretold in the local proverb.

"June, too soon. July, stand by. August, prepare you must. September, remember. October, all over."

"Hard fortune that it was, by chain shot, by chain shot,
Hard fortune that it was, by chain shot,
Our admiral lost his leg,
And of his men did beg,
'Fight on, my British boys; 'tis my lot, 'tis my lot;
Fight on, my British boys; 'tis my lot."

THE MUTINY

A French account published in 1703, details Benbow's quarry. It is titled Relation de ce qui s'est passe entre une escadre du Roi de quatre vaisseaux commandee par Monsieur Du Casse. This "Relation" is no doubt that which Secretary R. Warre refers to in his own letter of January 5, 1703. "I send you herewith by my Lords command the Relation given by Monsieur Du Casse of his engagement with Admiral Benbow in the West Indies." (Adm.1/4088) It lists Du Casse's squadron as follows: his flagship the *Heureux*, of 68 guns under Captain Bennet, the *Agreable* of 50 guns commanded by Captain De Roussy, the *Phoenix* of 60 guns with Captain De Poudens, the *Apollon* of 50 guns captained by De Demuin, and the 30 gun Dutch built merchant ship, the *Prince de Frise* under De St. Andre. The squadron also included a fireship, *le Marin*, and three small craft including the captured *Anne Galley*, and a transport. Du Casse had brought a larger squadron from Spain, which arrived at San Juan, Porto Rico, July 29 (this French account actually gives the date as August 8 since the French calendar was eleven days ahead of the English). It departed August 9 (English calendar) for Santo Domingo where it arrived August 13. Enroute to Santo Domingo, the French divided their squadron, dispatching two warships on August 11 to convoy five cargo ships with the new governor, the Duke d'Alburquerque, and other officials and troops west to Cuba and Mexico. The rest were to convoy about 2000 troops south to Carthage. Du Casse arrived before the city of Santo Domingo on August 13. The seas were rough and the ships had to brace to some distance from shore. The intrepid old buccaneer, Du Casse, braved the waves in his canoe, and made for the town. There he learned that the English had been bombarding Leogane, and worse still, the intended governor for Carthage had died fifteen days before. He decided on the 14th to proceed with his mission to deliver troops to Carthage, and so made for Riohacha on the Spanish Main where he would work his way along the South American coast. The French account actually states that Du Casse anticipated an ambush, reporting that he was told of English ships waiting for him in front of Carthage, probably the *Gloucester* and *Seahorse*. Benbow passed Cape Taburon, the southwestern tip of

Hispaniola, on the 12th. Thus, the English and the French squadrons left the island just two days apart, and headed on converging courses, south, for the Spanish Main.

There are numerous journal accounts of the ensuing conflict, made by the various ships' captains and masters. (Adm1/5263, Adm52/270, Adm52/40, Adm52/34, Adm51/341, Adm51/130, Adm51/4287,) The squadrons were 15 leagues west of Santa Marta when they sighted each other as the sun rose on August 19, 1702. The French were to the East and the wind was gentle and easterly. The French Admiral ordered his ships to furl their sails, get into battle line position, brace to and keep to windward while the strange sails tacked closer. Admiral Benbow gave the signal for the chase for all ships except the *Defiance* and *Pendennis* which were too far astern. The *Pendennis* had rejoined the squadron just off of Hispaniola. Now the English ships had to beat to windward, tacking to the northeast. The French in response veered southward with an easy sail. Some of the English ships clearly were having a difficult time making much headway against the Easterly and fell back. The *Defiance*, and *Pendennis* followed but were three to four miles to the rear.

By 10 a.m. the *Ruby*, *Falmouth* and *Bredah* managed to get close enough to make out the French colours. The French, now in good formation had made out the English colours and got underway on a southwesterly course. They held a brief council of war in which they agreed to let the English fire first and to make way straight to Carthage with their cargo of troops. The four French war ships led, while their slower cargo ships, including the *Marin* and the *Prince of Frise*, took up the rear, so as to extend their profile. Benbow's planned line of battle was the *Defiance*, 64, Captain Richard Kirkby; the *Pendennis*, 48, Captain Thomas Hudson; the *Windsor*, 60, Captain John Constable; the *Bredah*, 70, Captain Christopher Fogg; the *Greenwich*, 54, Captain Cooper Wade; the *Ruby*, 48, Captain George Walton; and the *Falmouth*, 48, Captain Samuel Vincent. (Adm1/5263 folio 218) The line was however, excruciatingly slow in forming.

At eleven the Admiral ordered a signal calling the rearmost ships to come up and for all ships to clear for action. The *Bredah* went with an easy sail so that at noon she was still two miles from the enemy, and waiting for the rest of the ships to catch up. An exasperated Benbow ordered Fogg to send a boat to Kirkby and Constable to command them to make more sail. Lieutenant Langridge had the unpleasant task of chiding the sluggish ships. The *Defiance* and *Windsor* set their main sails and let out their top gallants and noticeably picked up speed.

About half past twelve the Admiral ordered the *Bredah* to brace to and raise the Union flag at the mizzen peak signalling the squadron to form line ahead battle formation. The *Bredah's* station was in the centre of the line so Benbow reasoned the best way to get the other ships in position was to anchor the centre and have them form up ahead and astern. The Fighting Instructions issued by Edward Russell in 1691 outlined clearly the procedure a British force must undertake upon meeting an enemy head on. After forming into a line of battle, with each ship following the one ahead by one half a cable (100 yards), the ships were to draw abreast of the enemy line and upon nearing the enemy rear were to tack together. They would thus in unison reverse direction and proceed abreast the enemy. From this position they were to close on the enemy, opening fire only when near enough to make their shot count. Admiral Benbow had added his personal direction that all ships were to await his opening broadside unless the French attacked first. From his position in the centre of the line, he believed he could lead a coordinated action.

The Instructions also directed that the English were to keep the weather gage on the enemy. This required concerted action to keep the fleet tight together so as to block any counter manoeuvre by the French to get their ships to windward. Ships in the windward position in battle controlled the timing of the attack; They could bear down on the enemy at will; whereas ships to leeward would have to beat to windward to initiate any action. As well the windward ships would be spared the blinding clouds of smoke which would blow back on the leeward gunners. And perhaps, most importantly, the hulls of the leeward ships would be heeled over so that they would be dangerously exposed below their normal water line, and so a prime target for English gunners.

The only disadvantage was that the windward ship's lower gun deck might be swamped if the weather worsened, since it would be heeled over on the side facing the enemy. Without their heaviest guns, the 32 pounders, the English would be at a critical disadvantage, since they generally endeavoured to hole the enemy ships at and below the water line, "between wind and water". The French had plenty of oak and built their ship's sides of foot thick timbers. Broadships would need to be at point blank range and with the heaviest guns to cause any substantial damage.

While Benbow waited for his ships to get into proper formation, the tardiness of his sternmost ships had, however, allowed the French squadron to pass to the south, rather than meet him head on. Having seen his line extended over several miles and in such poor order, Du Casse had added all the sail he could and was shepherding his flock past the enemy, far out or gun range. Benbow thus lost the chance of meeting the French head on and was forced to give chase. The wind had shifted and freshened so that a gentle breeze came out of the sea from the north east, aiding the progress of the French, but continuing to impede the English stragglers. It was 2 o'clock before all of Benbow's ships were up and manoeuvring into their proper stations. It had taken three hours for his sternmost ships to form their appropriate positions. The French were now 4 miles distant to the south west. Finally, no doubt with extreme chagrin, Benbow ordered the Red Pennant hoisted on the maintopmast signalling the squadron to get underway, to intercept and catch up with the French. The Defiance took the lead as planned, but the Windsor was still astern the Bredah. The English were now to windward and intended to keep that advantage, and so tried to box the French in against the shore. The Admiral had used this tactic many times before, and so driven many enemy ships aground as they sought to escape his heavy and concentrated broadsides. They, however, now had the leeward advantage of flight, as long as they avoided being embayed. Nevertheless, with seven warships to the French four, the English had a tremendous superiority of fire power, 352 guns to their 258. They would of course have to force the French to stand and fight.

So at 3 o'clock, with the day fast disappearing, Benbow gave the order to hoist the red flag at the fore topmast, signalling according to Russell's Instructions that "every ship in the fleet is to use their utmost endeavour to engage the enemy in the order the admiral has prescribed unto them". The Windsor which had been behind the Bredah finally shot ahead to its appointed position between the Admiral and the Defiance. The Pendennis was still in the rear though its station was between the Windsor and Defiance. But with night approaching Benbow had to get his van up to the enemy's or abort the attack. The French were now in full flight, bearing west

south west. The English squadron was converging with them. And though the Falmouth in the rear had got up with the enemy's sternmost ship, Kirkby seemed unable to pull up with their van.

Samuel Vincent was not known for his patience. He well remembered his rough treatment by Du Guay Trouin. Like Benbow he sweated with frustration as he saw the opportunity for battle slipping away with the day. It is not surprising then that at 4:30 the crash of cannon fire thundered across the waves. The Falmouth was abreast the Prince of Frise which was covering the troop ships to leeward. It was his best chance and I suppose he hoped by initiating hostilities to give some impetus to Kirkby. Du Casse in the Heureux, seeing the danger threatening his rear, immediately braced to and together with his second ship, the Agreable, fell upon the Defiance. The Windsor began to fire on the Phoenix, the third in line, and the forth, the Apollon, let loose her broadside at the Bredah. She replied smartly, and with the wind on her quarter closed on her target.

Broadsides were unleashed successively as the two lines continued slowly westward. Then in the thick of this battle the inexplicable occurred. Not thirty minutes had passed when the Defiance and Windsor ceased firing. The French van, the Agreable and the Heureux had slipped to leeward, just out of gun range while Kirkby kept the Defiance into the wind, rather than closing on the enemy. Constable dutifully followed his example. The Phoenix now fell back to aid the Apollon with which the Bredah was hotly engaged. Benbow was appalled. He could not believe Kirkby's behaviour and no doubt the quarterdeck rang with his displeasure. He was forced to manoeuvre ahead to maintain a position abreast the Phoenix so she could not cross his forefoot and rake the Bredah from stem to stern. To the rear the Falmouth and Ruby kept up their barrage against the Prince de Frise and the Marin. The Greenwich and the Pendennis were astern of them with their shot not reaching. The Bredah persevered with the two French warships till darkness fell, around six. All the while Kirkby and Constable kept their ships just out of gunshot, though abreast the enemy's van.

In this brief engagement little was accomplished. The French escaped westward into the night, and the Admiral braced to, his ships standing northward, into the wind. He was livid. What should have been a textbook piece turned into nothing but folly. Granted the morning calm had exacerbated his leeward position when the fleets first sighted each other. And Du Casse wisely braced to and stayed to windward until the English fleet broke up in disorder, and allowed him to make a dash around them. Still, when Benbow did catch him, the French buccaneer stood and slugged it out. He must have wondered at Kirkby and Constable's half hearted effort.

Benbow instructed his captains to attend to their repairs immediately and then once under way again to keep after him as he intended to pursue the enemy through the night. While the Bredah's rigging was being refitted and the men hastily fed, he met with Fogg and his lieutenants. They had nothing but contempt for Kirkby and Constable and were equally scathing in their disgust for the stragglers Hudson and Wade. Benbow hated nothing worse than half hearted warriors. He had been court martialled himself for mocking Captain William Booth in the Mediterranean, for withdrawing from battle with the Golden Horse; and had court martialled Captain Henry Tourville for his trepidation at St. Malo. Nevertheless, Benbow was persuaded to give the errant captains an opportunity to redeem themselves. He wanted to believe they lacked only a good example, which he would see the Bredah gave them. To accomplish this and check

Kirkby's lethargy a new line of battle was devised. This would have the Bredah leading, followed by the Defiance, Windsor, Greenwich, Ruby, Pendennis and Falmouth. Benbow further stipulated:

"When the signall is made to draw into this line each Captain is directed and required to keep her Maj. Ship he commands not farther then half cable length {100 yards} from the ship he follows, and in the same paralell with the Bredah.

He is not to quit this line on any pretence whatever without first giving me notice, nor to keep at a greater distance then directed, as he or they shall or will answer the contrary at their perill, and for so doing this shall be your warrent. Dated on board her Maj. ship Bredah abreast St. Martha on the Main Continent of America, Aug 19th, 1702

To Col. Richard Kirkby comand of her Maj. Ship the Defyance and to all the other Captains.

If Any ship faulters the ship that follows her is to supply her place."

(Signed: J.Benbow) (Adm1/5263 folio 219)

By nine p.m. the Bredah's rigging was restored and Benbow ordered the squadron to get under way. So he began his pursuit of the enemy, bearing west by south.

Day two. Thursday August 20, 1702.

Benbow managed to keep the French in sight through the night, and in fact discovered he was quite up with them at daybreak. They were maintaining a course of WbS, so that as the sun rose about 5 a.m., they were passing the western most tip of Santa Marta, which was three leagues to the SSE. The wind was variable and they were making 2 knots. As customary in time of war they greeted the new day with every man at battle stations. However, Benbow was dismayed to see that only the Ruby had kept up with him. The others were three to five miles astern. He was in a most dangerous situation, for the French could, if they chose, fall upon the Bredah and Ruby. They were within gunshot of all of the French warships. There was little wind and what their was shifted to the south, thus giving the French the weather gage as well as delaying the arrival of the English consorts.

The Admiral immediately ordered the signal for the line of battle, in the hope that his sternmost ships would add sail. The French were already sailing in battle formation, and had shifted their slower ships to the van, including the Prince de Frise and the other transports. Strangely, however, the French did not attack. They seemed more intent upon distancing themselves from the English. Benbow relieved at having the opportunity to regroup, and with his dry sense of humour, commented to Fogg that their behaviour was quite civil. He shortened sail and allowed the Bredah to fall astern, out of gun range. He sent his boat to the other ships to deliver the new line of battle. The Ruby sent her boat to enquire if she should fall back to her station or remain in the van. The Admiral wisely decided to utilize her zeal and ordered her to keep ahead. Benbow took advantage of the small wind and passivity of the French to direct his ships to replenish the Bredah with eight barrels of powder each. By seven his sternmost ships

had come up between the enemy and the Bredah and put their boats over beside her. The English continued their slow pursuit, attempting all the while to maintain a close knit formation. At eleven the Windsor frustrated this design by bearing out of the line. The small breezes continued till 1 o'clock permitting the French to pull out of range, two miles to the south. The Admiral kept on a westerly course, in the hopes of frustrating the enemy's progress towards Carthage.

It was two o'clock before the sea breeze came out of the north. The English caught it first and were well underway before it reached the French. Benbow shot ahead to the south west to intersect Du Casse's course. The Ruby continued to precede but the Defiance and the others failed to move as quickly. At 2:30 the Admiral again exasperated, ordered his pinnace to call upon Kirkby to make more sail. A good part of Benbow's inability to better coordinate his ships was due to this cumbersome method of communicating orders. Flag signals were in their infancy, so fleets were dependent on standing orders, the Fighting Instructions, and shouted directions from ships boats. It was not difficult to be hard of hearing with sails flapping, rigging creaking, and the sea roaring. Kirkby did however respond and added his studding sails, and the Defiance noticeably picked up speed. Yet only the Ruby and the Bredah were within range by 3:30; so they fired their chase guns and maintained the pursuit. They could not catch the French, however, as the their ships were better sailers, no doubt having cleaner bottoms. Late in the day the Defiance and Windsor managed to come up and fire as well, but their shot barely reached. Benbow noted sarcastically to Fogg that the Defiance was sailing uncommonly heavily.

The Windsor was crowding after her and at five o'clock furled her fore topgallantsail and her mainsail to avoid a collision and keep her station astern. At six Constable could take it no more and ordered his ship to spring her luff, and drive to windward of the Defiance. The Admiral mistook this behaviour for bad seamanship, thinking the Windsor was breaking formation, and ordered two shots athwart her forefoot, to bring her into line. Some shouting ensued between the Windsor and the Defiance and then the Windsor fell back into her place. Constable later claimed he had been trying to pass the slow sailing Defiance but was ordered by Kirkby to keep his station. They continued thus till darkness fell; all the while the French making no return to the English fire. Du Casse had discovered the previous evening that his shot did not carry as far as the English, French powder generally being inferior.

With the cessation of firing the French commodore shortened sail to allow his slower ships to catch up. At half past six Benbow took in his signal for the battle line and furled his own small sails to wait for his sternmost ships. The men at last had an opportunity to eat a hot meal, get some much needed rest, and attend to some necessary repairs. When the rest of his ships had not caught up by eight Benbow irritatingly took in his mainsail. Finally, at ten, with his squadron somewhat back in formation he reset his mainsail, added his spritsail topsail, and they got underway. In small winds they followed as best they could in the enemy's wake through the night, on a course WSW. After two full days at battle stations exhaustion brought sleep quickly to those below deck.

Friday, August 21, 1702. The third day.

There was scarcely any wind through the hot Caribbean night. At 3 o'clock a sharp eyed lookout in the Bredah's crow's nest spotted the French lights ahead on the starboard bow.

Captain Fogg was roused and corrected the course to WNW. As the sky lightened at five in the morning, the Ruby, now foremost of the English ships, found herself abreast and within pistol shot (25 yards) of the second rearmost of the French ships, the Apollon. At that time the English knew not her name and referred to her as the Blue Stern, to distinguish her from her consort, the black flanked Phoenix, which was considerably further astern. The Bredah was close up with the Ruby and on the Apollon's quarter. The French commodore and his second ship, the Agreeable were some distance ahead. Suddenly, the Apollon fired on the Ruby who answered with the same. The Admiral ordered the Bredah to luff up and allow the Apollon to pull ahead. He intended to pass under her stern and cut off the Phoenix from the rest. His plan was to rake both ships as he sliced through the enemy's line, and then lay the Bredah aboard the Phoenix. The small arms, boarding axes and pikes had barely been handed out when he was forced to abandon his plan. The Ruby was no match for the larger and better armed Apollon. Her rigging began to disintegrate and she clearly needed Benbow's assistance. The Bredah turned and played her forechase guns on the Apollon, shooting down her main topgallant yard. The Ruby rallied and her gunners blasted the enemy's main topsail yard. The Apollon was becoming unmanoeuvrable and was in serious danger.

However, the other English ships were unable or unwilling to assist, leaving the Bredah and the Ruby alone in firing upon the enemy. Du Casse, seeing the damage wrought on the Apollon and the isolation of the English van, ended his flight and came to the aid of the stricken ship. The Heureux and the Agreeable shortened sail and with the Apollon directed their broadsides at the Bredah and the Ruby. The Ruby being ahead took the worst of it. She lost her main topsail yard, it being shot in the slings, and her masts and yards and rigging very much shot and torn. The two English ships engaged hotly for two hours with none of their other ships assisting. During this time the rearmost enemy ship, the Phoenix, was abreast of the Defiance and Windsor, who never fired a gun, though within point blank range. The Admiral, enraged and dumbfounded twice called to and signalled the Defiance to fire but to no avail, despite her boatswain on the forecastle acknowledging the signal. The Greenwich, Pendennis and Falmouth were a great way astern. About seven, the Apollon, much disabled in masts and rigging, managed to tow past the Heureux. The French described her rigging as "considerably disorganised", and noted the death of one of her officers, Monsieur De Neuville. Du Casse then with the Agreeable held the wind and together brought their broadsides to bear athwart the Ruby's hawse, and raked her fore and aft. At half past seven Benbow reluctantly ordered Fogg to break off and assist the much shattered Ruby to tow out of gunshot. There being little wind he sent his boats and ordered the Defiance to do the same. This order Kirkby followed. The valiant Ruby's main topmast was shot half through, the main topsail yard in the slings, the topmast shrouds cut in several places, the stays and backstays almost all shot, the mainmast and foremast very much wounded, with the foremast cracked all round, the mizen much damnified, and all her sails shot to pieces. It is a credit to the ships heavy construction that in this conflagration only five men were killed.

Benbow was extremely incensed at the lack of support from the rest of the squadron. To permit no misunderstanding, he sent his second Lieutenant, Thomas Langridge, with verbal orders to every commander to keep within one half a cable's length of one another, upon their peril, the Ruby excepted. At eight a gale of wind sprung up and the enemy made what sail they

could; the English chased in hopes of coming up with them again, while the Ruby fell astern, attempting to make her repairs. From five to half past nine the French Commander had a Red Flag at his Mizzen Peak. Then he hauled it down and hoisted a white flag in its place. Benbow kept his signal for the line flying and steered after the enemy SWbS, the wind at SSE.

They were then off the River Grande and Benbow was pleased to see his ships formed into their best line of battle (except the Ruby being unfit for a second battle). At eleven the Bredah got abreast of two of the sternmost enemy ships, the Agreeable and the Phoenix. There being little wind she was unable to pass and reach the Heureux and the Apollon who were about a gunshot ahead (1000 yards). So Benbow decided to engage the sternmost ships in order to disable their masts and rigging, and so force them back amongst the rest of his squadron. The Defiance was not more than two cable lengths astern at this time (400 yards), and all of his ships, save the Greenwich, were within range of the sternmost enemy. They assisted as best they could but the Bredah, lying abreast of the enemy, received the brunt of the French fire, which galled her much in her rigging, sails, masts, and yards. The Heureux and Apollon added their fire as well, with the French Commodore dropping back to assist his sternmost ships at about 12:30. The wind was so little that the Bredah would not respond to the helm, so her broadsides could not be well directed. She began to suffer considerable damage. Two of her lower tier of guns on the starboard side were dismounted with many men crushed, wounded and killed. The ships' boats, towing out in front, were most vulnerable. The Falmouth had manoeuvred closer only to have her pinnace explode in a burst of wood, water, and men. Then the Bredah's own long boat was hit and had to be cut away. In a somewhat ironic exchange the Bredah shot away the Agreeable's ensign staff, while she in turn destroyed the Bredah's ensign and line of battle flags. About one o'clock the French towed out of range. The Bredah made what sail she could after them, but was much damaged. However, the French were equally disabled and had to use all the shifts possible to evade fighting as they fled WSW. Benbow commented wryly to his tired officers, "when the French behave thus tis a very hard matter to join battle."

The respite from battle did not however give any peace, for about two a severe squall came out of the south, blowing hard with rain. Du Casse hauled down his colours and battle signal. The Bredah furled her courses, and reefed topsails as did the French. The wind quickly increased to hurricane force causing the Bredah to unbend her main topsail and send down the main topsail yard. The lower guns were hauled in and the gunports closed for the seas boiled and the ships heeled back and forth. As they were driven WNW the sternmost of the French lost her fore topsail as it split asunder. The Defiance likewise had her foresail torn from its yard. The storm passed and at three the chase resumed, while repairs were made on the run. That evening the Bredah rigged a new main topsail yard and continued chasing all night, keeping the enemy in sight.

Saturday August 22, the fourth day.

The sun rose to another clear sky. The enemy was a mile and an half ahead. Benbow made the signal for the line at half past five, and had Fogg add the topgallants and make for the enemy. The Greenwich and the disabled Ruby were about three leagues astern, the Pendennis somewhat closer, and then the Falmouth, Defiance and Windsor reasonably near. The Defiance

shortened sail, I suppose on the pretext of waiting for the sternmost ships to come into the line. At seeing this the Falmouth forsook her station which was to be at the rear and came up with the Bredah. Captain Vincent sent his Lieutenant on board and desired that he might have leave to assist the Admiral, seeing nobody else would. Admiral Benbow enthusiastically accepted and ordered the Lieutenant to thank his Captain for the offer. Benbow hoped the others would now fall into line.

At about seven the Pendennis shot ahead of the Defiance which was again sailing extremely poorly, and came abreast of the flagship. It seemed that Hudson too was going to offer real assistance. However, he limited his enquiry to how the Admiral desired the line, now that the Falmouth was in the van and the Greenwich and Ruby so far astern. The Admiral instructed him to close up with the Windsor and to call to the Defiance to make more sail. The Defiance did set her small sails and came up with the Bredah, but then tried to pass to leeward. The Admiral did not want Kirkby in the van as he obviously lacked enterprise, so waved him back to his position astern the Bredah. All the while the French crowded to the west with no colours or battle signal showing; so the English made all the sail they could. Benbow growled, "the French seem unwilling to speak with us".

The Greenwich was now two miles astern and the Ruby further to her rear. At eleven a breeze brought Benbow's squadron up with the south end of the Du Casse's line. The French were in much disorder as they endeavoured to change their posture to prevent the English engaging with their whole line. Benbow allowed the breeze to carry his ships west of the French until becalmed, they stood just out of range to the northwest. Though Kirkby swore the Admiral had given away a great advantage, in actuality he had boxed the French in against the shoals and sandbars of Zamba which were just three leagues to the south. He hoped when the wind freshened to drive them south to their destruction.

Unfortunately, a little after one the wind came out of the west, which gave the French the weather gage. They used it to flee, tacking SW. The English were about two leagues off Point Galera Zamba as they beat into the wind on a NW tack. About 2:30 Benbow turned his squadron on to the southward tack, while shortly after the French were forced to swing into their northward tack. So the two fleets converged again. About three thirty the Falmouth and the Bredah fetched within gunshot of the sternmost of the enemy, the Agreeable and the Phoenix. The enemy ships exchanged strong fire as they drifted by on contrary tacks, until a wind rose, allowing the two French ships to steer to their commander. The Heureux then joined in, presenting her flank and unleashing her broadsides. This permitted the much incommoded Agreeable to pass ahead of her. Most of the English ships managed a broadside or two with the distant enemy. However, the line was much out of order with some ships still three miles astern and to leeward. Even the Greenwich fired, but her guns did not reach above half way. She was actually behaving quite erratically. Though quite out of gunshot she periodically broke out of the line, and presented her broadsides, which only resulted in her falling further astern.

Soon darkness brought a reprieve. But the opposing admirals were not idle. The men were fed, repairs effected, and strategies reformed. The Ruby sent her boat to acquaint Benbow with the serious damage done her foremast and her inability to keep up. The Admiral replied brusquely that the Bredah was no better off and ordered Walton to repair his ship as best he

could and keep the line. Perhaps he was curt because he could not afford to lose such a valiant supporter, nor be held back by her.

Du Casse had similar worries. The Prince of Frise was embarrassing his squadron with its inability to stay close in the currents and flat waters, and tardiness under sail. He ordered her commander, Monsieur de St. Andre, to take advantage of the night to flee for Carthagen, and to beach and burn the vessel if pursued by the English. To cover the escape of this Dutch built ship he made numerous course changes from west to north, through the night, trying to either shake the English or lead them away from Carthagen. Du Casse also resolved to have his 68 gun flagship, the *Heureux*, take up the rear of his line since the English seemed intent on preying on his one or two sternmost vessels. The injured *Agreable* led in the Van.

Sunday August 23, the fifth day.

This morning cloudy skies and drizzle greeted the tired men of both navies. They all knew the cooler weather would give little relief. It was not till six that the *Bredah* lookout could clearly make out the enemy ships. He discovered that the Dutch store ship, the *Prince de Frise*, was missing. As well, he determined that the *Defiance* and *Windsor* were more than four miles astern. Nevertheless at half past six the English Admiral ordered the chase resumed, and the *Bredah* made all the sail she could after the French. At eight the *Falmouth* again requested permission to continue to keep close under the *Bredah's* stern, and she was so ordered.

In tacking after the French, at about ten the English fetched within point blank of the enemy rear. The *Heureux* began first to fire her broadsides. Fogg held his fire until he had brought his whole broadside to bear on the French Admiral, and then poured it in like hail, being loaded with double round and partridge. He gave her several of those as the ships passed, and so did some of the other ships, except the *Ruby* which was out of reach. The *Heureux* had taken several hits in her masts, and her sails were much disturbed. The wind at East, the *Bredah* had engaged on her starboard side and then tacked to continue the pursuit. Du Casse made a signal for the Line, and the *Agreable* and the *Phoenix* rallied to him, turning their flanks to the English and exchanging fire while the *Heureux* reset her sails.

While moving to cover their Admiral they left exposed a small merchant ship which was astern of them. The *Bredah* and the *Falmouth* moved in quickly, and fired many shot at this ship. To their surprise the French did not drop back to her aid. The wind died so at noon the *Bredah* manned her barge and pinnace and the *Falmouth* her longboat and rowed towards her, resolving to board her; whereupon she struck and was taken. They discovered she was an English ship, the *Anne* galley, filled with wine and oil. Her commander, Captain Crammer, reported that she had been enroute from Lisbon to London, when Du Casse had intercepted her, just three days out of Ferrol (Corunna). As the *Greenwich* was next closest, half a mile astern, Fogg sent his boat to her with sixteen prisoners and took six of her sailors to help man the prize, with some of his own men and a few from the *Falmouth*.

From two to three there was little wind. At half past three the *Bredah* stood to the westward, the wind dying away. Except for the *Falmouth*, the *Defiance* and the rest continued 3 to 4 miles astern, almost as a separate squadron. Benbow made a signal for Lieutenants, for a supply of eight barrels of powder and half a hundred weight of match from each of his ships. And

then the Bredah unbent her foresail and foretopsail and resumed the chase. Realizing the Ruby clearly could not keep up, the Admiral ordered her to take the Anne to Port Royal. The light breezes and calm continued till about seven in the evening. A gale then came up driving the sternmost ships so that by eight Kirkby's detachment was caught up with the Bredah and Falmouth, being distant from the enemy only about two miles. With renewed hope Benbow continued to steer after the French but gradually all the ships except the Falmouth had again fallen much astern. The wind died as the Bredah and Falmouth were nearing the enemy and the water was totally flat in the now still night air. At midnight the French began to separate in the currents, two to the westward and three to the Eastward; the Bredah kept after the sternmost. The men slept by their guns. The weather was cool, cloudy, and there were some small showers.

Monday August 24, the sixth day.

The night sky cleared and about two and one half hours after midnight the wind, what there was of it, shifted to NbW and the currents brought the Bredah and Falmouth close to the Apollon. The rest of the English ships were four miles astern, though no more than eight miles had been covered since they had all been together, but six hours past. Nevertheless Benbow resolved to take advantage of the enemy's proximity. So, in the dim starlight the Bredah and the Falmouth opened fire with double and round below and round and partridge aloft. There are some reports that the Bredah grappled the Apollon and that Benbow himself led three separate attacks on to her deck, receiving a large face wound and another to his arm. The French fought just as fiercely, and returned salvos heartily. The Apollon's fusillade was particularly deadly on the Bredah's quarter deck. At three o'clock the admiral's right leg was shattered to pieces by a chain-shot, and he was carried down to the orlop. The *Mercure Historique & Politique* account in February 1703 states his leg was 'emportee', indicating it was 'carried away' or so severely mangled that little remained.

It was bound to happen, for he insisted on being visible to his men, on leading by example. He had constantly marched to and fro shouting encouragement in his bright red coat. While the surgeon was at work on the Admiral's leg Lieutenant Langridge expressed great sorrow at the loss of his leg upon which the Admiral said "I am sorry for it too, but I had rather have lost them both, than have seen this dishonour brought upon the English nation. But do ye hear, if another shot should take me off, behave like brave men and fight it out." Even wounded he would not stay below. As soon as his leg was bound he ordered his cradle brought to the quarterdeck, and there, propped up, and in great pain, he resumed the direction of the battle. He knew the Apollon could be beaten. The men of the Bredah and Falmouth would not let him down.

The two English ships continued firing very smartly for the space of three hours, so that the Apollon was torn almost asunder. From three to five the sea had been almost calm, allowing no escape for the stricken Frenchman. Then the wind came easterly. The other English ships which had stood looking on, about two miles NNE now bore down to the battle. The Falmouth, herself badly disabled, towed out of range to the north to knot her rigging. The wind, however was also bringing the French Admiral and his remaining squadron, who had been four miles ESE. Fogg conferred with his first Lieutenant, Robert Thompson, who felt that the English ships would meet the enemy before they could reach the Bredah. "It would be best", he said, "to

endeavour to sink the disabled ship and then there would be one less of their number." Fogg agreed. They had been engaging on their starboard side when the fresh breeze took them on that quarter and the enemy on her larboard, causing both ships to yaw to each other. So coming very near the enemy, within ship's length of her, and going out ahead of the enemy, the Bredah gave her a dose with double and round in at her larboard bow, which rent and tore her both in masts and yard, hull and rigging. She having only her topsails set then ran along the Apollon's starboard side, likewise loading and firing as fast as possible. The Bredah then steered under her stern and along her larboard side, her head lying to the northward and the Bredah standing to the northward upon her lee bow. The men were called from between decks to tack ship. The three French ships to windward were now lying to, with their foretopsail to the mast and maintopsail full, with their heads to the northward, about two miles distant. They clearly had realized the English squadron would win the race, and decided not to risk an engagement against superior numbers.

As the sky lightened the Apollon's plight grew visible. The ruined ship's main yard was down and shot to pieces, her foretopsail shot away, her mizzenmast shot by the board, all her rigging gone and her sides bored to pieces with double headed shot. She lay as a wreck. Then the unimaginable happened. The Defiance, which was headmost of the other English ships, instead of coming to windward between the enemy and the disabled ship, led the wayward division to leeward of the Frenchman. She did close to within pistol shot (25 yards) and stood astern the Apollon, while the Bredah was tacking athwart the enemy's forefoot. However, she fired not above twelve guns and received no more than twenty shot in return. The Bredah tacked southward and bore down the enemy's windward (starboard) side and passed astern of the Defiance, with every hope of forming a line with her. However, seeing the Apollon was not yet ready to surrender, and indeed still had her teeth, Kirkby ignored the signal for the line, put his helm aweather, wore ship, and bore away to the northwest before the wind. In so doing the Defiance cut between the oncoming Greenwich and Windsor and fired her stern guns back at the Apollon. The Greenwich, Windsor, and Pendennis fired their upper guns as they ran past the Apollon on her leeward side and stood to the southward, neither following the Defiance nor coming in line with the Bredah. The Defiance lowered her maintopsail, spritsail, spritsail topsail, and foretopmast staysail and ran to leeward of the Falmouth which was then a gun shot northward, athwart the Apollon's forefoot. Needless to say the Bredah's officers and men were much surprised by this behaviour and could not forebear expressing their views of the cowardice of the officers on board the Defiance. The Greenwich, Windsor, and Pendennis, to the south, also remained out of gunshot despite the Bredah's standing with her head to the southward and her foresail set, to call them into line. Fogg bitterly declared " We are being left as a prey to the enemy." Nevertheless, they stayed within a half gunshot slightly to the south of their disabled enemy.

On seeing the three English ships stand to the southward the French had expected they would have tacked and come up with them. However, upon seeing they did not tack, the French bore down upon the Bredah, having taken in their spritsail yards and extended the plank for boarding. They gave her all the fire they had. The three French men of war lay on her weather bow, raking her fore and aft above an hour, shooting down her main topsail yard and tore her every way. She suffered more damage then in all the time of engaging before, so that she scarce

had any sails or rigging left to command the ship. Still, Du Casse held off at 500 yards, prudently deciding against boarding, given the ferocious defence the Bredah maintained.

None of her consorts were near, neither did they take notice of the battle signal, but all milled about in a confused hurry. Benbow ordered Fogg to fire two guns at his ships ahead to the south, in order to put them in mind of their duty, so that they would fall astern into line. But it was to no purpose; they kept their topsails and foresail set to keep themselves ahead and out of shot, which was a great discouragement to the Bredah's men who echoed their captain's sentiment, "they must all be agreed to make us a sacrifice." All concurred the Falmouth had played her part very nobly, but the Defiance, Greenwich, Windsor, and Pendennis behaved not like Englishmen.

At seven of the clock that morning the Bredah finally and reluctantly edged away, giving up her prize. At half past seven she was out of reach of enemy guns. She stood to, making all dispatch possible to refit and waiting for her ships to draw into line of battle. As the enemy were all fair up with the Apollon, and seeing the great disorder of fear and confusion amongst the English, they brought to and lay by their disabled ship and remanned her. The Apollon defenders were overcome with joy and saluted Du Casse three times with "Vive le Roy". The men of the Bredah, ears burning, yelled back a challenge to re-engage, "Send us another of your ships and we'll do the same to it." For the moment Du Casse was intent on taking the Apollon in tow, because she was so much disabled, having lost her mizen mast, main yard, and main mast so much shattered that she only carried her main topsail and part of a mainsail. And then at nine the French edged down towards their foe. Then, at half past nine, just short of gun range, they tacked and stood away to the northward.

The Bredah lost many men that morning, and many wounded. The Admiral's wound was of course devastating to morale and very much lamented by officers and sailors. Despite his wound, however, Benbow ordered Fogg to pursue the enemy, stand abreast of the van of the French, and when so, to attack them. At ten o'clock the Bredah completed her refit, tacked and stood after the enemy to the northward, as they were absolutely resolved to have the second encounter and all with courage. The French were then about three miles to leeward, towing the disabled ship, and steering NE, the wind, gentle, at SSW. At noon Zamba bore EbS eight leagues. Small breeze, southerly, with the French now just one mile distant. As the wind was variable and interspersed with calm the ships had their boats out towing. Benbow had ordered the line of battle signal to remain always out. Nevertheless, the English ships ran confusedly amongst one another. This further infuriated the English Admiral. He spoke with no little grief to Fogg that "it appears much like fear and gives the enemy no small encouragement, having before seen the behaviour of some of us." Exasperated, he ordered Fogg to send to the Captains to keep the line and behave themselves like Englishmen. Cooper Wade had just come on board to ask if he might follow next after the Bredah, since the Defiance was sailing heavily. He was probably more interested in learning the Admiral's condition, and his ability to continue to press the attack. So Fogg sent him to Kirkby and Constable to report the Admirals displeasure at their not keeping their line, and his order to resume the battle. At about one the westerly wind was just freshening, and the French were crowding to the eastward.

But Wade and Kirkby did not confer on how best to follow their Admiral's order. Rather, they discoursed on the posture of the two lines, which were then abreast one another; on the

little winds, in which the ships found great difficulty in governing; and on the Admiral's disability and inability to lead the squadron, in that he was lodged on the orlop platform, deep in the Bredah's hold. They decided it was necessary to wait upon him and know further his condition and sentiments concerning the conduct of the squadron. About this time the French, wondering at the English inactivity, sent a probe. Lieutenant Robert Thompson, records that it was 2 o'clock when the enemy sent over their fireship, which defiantly crossed before the English line. However, after briefly taunting the Bredah she sheered off.

So Kirkby and Wade were rowed over to the Bredah, and Fogg conducted them down to the Orlop deck, where the surgeon attended the wounded. The Admiral was resting in his wooden cot, in the cock pit. Kirkby addressed him with gravity befitting the occasion:

"Well sir, tis sorry I am to see your Honour in such a state. However, we have all been badly mauled. So, I do wonder that you offer to engage the Frenchman again. Having battled for full six days I must point out, Sir, that it is neither necessary, safe, nor convenient to fight further. The enemy has suffered very little; while he has injured us much."

Benbow replied, "That sir is but your opinion. I would know what my other captains have to say." And so he ordered Captain Fogg to make the signal and call for all commanders for a council of war. Fogg records that it was half past two when the signal was made. The Union flag was hoisted to the mizzen shroud and a gun fired. The enemy, nervously waiting the English onslaught, thought they were being fired upon. Du Casse in the Heureux was towing the Apollon and leading his other ships. According to the French account, the flagship was then immediately abreast the English van. He fired 10 to 12 shots first at the Bredah and then at the second in line. The Agreeable and the Phoenix fired a few shots at the sternmost ships. However, with no response, the French shortly broke off.

It would thus be about 3 that the other Captains came on board and met in Fogg's cabin. Kirkby reiterated his arguments for breaking off the action: they were undermanned and exhausted; their supplies were low, they were especially short of powder and shot; each ships masts, yards, sails ,riggings, and guns were all in great measure disabled; the winds were so small and variable that the ships could not be governed by the strength each ship had; and finally they had clearly seen how much stronger was the enemy in the six days battle. He answered the objections of Fogg and Vincent with a promise to leave them on their own, should they decide to proceed with Benbow's insane desire to resume the battle. He argued that if they all signed his written statement giving their reasons for breaking off the battle, no harm would come to any of them.

So they signed. All of them. Fogg and Vincent accepted the majority decision. They feared to do otherwise would have made a sacrifice of their ships and men. Kirkby and Fogg took the paper to Benbow. He was devastated. Not the least because he felt forsaken by Fogg and Vincent. He swore "This will be the ruin of you all." Kirkby returned to the other captains and after further debate added a statement proposing they defer fighting till a better opportunity. Lieutenant Robert Thompson could not contain his disgust. He reported his remarks in his deposition.

"Gentlemen, have you ever seen or heard of such a sight? What manner of men are we to allow such an enemy to insult us so? Are we not all Englishmen. Wade is this not a damn shame?"

Wade agreed but Kirkby cut him off, sneering:

"Wade you are not fit to sit at this consult if you'll give ear to every single man's words: this is a Captain's parley. Now let us add that we are indeed willing to carry on, but wish only for a more suitable opportunity. No man can fault us for needing to restore our ships and regain our strength after six days battle."

Thompson persisted, telling Kirkby he was like the Flemmings who waited seven years for a fair wind and when it finally came were not ready for it. Kirkby glared at him and then laughed in dismissal and turned back to his paper, exhorting the captains to sign. This they did, for it seemed better than the first, and both Fogg and Vincent hoped that by keeping the enemy company they might yet have another opportunity to force Du Casse to either destroy or desert his damaged ship. So they returned with their revised draft to the Admiral. The final draft read thus:

At a consultation held on board H.M.S. Bredah, Aug. 24, 1702, off of Carthagenia on the Maine Continent of America, it is the opinion of us whose names are undermentioned, vizt.

First-Of the great want of men in number, quality and the weakness of those they have.

2nd, The generall want of ammuniton of most sorts.

3rd, Each ship's masts, yards, sailes, rigging and guns being all in a great measure disabled.

4th, The winds are small and variable that the shipps cannot be govern'd by any strength each shipp has.

5th, Having experienced the enemyes force in six dayes battle following, the Squadron consisting of five men-of-war and a fire-ship, under the command of Mons. Du Cass, their equipage consisting in guns from 60 to 80, and having a great number of seamen and soldiers on board for the service of Spain.

For which reasons above-mentioned, wee think it not fitt to engage the enemy at this time, but to keep them company this night, and observe their motion, and if a fairer opportunity shall happen (of wind and weather) once more to trye our strength with them. (Signed, Richard Kirkby, Sam. Vincent, John Constable, Chris. Fogg, Cooper Wade, Thos. Hudson.) (Adm1/5263,fol.44)

In his report to Lord Nottingham, Benbow records that when he saw this he was finally convinced that they had no mind to fight, and that all their misfortunes heretofore came through cowardice. He added:

"If this be allow'd there is no going to sea for a Flagg etc. unless he carry his Father, Sons or Brothers to assist in the day of batle. I thought always till now that a good Example would make any Body fight."(CSP.col.Sept.11,1702)

Benbow immediately wrote his answer to the Captains' paper.

He was particularly appalled at their gall in suggesting they had fought as bravely as the Bredah, for he knew he had lost over sixty men, dead and wounded.

"Admiral Benbow's Answer to the objections made by the Captaines for not fighting Mons. Du Cass's Squadron. (1) For want of men, I am well assur'd there was not eight men kill'd in all the ships besides the Bredah. (2) The want of ammunition was only a pretence, for they had enough. (3) That of their masts and yards to be disabled is false, for every ship's masts and yards stood very well, and in a much better condition then the enemy's. (4) They say that the winds are small and variable, that our shipp's can not be govern'd, which is erroneous, for all that time there was a fresh gale of wind, and such an opportunity wee have not had in six dayes, wee being then along their side, and to windward of them, that a fairer oportunity could never happen'd to engage. (5) They say that they have experienced the enemy's force in six dayes battle; the Bredah, Ruby and Falmouth indeed has in some measure, but the rest would not or durst not come up. They tell you that the French Squadron consisted in five men-of-warr and a fire-shipp from 60 to 80 guns, which is likewise false, for those were but four men-of-war from 60 to 70 guns, and one of those was disabled so much that their Commadore was obliged to tow her, and as to their numbers of seamen and soldiers, I believe, we pretty well thinn'd them. These are the reasons they give for not engaging the French, which are all a vision false and cowardize, which I doe averr. Signed, J. Benbow." (CSP.Col.1702)

Lieutenant Thompson added that it was 4 o'clock when the consult was over; and the headmost of the enemy was then still abaft the Bredah's beam. The captains returned to their ships and proceeded in line ahead abreast the enemy, making way EbS with a small gale NNE. The Admiral, though crushed by the desertion of all his captains, still had Fogg hoist the signal for line of battle and bade him keep it out all night. At night the River Grande bore SEbE 9 leagues. The French account indicates that it was not until evening that the front line of the English, holding the wind better, had passed ahead of the French. So as darkness fell the English were slightly ahead and to the southwest of the French. At 6 at night the French edged further away. From six to nine the English steered EbS. About 8 o'clock they were two leagues ahead when the enemy steered in for the shore, westwards towards Carthagen. At 9 they tacked and stood after the enemy. Several ships fell further behind again. From 12 to 4 in the morning the weather mirrored Benbow's mood: a fierce storm of much rain, thunder and lightning drove them along shore to the eastward. At daylight the rest of his ships were scattered some distance

behind. The French were fading from view, four to five leagues to the southwest. By two hours after dawn the enemy squadrons had passed out of sight of one another. So, finally, exhausted and racked with pain, the Admiral ordered Fogg to take down the signal for the Line and make for Jamaica. They went with an easy sail, waiting for their stragglers. At nine they stood away NbE for Port Royal, the wind SE.

They reached Charles Fort and Port Royal harbour on Monday August 31. The Admiral immediately sent his lieutenants to the Defiance, Windsor, Greenwich and Pendennis, as each came to anchor, and there had confined the respective captains, each in their own great cabin.

Campbell writes that Benbow received a sympathetic letter from his adversary, Du Casse; suggesting he had a very lucky and unlooked for escape. He states that he received a copy of this letter from Paul Calton.

"Sir I had little hopes on Monday last but to have supped in your Cabbin, it pleased God to order it otherwise; I am thankful for it. As for those cowardly Captains who deserted you, hang them up, for by....they deserve it. Your's Du Casse." (Biographia, p.687)

The authenticity of this letter is certainly questionable, since Du Casse was never in any serious danger on that final day of battle. If the letter had come from or referred to Captain de Demuin of the Apollon it would be more credible. Campbell clearly confused that disabled ship with the flagship, the Heueux, for he states in the same passage regarding Du Casse that "Admiral Benbow boarded his ship thrice, in which he received a shot in the arm, and a wound in the face." Luttrell substantiates this part of Campbell's account. He writes on January 7, 1703:

"From Jamaica, that admiral Bembow, with 7 men of war, had a running fight for 5 dayes with 4 French men of war under Du Casse, whom the admiral boarded thrice, but beat off, himself being wounded in the leg; 4 of his men did not engage, otherwise he had taken all the French."

I do not doubt that Du Casse may have sent some correspondence to Benbow, for Calton's material is generally based on some stratum of truth, though often fragmentary. These sentiments do not however, correspond with the 1703 French account, also attributed to Du Casse or a member of his retinue:

"There are reasons to believe that they were as tired as we were and that having hoped to get us each individually and that having such hope deceived by our commander's tactic, they realised they couldn't and simply gave up; though they did possess more than twice the advantages. Everyone must have noticed that the English admiral never did lend his flanks to the commander of our squadron but rather stuck to the hound and fox game. The calm that almost never left us was more suited for them, their vessels being much lighter than ours and far less loaded, and the Prince de Frise causing us to loose every bit of the advantages we could have had."

Clearly the French were perplexed by the inability of the English to press the attack and capitalize on their advantages. There is no mention here of any appreciation of the aid rendered the French cause by the mutineers. The full nature of their infamy was not disclosed until the courts martial.

While making preparations for these trials and seeing to the refitting of his ships, Benbow wrote to answer a letter the Secretary of State regarding the governor's earlier charges of his pressing men illegally. He stated that he had not imprest one man from the shore, but carefully followed the governor's direction to take one of every five men out of all the ships and vessels coming into Port Royal. He added he had given strict orders to see that these commands were not exceeded and would "use my utmost endeavour, if a live, to see them comply'd with." He was aware of his precarious grip on life for he refers to "my circumstances and a shattered legg having lain at this time 32 days on my back in this torrid zone." He added:

"no body is safe to head any party if not stood by, I never met with the like misfortunes in all my life and hope never shall. But it is what I always feared for the Captains that comes these voyages are reckoned as lost so it may be thought anything may serve in these parts, but that is a wrong notion for if good men are not sent here a worse thing may happen to us for I find the French will defend their ships to the very last extremity...If it please God I recover, and as soon as our ships are in a better condition will go in quest of Monsieur Du Casse, hoping for better success." (CSP.Col.Sept.24,1702)

For Jamaica then at last he set sail, he set sail,
For Jamaica then at last he set sail,
Where Wentworth he did try,
And those cowards that did fly,
And from the French in fright turned tail, turned tail
And from the French in fright turned tail.

THE COURT-MARTIAL

The Courts martial were conducted on board the *Bredah*, October 8 to 12. Because of his own ill health and personal involvement Benbow appointed Rear Admiral Whetstone to preside over the trial. Initially the Admiral's secretary, George Collinson, was appointed Judge Advocate. However, perhaps for appearance sake and after sufficient evidence was amassed, Collinson was replaced by Arnold Brown, Solicitor General of Jamaica.

The Articles of War originally drawn up under Charles II in 1661 contained 39 articles, 25 of which prescribed the death penalty. These articles clearly set down what the state expected of its seamen, and particularly of its Captains. Article XI directed "Every Captain, commander and other officer...shall duly observe the commands of the admiral, or other superior or commander of any squadron, as well for assailing or setting upon any fleet, squadron or ships of the enemy...upon pain to suffer death or other punishments, as the quality of his neglect or offence shall deserve." Article XII stated "Every captain and all other officers ...that shall in time of any fight or engagement, withdraw or keep back or not come into the fight or engage and do his utmost to take, fire, kill and endamage the enemy, pirate or rebels and assist and relieve all and every of his Majesty's ships, shall for such offence of cowardice or disaffection, be tried and suffer pains of death, or other punishment." Similarly Article XIV ordered the death penalty for "whatever person or persons, in belonging to the fleet, either through cowardice, negligence or disaffection shall forbear to pursue the chase of any enemy, or pirate or rebel beaten or flying, or shall not relieve or assist a known friend in view, to the utmost of his power." Articles XIX and XX dealt directly with mutiny: "No person in or belonging to the Fleet, shall utter any words of sedition or mutiny, nor make or endeavour to make any mutinous assemblies upon any pretence whatsoever, upon pain of death".(XIX) "No person in or belonging to the Fleet, shall conceal any traitorous or mutinous practices, designs or words, or any words spoken by any to the prejudice of his Majesty or government, or any words, practices or designs tending to the hindrance of the service...upon pain of such punishment as a Court Martial shall find to be just."(XX)

Captain Hudson died before he could be brought to trial. It is quite possible that he chose a self-imposed death to avoid the shame of the impending trial. His passing is noted as "suicide" in Pitcairn Jones' *Sea Officers List* at the Public Record Office in Kew. In his journal, George

Harwar, the First Lieutenant of the *Pendennis*, notes only that Captain Thomas Hudson died at Kingston in the evening of September 25 and was buried before noon the next day in the salt pond cave. Saltpond Hill is across the channel, due west of Port Royal. It is significant that he was not buried in the church yards at Port Royal or Kingston. His ship did fire four volleys of small arms and eighteen great guns in a farewell salute. Interestingly just a few days earlier, on September 19, the Master, John Brown "departed this life". So they both, through illness or design missed the trial. Of further interest is the fact that First Lieutenant George Harwar had been given command of the ship on August 30 and ordered to confine Hudson to the Great Cabin. However, he was swiftly replaced following Hudson's untimely death, by Robert Thompson. Perhaps the Admiral was not pleased with his failure to prevent Hudson's demise.

Eleven captains sat on the court martial with Rear-admiral Whetstone: John Hartnell of the *Gloucester*, John Smith of the *York* (who had just arrived at Jamaica September 20 with fresh supplies and provisions), John Redman of the *Colchester*, William Russell of the *Seahorse*, George Walton of the *Ruby*, Barrow Harris of the *Kingston*, Hercules Mitchell of the *Experiment*, Philip Boyce originally of the *Hermon* (German) fireship but recently promoted to the *Pendennis*, Charles Smith of the *Stombolo* fireship, Samuel Vincent of the *Falmouth* and Christopher Fogg of the *Bredah*.

The Court Martial record is available at the Public Record Office, Kew, London. It consists of 233 bound and numbered folios. However, 83 of these are copies. The record contains depositions and journals of 34 witnesses. Of these 28 pertain to the trial of Richard Kirkby as well as the others, another three are particular to that of John Constable, and three more are specific to Cooper Wade. For Kirkby's trial witnesses were drawn from the officers of all the ships engaged, with the *Bredah* providing six, the *Defiance* nine, the *Ruby* three, the *Falmouth* four, the *Pendennis* three, the *Greenwich* two, and one coming from a ship in port, the *Lewis* hulk. Of the 28 witnesses only four could be said to be in anyway sympathetic to Kirkby's cause. Like most Court Martial records of the day there is no record of oral testimony other than what appears to be introductory testimony by Admiral Benbow. The procedure appears to be that of preparing depositions prior to the trial and having these sworn to in court. There is no evidence of any cross examination of witnesses nor of a formal defence. This is typical of other court martial records of the era and suggests note taking skills did not permit a record being made of such testimony. The Judge Advocate seems to have functioned like a prosecuting attorney in putting together the depositions. An edited version of the court martial record has been published by Dr. John Hattendorf in *The Naval Miscellany*, volume v.

The first trial was that of the *Defiance* Gunner, John Arthur, for concealing and hiding 43 barrels of powder and utterly denying the same to be aboard upon a survey. The fact was proved; the Court sentenced him to be rowed from ship to ship with a halter about his neck, and the Provost Marshall declaring his crime, and to have all his gunner's pay forfeited to the use of the chest at Chatham, and for evermore to be incapable of serving her Majesty in any employment.

The same day Capt. Kirkby's trial was held. He was accused of high crimes, misdemeanours of cowardice, breach of orders, neglect of duty, and other ill practices. Evidence was given of Kirby's lethargy in coming up into his proper position and then his timidity under fire. The testimony of Bartholomew Ordd, the *Bredah*'s Master, is typical.

"About 4 this afternoon we came within point blank shot of the 2 of the sternmost of the French men-of-war, being on our starboard tack and they to leeward. Captain Kirkby in the Defiance on the tack to leeward and the Windsor next him and the Falmouth being sternmost of our line and abreast of our enemy she engaged her, but we being only abreast of the second of the French line, the Admiral desiring to be fair up with the headmost of their line, we did not fire, but the Windsor being ahead of us did fire a broadside into that ship which was abreast of us. The Defiance ahead of the Windsor fired likewise, then the enemy fired at us, we were forced to enter battle, but none of our guns could reach their commander or his second, but their shot reached the Defiance Captain Kirkby receiving not above two broadsides before he luffed out of the line, without gun shot of the enemy. The Windsor following him and left us to engage those four ships which at night did seize the rest of our squadron being much out of order and astern. We lost in this action several men and received shot through the very heart of our mainmast, also had our sails and rigging much shot and disabled and several shot between wind and water." (Adm 1/5263, folio 21)

John Martin, Master of the Defiance, described in his journal a more heated action on the part of his ship. The Court Martial record of the journal states that the Defiance engaged the enemy from half an hour after four until five o'clock when their shot no longer reached the enemy. During this time the second lieutenant, Mr. Luck, received a mortal wound. Martin added that the Defiance received the fire of three enemy ships but did not bear down on the enemy because the Windsor and Bredah did not come up to close the line. He detailed extensive damage to the rigging.

His Mates, John Brown and Will Jarvis supported this picture of the Defiance actively engaging the enemy. However, the Carpenter of the Defiance, Edward Palmer, painted a less favourable picture.

"Defiance leading in the line of battle. About four o'clock in the afternoon began to engage the headmost of the enemy and continued it about half an hour or three quarters, about which time she edged out of the line, this deponent then being upon the gundeck heard there was an order given not to fire any more guns which was observed, the men crying out they should be knocked in the head at their guns, and that if some few guns were fired now and then 'twould prevent the enemy having so fair an object at 'em, at the same time this deponent spoke to Lieut. Knighton and asked him the meaning of not firing, who replied it was according to orders." (Adm.1/5263, folio 55)

Gavin Hamilton, surgeon of the Defiance gave similar evidence.

"On Wednesday the 19th about five of the clock in the afternoon when the Defiance had left off firing, John Hazleurst, coxwain of the barge, was brought down to this deponent wounded by losing his right arm. He exclaimed extremely against Colonel Kirkby his then Captain for ill conduct, saying it was God's just judgement upon him for sailing with a person he knew to be a coward, that the said Coxwain was reproved by Lieutenant Luck for his exclamation (who was brought down wounded immediately after him), who told him it was not then a time to rail, that the said Coxwain replied they were destroyed at their guns without making any resistance tho' required by the men.

That the 20th the Bredah and Ruby were abreast of the main body of the enemy, and the rest of our fleet at a great distance...

That the men publicly and generally exclaimed and complained of barbarous usage for standing still to be destroyed at their guns without making any resistance, the Captain commanding no guns should be fired, and when they applied to him for their provisions which was their due he refused it them, and answered lett me see the dog (who) says he deserves it in this ship, that the greatest encouragement this deponent saw his Captain give his men was abusing them by the names of dog and rogue." (Adm.1/5263, folio 95)

Others testified that Kirkby's behaviour caused great fear of his desertion. Lieutenant James Leyonbergh of the Ruby testified "That on thursday the 20th the Bredah and Ruby were in shot of the enemy's main body and the rest were above a league off the enemy." The Admiral testified he sent his Lieutenant on board the Defiance to Captain Kirkby to order him to keep his line and station. Nevertheless, Kirkby continued to drop 2 to 3 miles astern despite the signal for battle being out all day and night and the Admiral and the Ruby plying the enemy with their chase guns.

At daylight on the 21st the Admiral, seeing his line so spread out, decided to break the French line and cut off the sternmost ships. However, the Heureux and the Apollon in the French van shortened sail and concentrated on the Ruby, disabled her, and so forced Benbow to give up his design and come to her rescue. During this two hour battle, the Defiance and the Windsor were within point blank range of the sternmost ships. Again Kirkby disobeyed the Admiral's orders to play his broadsides on the enemy, though they were given twice. It was clear to the court that if Kirkby and Constable had assisted as they could, the Admiral would have succeeded in cutting out the ships. Several officers testified to the inactivity of the Defiance and Windsor despite their proximity to the enemy, including Master John Taylor of the Ruby, Captain Christopher Fogg of the Bredah, Master Percy Brett of the Falmouth, Lieutenant John Goodall of the Pendennis and Isaac Sunn Master of the Greenwich. However, the most damning evidence came from officers of the Defiance itself, such as Gavin Hamilton. Edward Palmer, carpenter of the Defiance had this to say.

"the Defiance was in her station close under the Bredah's stern and Windsor and the Defiance both within point blank shot of the enemy's sternmost ship

yet neither of 'em fired any shot at her tho' called to from the Bredah several times to engage her which the Boatswain acquainted the Captain with twice for which he was reproved by his Captain nor was it regarded by his Captain. About that time the Master acquainted him they were within shot for which he was reproved as he informed this deponent and Boatswain." (Adm.1/5263, folio 55)

The Boatswain, Thomas Mollamb substantiated this.

"the Defiance, then being upon the bow of the enemy's sternmost ship, and Windsor upon her quarter fired not one gun at her tho' called to from the Bredah by direction of the Admiral to engage her which this deponent with the men upon the forecastle informed the Captain of as also the Master. A second time this deponent called to his Captain to acquaint him the Admiral commanded some fire and withall told him they had a fair prospect to destroy the ship, that thereupon his Captain reproved him bid him hold his tongue, and told him to mind his own business and not intermeddle in that affair, which if he did not regard he would run his sword into him or words to that effect, that at the same time the men at their quarters cried out they had as good throw the guns overboard as stand by them, notwithstanding all which the Captain commanded they should not fire...

That during the whole time of engagement, he did not know of any encouragement his Captain gave to any of his men, but the contrary rather from his own pusillanimity by walking and dodging behind the mizen mast and falling down upon the deck." (Adm.1/5263, folio 66)

Defiance Midshipman John Skinner echoed this evidence.

"The Defiance and the Windsor were within musket shot of the enemy's sternmost ship and tho called to from the Bredah to engage her fired not one gun at her, the Captain being several times acquainted by several persons with the Admiral's directions, particularly by the Boatswain and this deponent, who were reproved for it by the Captain." (Adm.1/5263, folio 70)

Francis Knighton, 3rd Lieutenant of the Defiance, and the most senior surviving officer under Kirkby, gave more benign testimony. He initially testified in a deposition dated September 6, 1702, that on the 19th he did not know of the Defiance being out of the line of battle, nor did he know of any directions that were given for luffing out of it. He stated that he did know it was Colonel Kirkby's opinion that it was unsafe to bear down upon the enemy since there was no friendly ship near enough to support him. He added that on the 20th, when the Bredah and the Ruby were becalmed abreast the enemy, the Defiance made more sail and attempted to come up with them. Regarding the action on the 21st, he testified it was Colonel Kirkby's opinion that they were not within point blank shot of the sternmost ship and so he did not fire at her. The

Master John Martin also signed this deposition. The court however pressed both of them to admit to more damaging statements although they appear to have resisted.

"Mr. Fra. Knighton 3rd Lieut. and Mr. John Martin Master of her Maj. Ship Defyannce prove not much either for or against Col. Kirkby, but Mr. Fra. Knighton 3rd Lieut. upon oath before the Court declared that Colonel Kirkby did not keep his line, but was out of it, and farther than he ought to have been."
(Adm.1/5263, folio 102)

By the 22nd Kirkby and the rest were 3 to 4 miles astern. Only the Falmouth, whose station had been in the rear came to the Admiral's aid. The fact that only the Ruby and the Falmouth supported the Admiral led the Court to believe Kirkby and the other Captains "had a design to sacrifice the Admiral and Falmouth to the enemy, or desert." Testimony was given that Kirkby kept his squadron of four ships as a separate division, 3 or 4 miles astern all the next day. At noon on the 23rd the Bredah and the Falmouth captured the Anne Galley and sent it home to Jamaica with the disabled Ruby. Benbow noted in his deposition that there was no excuse for the others being so far astern: "you are to take notice that there was not a ship of the English but sailed better than the Admiral, before and after this battle."

On the 24th about 2 in the morning the Admiral and the Falmouth again engaged the sternmost enemy ship. At 3 the Admiral's leg was shattered by chainshot but he continued the fight, disabling his opponent. Kirkby, being to windward led his squadron against this disabled ship, but according to most of the witnesses only fired in passing and quickly fled when the French Commodore attacked.

Lieutenant Thomas Langridge of the Bredah exemplifies this testimony.

"Monday the 24 about 2 in the morning we and the Falmouth engaged one of the ships in the enemy's rear and perfectly disabled her, before the rest of the French ships could have any wind to come to her assistance. Between 5 and 6 in the morning the French had a gale and bore down to rescue their disabled ship, the Defiance, Windsor, Greenwich, and Pendennis then coming with the same gale with them, might have kept to windward and engaged Monsieur Du Cass which would have made it impossible for him to rescue his disabled ship, and if not, in one half hour more, in all human probability, we and the Falmouth must have either sunk or taken the disabled ship, but they contrary to this honourable way of acting, bore all to leeward of her and the Colonel leading them, after he had fired about twenty guns, bore round up from her directly and running away, lowered down his mizen yard, lowered his topsails and I think each of his main sheets and was out of gun shot before he brought to. I am sure too great a distance to do any service, the rest of the ships after they had first bore away but not so much, this encouraged Monsieur Du Cass to bear down to rescue the disabled ship and when he did, it put the four ships in such a consternation, that they made sail away from us, leaving us with our main-topsail yard shot down, our rigging very much disabled, and we exposed to all

the shot of Monsieur Du Cass and his Squadron, and did not lay by for us to get into our line, ahead of them, until we fired two guns at them." (Adm.1/5263, folio 133)

Similarly, Edward Palmer, carpenter of the Defiance described the Defiance as running along the side of the disabled ship, firing about one broadside, never bracing to, and quickly adding sail to get out of gunshot. His testimony is endorsed by Defiance Midshipman John Spurr who describes Kirkby's reaction when the mizen mast is hit.

"Monday the 24th on the morning when the Bredah and Falmouth had disabled a ship of the enemy's, the Defiance being to windward, bore down upon her and run'd to leeward of her within pistol shot of her, fired at her in passing at which time the foot of the mizen or mizen yard of the Defiance was shot, upon which the Captain ducked down his head, and made a retreat aft, ordering more sail to be set, particularly the spritsail, the spritsailtopsail, and foretopsail staysail and run to leeward of the Falmouth who was knotting her rigging, but never came within gun shot after." (Adm.1/5263, folio 69)

However, as in his other testimony Lieutenant Francis Knighton describes in his journal a more active engagement on the part of the Defiance.

"At 6 had a fresh gale from n, then we made sail towards those ships, the Bredah standing away to northward athwart his forefoot and fired several guns as they past him and we astern could not rake her fearing to have damaged the Bredah but as soon as he past the wake of our shot we began to fire at her with our courses up and maintopsails aback to stop our headway being close along their side. After we had backed astern we filled our Foretopsails and lay with our Maintopsail aback at which time we received considerable damage in our masts, yards and rigging and perceiving the French Commodore with 2 more ships coming down directly upon us and the rearmost of them could have slung a shot over us, and the Commodore his Spritsail yard fore and aft under his bow and none of our ships near, we wore to the northward and gave him our other broadside from the gundeck, between the Greenwich and Windsor coming up, who gave their broadsides and bore up to leeward as also the Pendennis." (Adm.1/5263, folio 147)

Master John Martin and his Mates John Brown and Will Jarvis support Knighton's version. Jarvis gives the impression the Defiance engaged the disabled ship for a whole hour from 6 to 7. The Court however was sceptical of the Master's testimony. It heard testimony from Richard Gull, Boatswain of the Lewis hulk, that Martin had been persuaded to alter his journal at Kirkby's insistence. Gull stated that while visiting his fellow Boatswain in his cabin on the Defiance and in the presence of the Carpenter, he heard John Martin cry "that they made him alter several things and would have it all upon him and he should be undone." (Adm.1/5263,

folio 28) The List of Evidences against Colonel Richard Kirkby includes the statement that "John Martin the Master declared upon oath before the Court that Colonel Kirkby made him make several alterations in his journal." (Adm.1/5263, folio 102) The Masters Journal does contain several bracketed portions, which may indicate those which the court suspected were altered. They are the very passages which detail the damage to the Defiance and inflate her participation in the battle. The Court then chose to believe the weight of evidence which minimized the involvement of the Defiance. Campbell concluded that "It was upon full evidence of this fact, that Captain Kirkby...was condemned for cowardice, though on other occasions he had behaved well." (Lives, vol.III, p.373)

Unattributed testimony was given regarding the fateful visit of Kirkby to the Orlop deck of the Bredah, where Benbow lay with his leg shattered.

"Colonel Kirkby came aboard of the Admiral on Monday 24 Aug. 1702 and went down in the Cock pit to see the Admiral. The first word he said he was sorry to see his Honour the Admiral in that condition, and said further that it was not requisite nor convenient to fight the French any more. The Admiral desired a signal to be made for the Captains to know their opinion and that was all the Admiral said, afterwards Colonel Kirkby desired to take the Admiral by the hand which was refused him." (Adm.1/5263, folio 13)

Benbow's emotions no doubt coloured his recollection. He testified Kirkby failed to show any interest in his health. The Court Martial record contains the paper signed by all six of the Captains after their consultation, (as in previous chapter). This was perhaps the most critical piece of evidence against them and witnesses were asked repeatedly to swear that there was no shortage of men, arms, or ammunition, contrary to the statements of the Consultation.

The court concluded that "Col. Kirkby had endeavoured to poyson the rest of the Captains, forming a writing under his own hand which was cowardly and erroneous, the substance of which was not to engage the enemy any more." The record contains Benbow's answer to the Consultation, (also in previous chapter). He further testified he believed that they either had a design against him or intended to be traitors to their country if an opportunity happened that the French could have destroyed him. Campbell adds that "It was generally supposed, that he [Kirkby] was the author of this scheme; at least, he was charged with being so, by Wade and Constable." (Lives, vol.III, p.373)

Given the format of Court Martial records of that era little was preserved of Kirkby's defence. However, the record states that he denied all of the evidence brought against him, except the written document and brought several of his own men to testify to his conduct during the battle. The record adds however that their testimony was very insignificant and Kirkby's behaviour to the Court and witnesses was most unbecoming a gentleman. The record contains sworn testimony of nine officers of the Defiance. Of these the only testimony that could be considered even remotely favourable is that of his 3rd Lieutenant, Francis Knighton, and of his Master, John Martin and the Master's Mates, Will Jarvis and John Brown. Kirkby does complain in a letter dated 11 December 1702 to Admiralty Secretary Burchett of hasty and unfair treatment at the trial.

"After which he (Admiral Benbow) made use of his power to terrify some of the officers of the squadron and encourage others with hopes of preferment to form their affidavits to his desire, which he having effected to his purpose, he brought me (with surprise) upon my trial (near six weeks after my confinement) having made a common lawyer, who knew nothing of the Civil Law, Judge Advocate, who proceeded contrary (in all respects) to the methods of naval trials, rejecting my defence and (with others of the Court which I beg you'll excuse me naming of at present) discountenanced my officers in giving their evidences to the truth. Especially the Master and a midshipman (whose business it was to observe transactions in time of service) threatening to order them into custody. These and many other gross proceedings past at the Court Martial too long to be related". (Adm. 1/2004)

The Court does appear to have been intent upon a conviction and may well have pressured Kirkby's witnesses. In a final appeal dated April 16, 1703, to Prince George, the Lord High Admiral, Kirkby described the court room drama in some detail. He states that he was denied a fair defence in not being able to present a damage report of the Defiance which he believed would show he had been as actively engaged as the Bredah, (see next chapter). He gives an example of a witness, Lieutenant Partington of the Greenwich, being brow beaten by the Admiral, into testifying against him. Apparently when Partington read his affidavit there was nothing against Kirkby in it so he was made to take pen and ink and write a new affidavit specifically against Kirkby. This is supported by the record. There is an affidavit dated September 5 which has solely to do with the Greenwich and Captain Wade. (folio 144-145) A further affidavit is dated October 8 (during the trial) and deals with Kirkby. It states that Partington observed that the Defiance was out of the line on the 19th and 24th (folio 89). It really does not seem inappropriate for the Court to elicit additional evidence from a witness, and in this case there is much substantiation from other witnesses.

Kirkby relates that he had to repeat several times his request to have the court hear the testimony of his Lieutenant, Master and Midshipman. However, when one of them had read a very little, the Admiral cried out he lied, and had sworn the contrary. The President proposed to clap them by the heels and to invalidate the Master's evidence. It was here that the Boatswain of the Lewis was brought in and swore he had heard the Master confess to altering his journal at Kirkby's insistence. Kirkby maintained the Master and the Midshipman stood by their testimony despite being threatened with confinement. He states their evidence was disregarded. However, the Court record indicates that Master John Martin was persuaded to declare upon oath that Colonel Kirkby made him make several alterations in his journal.

It is possible that to counteract Kirkby's substantial influence with the Admiralty and Parliament Benbow may have expunged from the record material favourable to Kirkby. Certainly little was kept of Kirkby's words on his own behalf. Also there is no record of depositions from the two Master's Mates of the Defiance, Will Jarvis and John Brown, although their journals are included. This deficiency is notable in that in other cases where a journal is part of the record a deposition has also been taken. As well there is no record of any favourable

testimony from a Defiance Midshipman, although Kirkby claimed he had such a witness. In addition the Court obviously had difficulty getting Lieutenant Francis Knighton to give adverse testimony. Under pressure from the court he was clearly forced to contradict his sworn deposition of September 6, 1702. Kirkby also states in his letter to the Prince that he supplied the court a written vindication of the Captains' consultation paper but this was not considered and certainly was not preserved in the court record, (see next chapter).

Nevertheless the overwhelming weight of evidence leaves little room to doubt Kirkby's guilt. The court summary adds that on being asked by the Court why he did not fire at the enemy's sternmost ship, when at point blank range on Aug. 21, Kirkby "replied it was because they did not fire at him, but that they had a respect for him, which upon several occasions during the trial, the same words he repeated three several times." The report concludes:

"Whereupon due consideration of the premises, of great advantages the English had in number being seven to four, of guns 122 more then the other; with his acts and behaviour as aforesaid and more particularly his ill timed paper of consultation as afore recited which obliged the Admiral for the preservation of her Majesty's fleet, to give over the chase and fight, to the irreparable dishonour of the Queen, her Crown, and dignity, and came to Port Royal, Jamaica: for which reasons the Court was of the opinion, that he fell under the 11th, 12th, 14th, and 20th articles of war; and adjudged accordingly, that he be shot to death."

He was thus found guilty of breach of orders under the 11th article for not observing and keeping his line of battle as so ordered by his Admiral; guilty of cowardice under the 12th article in that he withdrew, kept back and did not come into the fight and do his utmost to endamage the enemy or assist and relieve his friends; guilty of neglect of duty under the 14th article in that he did not pursue and chase the enemy nor assist his friends to the utmost of his power; and guilty of mutinous actions under the 20th article for signing a paper which hindered her Majesty's fleet then engaged.

The Court Martial of Richard Kirkby has been criticised on the basis that little if any of his defence was preserved for the record, and that much of the testimony against him was repetitious to the point of appearing rehearsed or coached. I believe the format for recording court martials of that day dictated the structure of the record. Oral testimony was not generally recorded. Rather, written depositions were utilized and backed up with Officers' journals. The process was like the French system which utilizes a Juge d'instruction to gather evidence through interrogations prior to the trial. Similar statements, particularly related to the conditions of the ships, men and ammunition, were put to many of the witnesses by the Judge Advocate, and they were asked to swear to their veracity. This resulted in what appears to be rehearsed testimony.

In terms of Kirkby's defence he did manage to get written arguments to his friends through Secretary of the Navy, Josiah Burchett. These documents were published posthumously in 1705 and will be analyzed in the next chapter.

The court martial of Captain Constable of the Windsor followed that of Kirkby. Evidence was presented by 17 witnesses that showed Constable never kept his first nor second line of battle despite the Admiral firing two guns to so command him. The Admiral twice sent his Lieutenant to command he close the line. Constable interpreted this to mean he must keep within half a cable's length of the ship ahead. He thus followed Kirkby's lead rather than the Admiral's wishes. His master, Jacob Tiley testified thus.

"Captain Constable's directions to him was to keep the Windsor within half a cable's length of the Defiance, go where she would and not have regard to the station the Admiral was in." (Adm.1.5263, folio 108)

The 1st lieutenant, Edward Holland, testified to Constable's hesitation to engage and expanded on his keeping the line at Kirkby's direction.

"(the 20th) the Admiral thought fit to alter his line, ordering the Ruby to lead, himself next, the Defiance next, and we next. In the morning of the third day the Admiral and Ruby engaged the enemy, we had very small winds, in stretching along, the Defiance and we were pretty near a ship of the enemy's rear, who sailed heavier then the rest, and as I thought, was within shot of us, I told Captain Constable of it, and desired I might try some guns at him, our Gunner was of my opinion. His answer to me was, that it was but throwing away powder and shot...

At another time when I was upon the quarter deck...the Admiral fired a gun to windward with powder and a little after, another was fired with shot, upon which I told Captain Constable, that it was my opinion the Admiral seeing the Defiance sail heavily that he designed us to go ahead and close the line next to him. He was then of my opinion and ordered the foresail to be set and the topsails hoisted, but Colonel Kirkby called to him and asked his reason for not keeping his line, Captain Constable answered that those guns were a signal for him to go ahead, but Colonel Kirkby told him that he mistook the signal and that it was for him to keep his line, upon which the foresail was hauled up, the topsails lowered and we fell astern of the Defiance." (Adm.1.5263, folio 98)

John Moseley, Purser of the Windsor, filled in for the absent second Lieutenant during the engagement. His testimony confirmed Holland's and he added:

"The last day of action, after we had engaged a disabled ship of the enemy, our helm being put a weather, we fell on the larboard quarter of the Admiral, from whence somebody waved and spoke to us, but not well hearing, believing twas to fall astern of the Defiance, which we did." (Adm.1/5263, folio 100)

The Court Martial summary indicates Constable called several witnesses who all testified he remained at his station on the quarter deck during the engagement and encouraged his men to fight. He claimed the Admiral's order was delivered by Lieutenant Langridge in some heat and passion and he understood it to be to keep the line within half a cable's length and to follow Kirkby, which he did. He thus managed to convince the court he was not guilty of cowardice. Nevertheless, the court did find that "Captain John Constable, through drunkenness and ignorance is guilty of breach of orders and neglect of duty, and therefore falls under the eleventh article of war...and through drunkenness and ignorance for signing a paper tending to the great hinderance and disservice of her Majesty's fleet then engaged as aforesaid, falls under the 20th article of war." (Adm.1/5263 fol.105a) He was sentenced to be cashiered and for ever after rendered incapable of serving her Majesty and to be imprisoned during her Majesty's pleasure. Furthermore he was to be kept a close prisoner until the Admiral found a suitable ship to send him, as a prisoner, home to England. The 11th article refers to observing the commands of the admiral while the 20th depicts mutinous practices, designs or words tending to the hindrance of the service.

An interesting anomaly occurs in the court record. A summary report of the individual court martial findings was compiled and sent by Rear admiral Whetstone to Secretary Burchett. This report became the official version and was even published in 1703. It erroneously states that Constable was found guilty under the 12th, 14th, and 20th articles of war. (Adm.1/5263 fol.1-7) The significance of this is that unlike Kirkby and Wade, the complaint brought against him did not include cowardice, nor did the court find him guilty of that offence, which is the basis of the 12th and 14th articles. This disparity may well have been later utilized by Constable in mitigating his sentence.

Following Constable's trial, which concluded on the 10th, the court proceeded with the court martial of Cooper Wade. As with Kirkby, a complaint was brought against him for high crimes and misdemeanours of cowardice, breach of orders, neglect of duty and other ill practices. Sixteen witnesses deposed that Captain Wade of the Greenwich never kept the line of battle during the six days engagement, and fired all his shot in vain, not reaching half way to the enemy. When his lieutenants questioned him he commanded them to continue firing, "saying they must so do, or the Admiral would not believe they fought." During the whole fight he received only one shot from the enemy. As well witnesses testified he was inebriated during the greatest part of the engagement and arraigned the honourable courage and conduct of the Admiral. Edward Eaton, a clerk aboard the Greenwich testified regarding the behaviour of Captain Wade, starting with the beginning of the battle on the 19th.

"about 5 in the afternoon being something nigh the Falmouth began to fire at a Dutch built ship which I could perceive had a great number of men some shot passing from the enemy, the Defiance being to lead the van began to fire as did the Windsor at a great distance steered out of the line persistently from the enemy leaving the Admiral to lead we being next the Admiral we let some guns pass from us to the two small ships and then edged away and broke the line. My captain, instead of animating the men, told them they were ships of great

force, and said 'twould make our hearts ache. Three times successively he did pretend to bear down to the hindmost ship, but when in gunshot luft up into the line saying he was not to break the line. The first Lieutenant, seeing of the Captain's ill management and that we were in a confused order, came up to know what he intended to do whose opinion was asked about keeping the line he replied and said that he was not to break his line, but he being somewhat mellow or otherwise in drink, as he was at Logan, had no regard to any instructions, but fired to no purpose, without considering what distance we were from the enemy...

[On Sunday the 22nd] being nigh the enemy we followed the Windsor in our due line and engaged two of their ships, but soon we did forsake the line and bore away, which the Master did persuade the Captain to, who did readily condescend thereto, tho' he had sent orders down to the Lieutenant that he did design to be on the enemy's quarter and continued bearing away and luffing again which kept us very much astern. Then the Captain said to the Master 'What if the Admiral should fire a shot at him. 'Oh' says the Master, 'we will tell the Admiral the ship will not answer the helm'. The Captain then begins to find fault with the Admiral's conduct, saying 'God damn it, it would be another parliament business', and that he would not favour any one, and that notwithstanding the several orders for keeping the line, he swore by God he did not understand those damned verbal orders, and did believe that he ought not to follow them without a written order, the Master being of the same opinion." (Adm.1/5263, folio 198)

Wade may have been suggesting that he and Kirkby had already contemplated referring the Admiral's conduct of the battle to a Parliamentary review, much as had happened to the Admiral's tutor, Admiral Arthur Herbert, after the battle of Beachy Head in 1690; and to John Norris, Wade's commander in Newfoundland in 1697. The reference to verbal orders shouted from ship to ship underlines the handicap fleet actions operated under in those days of limited signals.

This same witness described how Andrew Bloom, the Master's Mate, joined in with further disparaging comments regarding Admiral Benbow's bravery and conduct. This is difficult to comprehend given the Bredah's active engagement with the enemy. Wade and his officers may have been promoting a melee type of action which they felt was frustrated by Benbow's efforts to keep them in an orderly line. The above testimony suggests that from time to time Wade ordered the Greenwich to turn so as to direct a broadside at a fleeing enemy ship. Such actions would of necessity slow down the Greenwich and cause her to fall further astern. The court tried Mr. Bloom as part of its proceedings. It sentenced him to be carried along side his own ship the Greenwich and the two flagships of the squadron, and with drums beating, to have his offence read and receive ten lashes on his bare back at each ship. Benbow did not take such insults lightly.

The 1st lieutenant, Henry Partington confirmed Eaton's evidence regarding Wade's persistent bearing up, ostensibly to direct his guns at the enemy, but with the consequence of

falling further astern. He also testified to Wade's poor judgement in maximizing his ship's ability to pursue the enemy.

"the day he [Captain Wade] saw the enemy or the day after, we bent an old foretopsail which is fit for nothing but to be cast it's so thin that if it had shivered in the wind it would have flown out of the bolt rope, which we chased with and a reef in the main topsail which I mentioned and objected against upon the quarterdeck before the Captain, Master and Pilot, but had no answer tho' I said the foretopsail looks more like a design than a chasing sail."
(Adm.1/5263, folio 145)

John Codner, the 2nd lieutenant testified that Wade was drunk with both the Master and the Pilot every day of the battle. The Master, Isaac Sunn perhaps looking out for himself, testified it was the Captain who directed what was done the whole time of Action. His actual journal (Adm.52/40) differs from the trial version in that in the latter he omits the significant point that on the 24th the Admiral had to fire a gun at the Greenwich to bring it back into line after it ran to leeward of the disabled enemy ship.

Francis Cotterell the Boatswain stated that Wade ordered them to continue firing despite the shot falling short in order to convince the Admiral that they were in the fight. He added that they were never within range except on the one brief occasion that they sailed by the enemy's disabled stern ship. Henry Partington, the 1st lieutenant related how discouraged Wade was upon his return from visiting the Flag. He said "Oh Lord if any of the enemy's ships boarded us we should be immediately taken," for he had made no preparations to defend himself.

The Court Martial summary states that Captain Wade "acknowledged the honour, courage and conduct of the Admiral during the whole engagement, declaring the bravery and good management of the Admiral in this time of action and that no man living could do more or better for the honour of the Queen and Nation." These sentiments are certainly not in keeping with Eaton's testimony of Wades words and behaviour during the engagement. They exemplify Wade's characteristic attempt at self-preservation. Unlike Kirkby he begged the mercy of the Court.

He called some witnesses to justify his own conduct but the record states little was said in his favour. As in Kirkby's case, the court in its wisdom chose not to preserve this beneficial testimony. Wade was found guilty under the same articles of war as Kirkby and so received the same sentence, death. As with Kirkby, his sentence was to await the Queen's pleasure.

The court next tried two of its prime witnesses, Captains Samuel Vincent and Christopher Fogg. The Falmouth, under Vincent, had begun the engagement on the 19th and was an active participant, though the rearmost ship of the British line. First Lieutenant William Herriot testified that the Admiral made a signal for the line of battle about 11, and then at 3 in the afternoon he hoisted "the Red Flag at his foretopmast head which was for every ship to engage the enemy." The Falmouth fought the enemy's sternmost ships from four till half an hour past six. Interestingly the Pendennis, whose place was originally second to Kirkby in the lead, fell behind the Falmouth and never made it into the battle line. Vincent testified that he had tried to

send his boat to the Admiral to gain permission to engage in the night. A fresh gale prevented this communication as his boat was not able to get ahead of the ship. This underlines again the difficulties inherent in the dearth of proper signalling at this period in British naval history. The Rigid Fighting Instructions were all the Captains had to go by. This basically kept them in line, but stifled initiative. Vincent's tale is thus one of itching to be in the thick of the battle, but constantly being held back by the lagging ships ahead of him. He testified that on the 20th:

"we endeavoured to get up with the enemy but could not by reason of light wind and the Pendennis not making sail [or] closing the line as per the Admiral's order tho' we called to them several times [so] to do." (Adm.1/563, folio 81)

The Master Percy Brett and his Mate Israel Sparkes both testified to calling to the Pendennis to make more sail. 1st Lieutenant, William Herriott gave similar evidence.

"this deponent by order of his Captain called to the Pendennis near forty times severally to make more sail and let out his reefs to get nearer the Admiral and into his station as his line of battle directed, also for him to do the same to the ship ahead of him." (Adm.1/5263, folio 84)

There was little action on the 20th but on the 21st Vincent was prevented from getting into the fight by the Defiance and Windsor holding their noncombatant positions abreast the rearmost enemy ships. Later that day he did manage some distant shots at the enemy. On the 22nd Vincent had enough and shot ahead of the intervening ships and joined the Bredah. The Falmouth seconded the Bredah from thence forth, until the 24th when they isolated the Apollon and in a heated battle disabled her. The Falmouth was herself so damaged that she towed out of range to repair her rigging. Vincent described it thus.

"she damnified us extremely in our rigging, masts, yards, sails and hull. There being little or no wind the rest of our ships were a great way astern. Between 5 and 6 there happened a fine breeze of wind and the French bore down to the assistance of their disabled ship, and at [the] same time the Defiance, Greenwich, Pendennis had an opportunity of coming up with the enemy and engaging them but they only fired some few guns at their disabled ship and then bore away...During the time of action, I have not understood that there was any complaint for either men or ammunition, but only at the consultation, at which time they all said they should want ammunition. I replied and said I believed the Falmouth wanted more than any of them. For, I thought that 3 or 4 hours' fight would go a great way with the shot on board us as we engaged in the morning, for I had not observed that from either of them there had been such great expense either of powder or ball." (Adm.1/5263, folio 82)

Captain Vincent of the Falmouth and Captain Christopher Fogg of the Bredah declared their reason for signing Captain Kirkby's paper.

"Captain Samuel Vincent, Commander of her Majesty's ship the Falmouth, deposeth upon oath that the reason of his signing to the consultation held on board her Majesty's ship Bredah, the 24th of August 1702, was because he perceived by the ill behaviour of the four Captains of the squadron whose names are in the margent (Kirkby, Constable, Wade, Hudson), and their backwardness to engage the enemy, that if they had engaged the French any more either the Bredah or Falmouth or both of them must have unavoidably been sunk or taken by the French." (Adm.1/5263, folio 109,137)

Admiral Benbow spoke on their behalf saying that during the six days battle Captain Fogg behaved with great courage, bravery and good conduct, like a true Englishman and lover of his Queen and country, and that Captain Vincent valiantly and courageously behaved himself during the said action, and came to his aid when he was deserted by all the rest of the ships, which the Admiral said saved him from falling into the hands of du Casse. For signing Kirkby's paper they were suspended from her Majesty's service. However, Benbow wrote the Lord High Admiral requesting that the suspension be lifted and so it was. Both captains continued for several years at full pay in the service. Benbow gave the command of the Defiance to Vincent who subsequently attacked Petit Guave destroying and taking all the ships of the enemy found there. He served for many years but was unsuccessful in his appeal for a flag. He died September 27, 1719. Christopher Fogg was transferred to the Falmouth and served in the Royal Navy until his death November 24, 1708.

Vice Admiral Benbow also wrote the Earl of Nottingham on October 20, asking him to lay before Her Majesty the matter of the death sentences of Kirkby and Wade which he had ordered deferred until her pleasure was known. He states that "the people in these parts are extremely incensed against them, having never heard or met with anything so base." (CSP.Col.1702)

Kirkby and Wade were men of some influence and efforts were made on their behalf to discredit Benbow and have them pardoned. However, the Court martial was upheld by both the Queen and Government. The reports of the Courts martial were received on January 6. On January 7, 1703, the Prince's Council recommended to the Queen in Council that her Majesty empower the Prince to order the execution of the sentences of the Courts martial. Members present were Sir George Rooke and Sir David Mitchell, both former captains of Benbow, and Mr. Richard Hill and George Churchill. Prince George sent the following letter.

"Lord High Admiral to H.M. in Council. Proposing that H.M. 'empower me to order Vice-Admiral Benbow or the officer commanding the squadron, to put the sentence' (passed on Cpts. Kirkby and Wade) 'into execution by shooting to death the aforesaid Captains as a just punishment for their crimes and as a necessary example to deter others from being guilty thereof for the future' and

that the sentence upon Capt. Constable be confirmed. Signed, George."
(CSP.Col.1703)

On January 13 the Queen replied to Prince George, indicating she was not to be swayed by the appeals made on Kirkby's behalf:

"We see no reason to shew favour to Captains Richard Kirkby and Cooper Wade, who have been condemned to be shot, or to Captain John Constable, who has been condemned to be cashiered, to be unfit for the Queen's service, and whom you say should be sent prisoner from the Indies on the first occasion."
(CSP.Dom.1703)

Lord Nottingham sent the Queen's sentiments to Vice-Admiral Benbow on January 23.

"The Queen is very pleased with your conduct 'and much offended with the baseness of those officers who deserted and betrayed you.' You will hear more from the Prince's Council. I only lament your misfortune in losing your leg. I hope this will find you otherwise well, and that you are reserved to do Her Majesty and your country still greater services, of which no man is more capable than yourself." (CSP.Dom.1703)

The Prince sent his orders on January 19th and interestingly, addressed Benbow as Vice-Admiral of the White. Possibly this promotion was a reward for his much appreciated services. Benbow may never have been aware of this added honour, for he died of his wounds November 4, 1702. (CSP.Dom.1703)

Secretary Burchett was directed to issue orders for the sentence to be carried out upon the arrival of the prisoners in any English Port. Rear-Admiral Whetstone dispatched Captain Edward Acton in the Bristol with prisoners Kirkby, Wade and Constable, on February 3, 1703. There had been a devastating fire in Port Royal and he feared their escape. In April 1703 the London Gazette published the following:

"Plymouth, April 13. Her Majesty's Ship the Bristol came in the same day from Jamaica, which brought Prisoners from thence Captain Kirkby, Captain Wade, and Captain Constable; The two former were shot to Death the 16th on board the said Ship, in pursuance of the Sentence given against them by the Court Martial held at Jamaica in October last, for their Cowardice, Breach of Orders, and Neglect of Duty, in the Fight between Admiral Benbow and Monsieur Du Casse." (3907)

Luttrell records that Kirkby and Wade were surprised when told to prepare for death, alleging that they were not tried according to act of Parliament, and so insisted on a new trial. They were dismayed that the Queen had signed a warrant for their execution already, and that they were not to be allowed an opportunity to present their case. Captain Acton described their

death in a letter to Secretary Burchett. He included a paper which Kirkby had asked him to have printed.

"I caused Captain Richard Kirkby and Captain Cooper Wade to be shot to death together upon the forecastle in the presence of several captains and commissioned officers and many other spectators. I do likewise think myself obligated to give this account of them that for Captain Kirkby, during the time of his being in prison, he behaved himself mannerly and very much like a Christian by continued prayer and reading of good books, and upon receiving notice of his approaching death seemed very easy, desiring of God to strengthen him and the night before his execution I sat up late with him and found him very calm and easy, not railing or reviling, but forgiving all the world and praying, for the Queen health and prosperity, and his Royal Highness the good and honour of his country. He received the sacrament with Captain Wade and after prayers spoke a quarter of an hour to all the people in general to forbear swearing and debauchery and be obedient to their superiors, but did not rail at his hard fate or any such thing to arraign his judges or the like, but Captain Wade could not forbear till I deferred him to retire. He is very timorous and of a low spirit. I delivered their bodies as desired to their friends to be privately interred." (Adm.1/1436)

Captain Constable was imprisoned, but served little more than one year. Letters he wrote to the Admiralty indicate he had the ear of the Earl of Halifax, whose nephew, Edward Lawton, had served with him as a Volunteer on the Windsor. On May 9, 1704 he addressed a letter to Secretary Burchett regarding Lawton's service. (Adm.1/1591) Charles Montague, 1st Earl of Halifax, was one of the most powerful Whig politicians. Under William he was Lord of the Treasury and had devised the system of loans that financed William's war and initiated the national debt. He had been instrumental in establishing the bank of England in 1694. He is less known as the author of *The Country Mouse* and *the City Mouse*. His patronage would have greatly assisted Constable.

Moreover, I have already suggested he may have had some legal justification to question the court record in that the summary report erroneously lists the articles under which he was convicted. As well, the original court finding attributes his behaviour to the extenuating circumstances of his drunkenness and ignorance. Also, he may have appealed to be treated in the same manner as his peers, Captains Vincent and Fogg, who also had been found guilty under the 20th article of war; that is, for mutinous behaviour. Constable received a Royal pardon in June 1704. Sir Charles Hedges, Secretary of State sent this to the Prince of Denmark at the Admiralty.

"25 June, Whitehall. Hedges to the Prince's Council: The Queen will pardon Captain John Constable, late Captain of the Windsor and now a prisoner in the Marshalsea, provided he be not again employed by the Navy. Communicate to the Lord High Admiral that he may take steps accordingly. (CSP.Dom. 1703-4, Entry book 105, p.4)

Despite this prohibition against naval employment, his friends found a way to utilize his services and restore him to some degree. Among these friends may have been one named Leake. Sir John Leake was at that time Rear Admiral of Great Britain, the highest post afloat, and was quite active in the Mediterranean. He utilized Lisbon for refitting and victualling his fleet. Another noteworthy seaman of that name was Sir Andrew Leake. He was the son of Andrew Leake, merchant of Lowestoffe. The proximity to Yarmouth is quite interesting, given Constable's suspension in 1698 for irregular proceedings towards some people of that town. (Adm 3/13) Sir Andrew Leake had more in common with John Constable. They quite likely served together in the Channel fleet in 1693-4, and then in 1704, the very year of Constable's deliverance, Leake emulated his behaviour. In May of that year, he commanded the 70 gun Grafton in a fleet under Admiral George Rooke, patrolling in the Mediterranean near Carthage. They fell in with six French ships of war and were part of a division of eight English ships ordered to give chase. Three of the ships, including the Grafton thought it too dangerous to engage the enemy and broke off the chase prematurely. Leake signalled the other captains to come on board, causing the rest of the squadron to bring to and abandon the chase as well. Charnock records that although acquitted in his court martial, he still suffered much censure from his fellow captains. A few months later, in August, Leake was in the van of Rooke's fleet in a battle off Malaga. He was mortally wounded, and perhaps in reaction to the odium heaped upon him, he wrapped a table-cloth round his wounded body and had himself placed in his elbow chair upon the quarter-deck, in a pale caricature of Admiral Benbow.

Letters written in May 1709 connect Constable to the Leake name. They indicate he was Captain of the Leake, a Merchant ship, acting as a victualler or supply ship to Naval ships at Lisbon. This ship is referred to in THE LIFE OF SIR JOHN LEAKE as being under his command in 1704 in Cadiz Bay. It is listed as a hospital ship for the years 1707 to 1711 in MEDICINE AND THE NAVY by John Keevil. In 1709, Constable was, according to his letters, experiencing some difficulty persuading Captain Dawes of the Crown frigate to convoy him from Spithead. (Adm.1/1594) Perhaps, like Andrew Leake, Constable suffered the censure of his fellow captains. These records also contain letters from another John Constable, a man who rose no higher than third lieutenant, lost his legs in the war ending in 1697, and became a purser of the Royal Sovereign in 1700, the Queen in 1703 and in 1704 an official at Greenwich hospital. A comparison of signatures convinces me that John Constable, the mutineer, was indeed the same as John Constable, Captain of the Leake in 1709, and should not be confused with the purser.

George Walton's career remained unblemished, except for certain malicious rumours. Historian Tobias G. Smollett suggested in his 1877 History of England that "Captain Walton had likewise joined in the conspiracy, while he was heated with the fumes of intoxication; but he afterwards renounced the engagement, and fought with admirable courage until his ship was disabled." (Smollett,p.417) I can find no evidence of his ever having been a party to the mutiny. His behaviour throughout the engagement was exemplary. He rose to Admiral of the Blue in 1734, having been knighted by George I in 1718. He retired in 1735 and died November 21, 1739.

The fortunes of the court martial judges is of some interest. William Whetstone succeeded to the command of the Caribbean forces until he was superseded by Vice-Admiral John Graydon in June 1703. He was recognized by Prince George for his service and promoted over the heads of other more senior captains to Rear-admiral of the Blue. In February 1705, as Rear-admiral of the White, he returned to the Caribbean as Commander-in-chief. In the same month, apparently for again undertaking such an unpopular venture, he was knighted. He died in the spring of 1711. Charles Smith, formerly the captain of the Strombolo fireship, was rewarded according to Charnock, for having behaved with the greatest spirit in the encounter with Du Casse, with promotion to Captain of the Greenwich, in Wade's place. A more cynical perspective might be that Benbow looked after those who assisted him at the court-martial. His first lieutenant on the Bredah, Robert Thompson, was made captain of the fifty gun Sunderland on September 24, 1702, moved on to the Pendennis on September 27, and then on October 13, 1702 replaced Christopher Fogg as captain of the Bredah. William Russell, another of the court martial judges, went from the 24 gun Seahorse to the thirty-two gun Experiment, but died in that ship on June 30 1703. John Redman retired in 1707 on a Captain's half pay, and lived until 1727. John Hartnell was promoted from the fourth rate Gloucester to the third rate seventy gun Chichester, in which he served in the West Indies in the summer of 1703, under vice-admiral Graydon. He later served under John Leake and died in England about 1723. Philip Boyce was made Captain of the Pendennis on October 6, 1702 and then of the Nonsuch but ran into trouble with the colonial authorities for following Benbow's example of overzealously pressing merchant seamen. Charnock says that he put a period to his own life in January 1726, as a result of a melancholy derangement of mind. Like Boyce, John Smith suffered some mental disturbance, described by Charnock as an intermitting delirium occasioned by a calenture or tropical fever. He had been rescued from Bridwell by Cloudesly Shovel. Interestingly he had succeeded Henry Tourville as Captain of the Mortar Bomb vessel in January 1694. Benbow may well have been responsible for this promotion since it was Tourville he court martialled for not going in close enough to St. Malo in the fall of 1693. Following his duties on Kirkby's court martial, Smith had further misfortune. He lost the York at Harwich in the Great Storm of November 1703. He died in 1722 as a Captain of Greenwich Hospital. Barrow Harris became Captain of the Assistance of fifty guns and continued serving in the West Indies under Whetstone, and then Charles Wager. In July 1708, again in Port Royal, he sat on the very similar court martial of captains Bridges and Windsor, who had like Kirkby and Wade, held back from the battle. Harris commanded the Bredah in 1718 in the Mediterranean, and died in a hurricane in 1725 while on the Jamaican station.

Kirkby's supporters did not fare so well. Lieutenant Francis Knighton, the most senior officer who supported his commander, was unsuccessful in promotion until 1718 when he was appointed to the Success storeship. Coincidentally, this very ship was Kirkby's first command. Knighton did not apparently reach command of a man of war until he was made captain of the Hampshire of fifty guns in February 1727, only to die in that ship on the 16th of July 1727.

Of the common seamen, Whetstone gave an account on January 30, 1703. The Bredah, after little more than one year in the Caribbean, had lost 174 dead and 62 deserted of an original 289 entered on her books; the Defiance had 123 dead and 21 deserted out of 221. (CSP.Col.1703)

One somewhat ancillary matter is of interest. Despite Governor Beckford's changed attitude to Benbow, several of the Colonial authorities continued to bear a grudge, so that the

Court of Vice-Admiralty procrastinated in the matter of Benbow's prizes. On Tuesday, October 13, with the matter of the Court Martials out of the way, Benbow wrote the Governor requesting him to direct the Judge of the Admiralty to proceed to the condemnation of the prizes, which he had previously "downright refused". Benbow requested a speedy answer so that he could "give Her Majesty account how her subjects which are sent to this Island are treated." The Council wisely acquiesced and ordered the Commissioners for executing the Office of the Judge of the Admiralty to proceed and do their duty in the condemnation of the said prizes. (Institute of Jamaica--Benbow biographical file)

The Court-martial, then, established that four of Benbow's captains were indeed guilty of mutiny and that Kirkby in particular was the instigator. The evidence unfortunately sheds little light on their motivation. It is possible that they resented Admiral Benbow personally and perhaps disagreed with or feared his battle strategy of close encounters with the enemy. It may be that they wished to sabotage any major action against the French in the hopes that his mission would fail and he would leave or be replaced in disgrace. However, they did not count on his zest for battle and so compounded their crime by leaving him to be mauled and hopefully taken by the French. In attempting to foil his attack on the French they became a foil to his courage. So, in doing what he believed was only his duty Benbow became a model and a legend to generations of British seamen. Still, the mind boggles at how four Captains in the British navy could come to such an action. The heart of the mystery must lie with their leader, Richard Kirkby.

Then they look'd at him they hated,
Had what they desired:
Mute with folded arms they waited--
Not a gun was fired.

Those, in whom he had reliance
For his noble name,
With one smile of still defiance
Sold him unto shame.

Lord Tennyson: "The Captain"

Says Kirkby unto Wade, 'I will run, I will run,'
Says Kirkby unto Wade, 'I will run.
I value not disgrace,
Nor the losing of my place;
For my enemies I'll not face with a gun, with a gun
For my enemies I'll not face with a gun.

COLONEL RICHARD KIRKBY

Kirkby was not unlike Benbow in his beginnings. An anonymous defence of Kirkby was published in 1705, titled *An Account of the Transaction between Admiral Benbow and Monsieur Du Cass*. The author gives the following biographical details. His father was Richard Kirkby of Kirkby in the County of Lancashire. His mother was Isabel, the daughter of Sir William Huddleston of Millum in the County of Cumberland. Sir William had raised a regiment of foot with his brothers and risked life and fortune to fight for Charles II, as had Benbow's uncle. Similarly, Sir William suffered imprisonment and disgrace. He is said to have been extremely fond of his grandson Richard for he discovered in him "a pregnant wit and a martial spirit".

A contemporary Captain Richard Kirkby in a note in the *Mariner's Mirror*, February 1987, writes that the Kirkbys ancestral home, Kirkby Hall, was in Kirkby Ireleth, Furness.

The Kirkby family history has been well documented by Mr. H.S. Cowper, in TRANSACTIONS OF THE CUMBERLAND AND WESTMORLAND ANTIQUARIAN & ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, volumes VI and XVI. He states that the Kirkbys were landed squires who had been seated at Kirkby from time immemorial. Like the Benbows and other old families they were submerged by the struggles of the seventeenth century. Our Richard's grandfather, Roger Kirkby was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1638 and Royalist MP for Lancaster in 1640. Caught up in the Civil War, he was discharged from his commission of Justice of the Peace in 1641 because of his Royalist sympathies. He was replaced by one Thomas Fell (whose widow Roger Kirkby's son was to persecute). He actively recruited soldiers for Lancashire and attempted to defend Lancashire Castle in February 1643 from Parliamentary forces. A local history by Mr. Barnes and titled *Barrow and District* states that "the Parliamentary troops, after taking Preston, easily captured Lancaster, Roger Kirkby who commanded there for the King 'stole away' before the fight". Roger escaped to Ireland, where he died in August of that year.

Roger's brother John Kirkby of Coniston Hall and William Huddleston led further resistance in Furness. Roger's son and heir, Richard Kirkby would have been 18 in 1643 and is said by Barnes to have raised a small force at Kirkby Ireleth for the King. In September of 1643 the 1500 Royalist troops of Furness were confronted by a Parliamentary force under Colonel Rigby at Lindal, just three miles from Kirkby hall. The Royalists turned and fled, "stomach to earth", leaving 300 prisoners, including Huddleston. John Kirkby got away, like his brother

Roger at Lancaster. Only two Parliamentary soldiers were hurt and one of these had wounded himself. The Kirkbys were not establishing much of a military tradition.

The whole Kirkby clan were compounded (fined in lieu of prosecution) in 1646. Richard's fine was ,751 which was reduced to ,250 on his settling ,50 a year for ever on the ministry of Hawkshead. Both debts became much in arrears as his estates were greatly impoverished.

When Charles II was restored in 1660 he did not have a lot at his disposal with which to reward those who had been loyal to his cause. He did make Richard Kirkby Receiver of the Royal Aid for Lancashire and a Justice of the Peace. Also, in 1663 he granted him all the woods and trees on the Barony of Kendal not fit for shipbuilding. Charles had proposed to found an Order of Knights of the Royal Oak as a reward for about seven hundred of his supporters. This never came to pass, but in the list of nominated gentlemen is Colonel Kirkby, Esq., estimated value of estate, ,1500.

Colonel Richard Kirkby is best remembered for his notorious persecution of the founders of the Society of Friends, George Fox and his wife Margaret Fell. Margaret was a local Furness lady, having been born at Marsh Grange just three miles from Kirkby Hall. Her first husband had been Judge Fell who not only replaced Richard's father Roger as a Justice of the Peace in 1641, but later was one of the Parliamentary sequestrators who assessed fines on the Royalists. George Fox founded Quakerism during the tumultuous years of Cromwell's rule in the Lancashire countryside. They were persecuted by the Puritans until the Restoration when the new magistrates led by Richard Kirkby took up the club. The widow Margaret Fell had inherited the valuable Swarthmoor estates, which no doubt motivated her persecutors. In 1663 Richard and his brother William led a raid on Swarthmore in a search for George Fox and imprisoned him and Margaret in Lancaster Gaol. At Richard's instruction, George was kept in solitary confinement with specific orders that no one was to come near him for he was not fit to be discoursed with. At Margaret's trial she upbraided Richard Kirkby for whispering to the Judge, stating that one judge was quite sufficient. They remained in prison for five years on this charge, and were back in jail many times over the next years. Margaret wrote of Colonel Kirkby's continued severity, and meanness. When released George and Margaret were married in 1669. Kirkby continued his persecution, informing on his neighbours and carrying his mission to London itself, where he was active in breaking up Friends' meetings.

During these years Richard Kirkby continuously beseeched the Royal authorities to relieve his financial stress. He wrote in 1674 "I am pinched most horribly, and myself and family are in the greatest distress imaginable" and "I have neither money nor credit, nor shall shortly have clothes. If his majesty will now order me my whole pay, if he shall not otherwise dispose of me to some employment, I shall make shift to serve him...Surely either in the Navy, Excise or Customs an employment may fall for me ere long."

After marrying four wives in 18 years and producing several children, Colonel Richard Kirkby died at age 56. Cowper describes his life as turbulent, feverish, ambitious, unfeeling and mean. He was succeeded by his eldest son Roger Kirkby, who also became a Colonel and was Governor of the City and Castle of Chester as well as High Sheriff of Lancashire. The Kirkbys continued to be strong supporters of the Stuarts and rallied to James' cause in the difficult times of 1687. James II was openly Catholic and had been for some time not endorsing the Test Act

which had required acknowledgement of the Church of England for Parliamentary office, government commissions and military service. He had thus defacto established toleration of religion which benefited all stripes, from Quakers to Catholics. He now wanted the law itself changed and sent his emissaries throughout the land to determine who would support such a repeal. The country was generally against the repeal but in Lancashire, which was strongly Catholic, he received good support, including that of Roger Kirkby and his uncle William Kirkby of Ashlack, who is described as the only Protestant who pledged his support. This suggests Roger himself may have been Catholic, secretly if not publicly. Both he and his uncle William carried on the family tradition of persecuting the Friends. There is a record of Roger and William signing warrants and fining Quakers at Swarthmoor Hall and Hawkshead in 1683 and 1684 for failure to attend the established Church.

This leads us to Colonel Richard Kirkby's second son, Richard Kirkby, the protagonist in the Benbow Mutiny. Richard was probably born in December 1656 so was a few years younger than Admiral Benbow. He lost his mother before the age of four as his father remarried in 1660. With the family's poor financial situation Richard volunteered to Sea at the age of fourteen, that is about 1670. This would be as a King's Volunteer or junior Midshipman. The 1705 Account records that he saw action in two bloody engagements of the Dutch-English war of 1672-74 and then completed two voyages to the Mediterranean and one to the West Indies, all before the age of twenty. Cowper quotes a relative, Edward Wilson, who wrote in 1687 that "Cousin Richard Kirkby had lately unfortunately killed a man one Crofts, whose father was Captain-Lieutenant to the Duke of Berwick." James, the Duke of Berwick, was the illegitimate son of James II and Arabella Churchill, sister of John Churchill, later Duke of Marlborough. He had only just been made Duke of Berwick that year and Governor of Portsmouth. Crofts was the family name of the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II who had attempted to overthrow his uncle James II in 1685. We do not know what led to the fatal quarrel between Kirkby and Crofts. It certainly suggests the young Kirkby was imprudent, likely outspoken and probably hot headed. Perhaps the "pregnant wit and martial spirit" so favoured by his grandfather were not so well received by others. Shortly after this incident he was sent back to the West Indies, the most undesirable station in the navy.

He not only survived but finally, at age thirty-three, passed his examination for the rank of lieutenant March 28, 1689, no doubt as part of William's mobilization of military forces. July 10, 1690 finds him second Lieutenant of the St. Michael in the West Indian expedition of Lawrence Wright. With the severe attrition of such a voyage he soon rose to be captain of the Success. Charnock gives the date as February 7, 1690 (1691). While in the Indies he also became a Colonel of Marines in June 1690 and participated in the retaking of St. Christopher. In 1694 he was appointed Captain of the Southampton and accompanied Russell to the Mediterranean. He returned to England in 1696 and was dispatched to the West Indies as one of just half a dozen ships on Island stations. Following the end of that war and his arrival home in October 1697, he was decommissioned and without a ship until February 1701 when he was appointed to the Ruby and Benbow's West Indian expedition.

His 1705 defender described his character thus:

"his too daring and free way of speaking his sentiments to those who did not act accordingly, made him formidable not only to the ignorant, but to all such

as went about too grosly to impose upon him, of any degree or quality whatsoever; and this perhaps might be the true and original cause of those rigorous proceedings against him in the West Indies."

This indicates a temperament similar to Benbow's. The court-martial concluded Kirkby was the ringleader of the mutiny, that he poisoned the other captains. This implies a personal conflict with Admiral Benbow of some magnitude. Given the disposition of both of these men it is not difficult to formulate likely reasons, not the least of which may have been religious. We know the Kirkbys were Tories, and so probably High Church and possibly Catholic. Benbow is known to have encouraged the dissemination throughout his squadron of tracts of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, a relatively Low Church and Protestant phenomenon. The Kirkbys strongly supported the Catholic James whereas Benbow was extremely loyal to the Protestant William. It is not unlikely that their religious and political differences may have led to some heated exchanges and motivated Kirkby to promote rebellion.

As well, we know that Benbow was strict in discipline and expected his captains to set a sober example. One can imagine that he limited shore leave and rigorously exercised both men and ships. Moreover he was particularly scathing in his attitude towards ineffectiveness in seamanship and battle. Campbell reports he treated his captains a little briskly when they were slow to obey. We know he had quite a history of offending his peers: from Captain Booth in the Mediterranean; to those he harassed and court-martialled, like Henry Tourville, for not engaging the enemy closely enough in the French channel ports; to his impatience with Admiral Berkeley and others he judged incompetent, including colonial governors. He may well have been critical of Kirkby and others for their reticence to closely confront the enemy. His own fighting style, though effective was dramatically terrifying to combatants on both sides. It is thought that Benbow developed the tactic of moving in extremely close to the enemy before devastating him with concentrated and heavy broadsides.

Kirkby seems to have developed more accommodating relations with the French, based on his earlier somewhat isolated stationing in these waters, and perhaps following the family tradition of self preservation. He clearly believed, as did the French, that it was more prudent to avoid a conflict which could irreparably damage both ships so far from home. He was not alone in this thinking. Benbow's old tutor, Lord Torrington, had himself used this defence in justifying his actions at Beachy Head. He argued that it was paramount to keep the 'fleet in being' rather than risk all. Kirkby used this defence himself at his court martial when he justified not attacking the French on the grounds that they had a respect for one another, so that neither fired. This certainly was not Benbow's way and he would let Kirkby and the others know this. No doubt Kirkby would not take lightly any such criticism, especially if it offended his honour. He probably argued in favour of a different strategy in combatting the French. Basically this was to harass the enemy's shipping by capturing merchant ships and small privateers. This had the advantage of hurting the French economically while avoiding direct confrontations with warships. It also helped to build many personal fortunes. In 1697 Kirkby returned from the West Indies with his hold full of gold and silver. (CSP.Dom.1697) Some of this was the result of his participation in Neville's belated rescue of Carthage following Du Casse's departure. After an ineffective skirmish with the main French fleet the English had caught some of the French

Buccaneers who had returned for further plunder. Kirkby donated a silver paten to his home church at Kirkby Ireleth in 1698. It is inscribed "taken from ye French who had [just before] plundered Carthagea in New Spaine".

He appears to have been a little greedy for he was court-martialled for embezzling, plunder, cruelty and oppression. Tradition allowed that when a prize was taken, the crew were allowed to plunder all that was above decks, while the officers sacked the cabins. Anything stowed in the hold was assessed by the Prize Court. Some of Kirkby's seamen on the Southampton complained that he had embezzled their 'plunder'. He assured the court that he had intended to make a dividend amongst all the men who were employed in the expeditions on shore against the enemy, and was in fact proceeding to do this. The court accepted this and acquitted him. Evidence was also presented that he attempted to crucify a seaman for straggling by hanging him by his right arm and left leg for several hours. Apparently he was absolved by the fact that he had allowed the man to rest one foot on deck. Interestingly Benbow's old friend Admiral Shovell presided over the court-martial of 1698, and Captains Fogg and Wade sat on it. (Adm.1/5260) Kirkby had difficulties with his crew previously as well. In his 1696 cruise in the Mediterranean he had a sharp disagreement with his Chaplain, which resulted in his discharge. He also found it necessary to flog and imprison his Boatswain for refusing to do carpenters chores. Charnock describes this incident as a violent dispute and quarrel and states that "his own character rather suffered in this civil encounter", suggesting the Boatswain may have brought a civil suit against him. On this same voyage Kirkby ordered a seaman to be flogged and towed ashore for 'scandalous actions, to the great corruption of good manners.' This may well have been a reference to unhygienic practices such as fouling the lower decks rather using the 'head'. There was a definite impression that Kirkby was overly severe in his punishments. (Adm.1/5256) Benbow on the other hand was known as the seaman's friend and did not approve of such harsh treatment of the men. He would no doubt be vocal in his displeasure with regard to Kirkby's methods.

Bourne in Queen Anne's Navy in the West Indies accounts for Kirkby's mutiny on the basis that he had resented being passed over for promotion and suffered ill health from his long stay in the West Indies. She states that prior to his West Indies appointment Kirkby complained that he had been left unemployed and with several years back pay due him, as juniors were promoted over him. Indeed, while the years dragged on after his decommissioning in 1698, Kirkby did pepper the Admiralty with appeals for a new command. He sent letters dated Jan 17, 1699, March 21, 1699, and April 29, 1699, all appealing for a ship. In one he was foolish enough to complain of the injustice and malice of the Earl of Orford, Lord Russell. The Admiralty responded by sending a messenger to him dismissing him from further attendance and indicating the Lords would send for him if they had occasion. He responded on June 2nd, 1699 with an angry and outraged complaint.

"And since their said Lordships have supplied the said ships with officers without respect to seniority or circumstance, there not being nine of the thirty one that are elder in command than I, and the rest being my junior officers, have most of them, if not all been paid off a considerable time, since the ship I have commanded was discharged. Therefore My Lords, I humbly request in

consideration of my service in command, between nine and ten years, in all which time I have not proved guilty of any miscarriage to the detriment of his Majesty's and Country's service, that your Lordships will please to allow my title to seniority, that I may be no longer oppressed by the advancement of my juniors to my prejudice". (Adm.1/2004)

He followed this with a letter on June 26, 1699 in which he asked to be given the command of the Weymouth instead of Captain Wyatt, "who (though a good man) has been advanced from a warranted employ in a fifth rate". The jealousy and envy prevalent among these out of work officers is evident in Kirkby's letter in 1700 to the Admiralty in which he states his belief that Captain Crawley will inform falsely against him. (Adm.1/2004)

Even when finally appointed in February 1701 to the West Indian squadron he was not given all of his back pay. He wrote on May 1, 1701 complaining he was still owed pay for his service on the Southampton. On May 7, 1701 he added that he hoped money recently granted to the navy by Parliament would come to hand before his departure. June 3, 1701 finds him repeating his request.

Bourne states that Kirkby had made himself quite unpopular with the Navy Board by his constant complaining that everything was always wrong and never remedied. His letters do show a concern for the welfare of his ship. On April 10, 1701 Kirkby complained to the Admiralty that the Ruby was not satisfactorily fitted out. It had not been sheathed in five years, its bow was damaged, its mainmast rotten, and its gunner's stores were inadequate. He wrote:

"I think it my duty to acquaint their Lordships therewith, that her sudden return from any expedition their Lordships should please send her upon, through the defects herein mentioned, as may not be attributed to my want of giving notice thereof." (Adm.1/2004)

This suggests a strong element of self-preservation in Kirkby's concerns for his ship and crew. While in the West Indies Kirkby kept up an active correspondence with Secretary Burchett. He writes in a somewhat fawning manner, mentioning their friendship and his intention to keep him informed and to look out for his interest. He chats about a mutual acquaintance, Charles Hutchinson, who is ill, and refers to the many favours he shall heartily acknowledge. He asks in particular on April 13, 1702 that Burchett be acquainted with the fact that he is "the eldest officer (under the flag) in the squadron, and request you to remember old friendship as occasion offers." (Adm.1/2004) On July 7, 1702 he asked Burchett to make the Lord High Admiral sensible that he was entitled to rank next after Rear Admiral Whetstone, "and recommend me as a friend". (Adm.1/2004) His impatience with slow promotion and the apparent lack of respect shown him may well have induced Kirkby to drag his feet, while resentment and jealousy festered into revenge.

This was not the first time Kirkby had lagged behind and seen his commander destroyed by the enemy. On January 7, 1696, while captain of the Southampton, he was in a squadron of 6 ships patrolling the Mediterranean under Captain James Killigrew of the Plymouth, 60. The squadron included John Norris in the Carlisle 60, Charles Cornwall in the Adventure 44, Caleb

Grantham in the Falmouth 42, and Charles Wager in the Newcastle 54. The squadron was between Sicily and Cape Bon, off Pantelleria, when the Plymouth, far ahead of her consorts, sighted and engaged two French men-of-war, the Content, 60 under Captain du Chalart and the Trident, 50 under Captain d'Aulnai. Killigrew and fifty others were killed but the Plymouth managed to disable the enemy ships. When the English squadron appeared the French ships fled. The English divided with three ships pursuing one Frenchman and two the other. The following day, after a running fight, both the Content and the Trident struck their colours. The Southampton must have arrived late for Kirkby was denied a portion of the spoils by the Admiralty, which granted the prize money only to the four ships that had actually captured the enemy. (DNB) Nevertheless, Kirkby had here a model for future reference, and may have derived his plan to be rid of Benbow from this action. Also, this lagging behind may have branded him a coward. At the 1702 court-martial his surgeon quoted the coxwain as blaming the loss of his arm on his sailing with a person known to be a coward. Such a reputation would certainly have led to sparks between Kirkby and Benbow.

I believe Benbow had a certain egotistic and self-righteous attitude, which would not have endeared him to his Captains. His lack of tactfulness in dealing with his officers is quite evident in his correspondence with his flag captain prior to their departure for the West Indies, when he questioned Fogg's lack of West Indian experience.

Kirkby, however, was no less self-assured, and so, despite the guilty verdict received at his court-martial in Jamaica, he believed that his friends in the Admiralty and government would fight to save his life. Besides his brother Roger who was Governor of Chester, he was through his grandmother, Agnes Lowther, related to the family of Sir John Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale, a Tory, who was a Lord of the Admiralty and Lord Privy Seal; and he was related by marriage to Sir Daniel Fleming, a prominent gentleman and Sheriff of Cumberland. With this in mind he wrote a letter dated December 11, 1702 justifying his actions to J. Burchett, Secretary of the Navy. (Adm.1/2004) This letter is printed in full by Bullocke in *Sailor's Rebellion* and in *The Naval Miscellany* Vol. V. Kirkby begins by accusing Benbow of ignoring several articles of the Fighting Instructions.

"By mine of the 9th of September I gave you notice of my confinement upon my return hither with Admiral Benbow from the coast of Carthagera who as I told you respected not the 17th, 18th, 19th, or 20th articles of our fighting instructions in all the actions we had with Monsieur Du Cost, his squadron, nor the 28th article of the same in the matter of my confinement, he shamefully parting with Monsieur Du Cost on Tuesday the 25th of August last on the coast of Carthagera and my imprisonment was on the Monday following."

Issued in 1691 by Admiral Edward Russell, articles 17 and 18 deal with forming a battle line so that the British line is parallel and on the same tack as the enemy with van opposed to van. Each ship is directed to keep within half a cable's length of the next in line. Article 19 states that guns are not to be fired until within point-blank range and care is to be taken not to fire in the direction of any of our own ships. According to 20, none of the ships in the fleet shall pursue any small number of the enemy's till the main body be disabled or run. Article 28 directs that in

case any commander shall be wanting in his duty, his flag shall immediately send for him and appoint another in his room.

This is Kirkby's most serious defence and deserves some detailed analysis. He is criticising Benbow who was in the van for engaging the rearmost ships, when by the instructions he should have waited till he was up to the French van. He maintains that this prevented the rest of the squadron from engaging. He feels this also accounts for why he held his fire in that he was not able to get into point-blank range. Of course contrary evidence was given at the trial indicating the Defiance and others often lagged so far behind that it would be imprudent for the Bredah to take on the whole French line. Also Kirkby failed to fire on occasions when he was in fact quite within range. His reference to article 20 is either an effort to chastise the Bredah and the Ruby, and later the Bredah and the Falmouth, for attacking a portion of the French line; or he is using this article as a defence for his not following Benbow's example, in that he had to keep the line and remain behind the van, even if this kept him out of fighting position. The Fighting Instructions were often a liability, and Benbow was indeed living dangerously in reacting to the needs of the situation, as Nelson did a century later. Like Nelson, Benbow chose to concentrate his limited force where it could be most effective, in the enemy's rear; hoping to set an example for his wayward ships, irrespective of the Instructions.

This debate and uncertainty over how to obey the rigid Instructions in the difficult realities of battle continued for a century until better signal communications were developed. Kirkby's defence was in fact successfully utilized by Rear-Admiral Lestock in 1745. He was second in command to Vice-Admiral Thomas Mathews in a battle with a combined Spanish/French fleet off Toulon. Mathews and Lestock were on bad terms, partially because Lestock had hoped to be the one in command. When Mathews gave the signal for line to form, Lestock in the rear lagged behind so that the British fleet stretched over several miles. Mathews, fearing the enemy would escape, grew impatient with Lestock and hoisted the signal to engage while that for the line was still flying. His van was only abreast the Spanish centre. He bore down on the Spanish flagship and hotly attacked it. Only a few ships supported him. Even three ships of his Van remained unengaged, arguing later that they were preventing the Spanish Van from doubling on Mathews. The Rear under Lestock refused to leave the still forming line, and made little effort to close the gaps. Mathews suspended Lestock when they returned to harbour and shipped him back to England. In the ensuing courts-martial, Lestock successfully argued that he could not engage the enemy while the signal to form the line was still hoisted. Mathews, on the other hand was cashiered for not waiting till his line was in place, so that he could have formed a coordinated attack.

One of the Admirals convening their courts martial was John Byng. He followed the above reasoning in an action in May 1756 with disastrous results. He had been sent to relieve the main British base in the Mediterranean, Port Mahon on Minorca. He was met by a French fleet in the leeward position. Unfortunately Byng approached the French line at an angle of 30 degrees, causing his Van to be raked by broadsides while his rear was out of range. The line disintegrated in disorder. Instead of pressing the attack Byng tried to reform the line. He reasoned with his flag captain:

"You would not have me, as admiral of the fleet, run down as if I were going to engage a single ship. It was Mr. Mathew's misfortune to be prejudiced by not carrying down his force together, which I shall endeavour to avoid"

The delay in trying to re-form gave the advantage to the French and Byng eventually withdrew, with Port Mahon surrendering shortly after. Byng had lost his battle because he obeyed the letter of the Fighting Instructions. Nevertheless he was found guilty of not doing his utmost to take, sink, burn and destroy the ships of the enemy. The penalty was death, and he, like Kirkby was shot. The Instructions did indeed put officers in a difficult position. Both Benbow and Mathews put necessity before the rules and pressed the attack. If they had been supported by their subordinates both situations would have been successful. But Kirkby, like Lestock erred in withholding needed support and cowering behind technicalities. Perhaps if Kirkby, like Lestock, had been tried in England he would have more successfully used his political influence. As for the Instructions, they continued to confuse and intimidate until Rodney and Nelson broadsided them by demonstrating the value of breaking the enemy's line and concentrating on the isolated segment.

With regard to the 28th article, Kirkby is stressing that if Benbow was in any way dissatisfied he should have replaced him at the time of the offence. Kirkby argues that arresting him ten days after the fact indicates that Benbow was using him to cover up his own mistakes. Benbow, for his part, states that he continued to hope his captains would behave like Englishmen. Besides, their crimes were, for the most part, omissions rather than commissions, that is, they failed to keep up and engaged the enemy half-heartedly. No doubt he was also loath to take such a precipitous action in the heat of battle, especially when he didn't know the extent of the conspiracy against him. Both Fogg and Vincent testified they feared the other British ships might desert to the French if provoked. Kirkby goes on, in his letter to Burchett, to allege that Benbow misused his power and influence to terrify some and bribe others to testify as he desired. He adds that the Judge Advocate, Arnold Browne, was a common lawyer and ignorant of the law. He claims he rejected Kirkby's efforts at mounting a defence and in particular, threatened to arrest the Master and midshipman of the *Defiance* when their evidence was favourable to Kirkby. Moreover, he refused to hear evidence of the damage done to the *Defiance* so that it could be compared to the *Bredah's* damage, which Kirkby believed would demonstrate he was as engaged in the battle as the Admiral. He further alleges that Benbow falsified the court record.

"I have discovered since that there is a false return made of my pleading. The following instance having been seen by several gentlemen in the copies of the trial where it is said that when I was asked the reason why I did not fire upon the enemy at some particular time or times, that I should answer by reason of my acquaintance with Monsieur Du Cost, whereas my real answer was, that I was not within shot of the enemy, and the Court demanding the reason of that I told them the enemy sheered off from us and the Admiral having taken the lead upon himself would lead me no nearer so that by our usual distant fight her Majesty's ammunition was spent to no purpose."

Kirkby continues at some length in a similar vein, complaining that Benbow was overly involved in the court proceedings. He alleges that the Admiral wished for a speedy execution of Kirkby because he feared being discovered as himself at fault. He adds that these apprehensions hastened his death, "the wound in his leg being only a common fracture". He thus argues that he has been maliciously framed on trumped up charges and pleads with Burchett to present his case to the Lord High Admiral. Actually Article XXXIV of the Articles of War authorizes the execution of a Death Sentence upon the order of the Commander in Chief of the Squadron while outside of Home waters, so Benbow could well have put Kirkby and Wade before a firing squad. Kirkby included a journalistic account of the battle for Burchett's examination. It is of course difficult from our distant perspective to weigh Kirkby's charges. However, Reginald Rees, writing in the Shropshire Magazine, January 1983, describes the actual court-martial testimony thus:

"it is a one-sided narrative with dozens of repetitious statements by 'prosecution' witnesses, and no account of evidence for the defence except bald statements that it was 'inconsiderable'. It seems fairly clear that the numerous witnesses were directed, to use no stronger a term, by Benbow and his supporters, and that he was (understandably enough) determined that Kirkby and Wade should be convicted."

Fortunately, Kirkby's version is available in the journalistic account he sent to Burchett. Interestingly it is part of the material published anonymously in 1705 by Kirkby's apologist. Kirkby is painted as the hero of the piece trying to make up for the foibles of a bumbling Admiral. He initially blamed the Falmouth for starting the engagement prematurely by firing before Kirkby could draw even with the van of the enemy. This he claims left him under attack by the three foremost French ships with the Windsor the Bredah and the Greenwich taking on the fourth in line. He criticized the Admiral for not closing the line and so coming to his aid. He adds:

"I cannot imagine how the Admiral could expect me to be so heroically inspir'd to fight three Ships, the least equal to me in Force (were I well man'd) and the other two superior, one having near 80 Guns, when he thought it sufficient for his Honour with the Windsor ahead of him and the Greenwich astern of him, to employ the Force of them with the Bredah between them, upon the fourth Ship of the said French Squadron, and by their shortening sail for that purpose, kept the Ruby and Falmouth astern of them quite out of all manner of Service, the Pendennis not coming in till all was over."

He maintained he suffered extensive damage for half an hour before disengaging. He also claimed he held his position just out of range, but abreast the enemy Van in order to divert them from doubling on the Admiral. Benbow's version claimed he was left fighting two French ships on his own while the Defiance and the Windsor fled, and his rear most ships lagged behind. Kirkby's account goes on to claim the Admiral erred in changing the Line of Battle, taking the van himself, and ordering a supply of powder from the other ships, in that this disclosed to the

enemy the scope of the English strength. He goes on to maintain that he kept up with the Admiral in the running battle, and suggested the Admiral gave conflicting orders in directing the line of English ships. Of the action on the 21st he stated:

"Thus the Admiral falling in short of the Enemies Van, kept all astern of him (of his own Squadron) out of service, and gave Monsieur Du Cass the opportunity honourably to relieve his Rear in jeopardy. and one being a worse Sailer than the rest, and considerably astern of the engag'd Ship, by this means got up into her proper Line: When if the Admiral, instead of falling in with the Rear of the Enemy, had done his endeavour to engage their Van, he would have forc'd Monsieur Du Cass to have left the two ill Sailers to take their fortune with our Squadron."

On the 22nd he states, Benbow misread the wind "so that great advantage was offered to Admiral Benbow; but instead of taking it, he spent the remains of the breeze in veering to the westward, till he lay becalm'd, out of shot of the Enemy." On the 23rd he described the Admiral firing prematurely at the wake of the French and so preventing the rest of the squad from engaging. "Then we were forc'd to haul up our Mainsail, fearing to run aboard the Admiral; neither could we back astern, for the Windsor being close up with us." On the 24th he justifies his leaving the disabled French ship on the grounds that the French commodore was bearing down on him to board and the other English ships were no where near.

"till Monsieur Du Cass seeing me single by her side, made what sail he cou'd with the rest of his Squadron (who were join'd him) and came so near, that his Sternmost Ship could have flung a Shot over me; and the Ship's Company being consternated, made no use of their Senses for Service: the Boatswain coming twice or thrice to the Master on the Quarter-Deck, to desire him to speak to me to bear up, the Enemies whole Force being just upon us, and none of our ships near to Succour us; which the Master acquainted me with more than once, before I could be prevail'd with to make sail."

On the 25th (actually the afternoon of the 24th) he states that because of the little winds the Defiance would not govern. He points out that "for many reasons it was resolv'd impracticable to engage them, but to keep them company all night, and take the first opportunity to re-engage them." Kirkby defends his written argument for breaking off the engagement on the grounds that its imperfections were due to the "Inconveniences of the Place where we sat, and the continual Noise and Confusion that was about our Ears."

Kirkby's main criticism, as in his letter to Burchett, was that the Admiral by engaging the enemy's rear prevented the rest of the squadron from firing on the enemy. The Admiral's contention was of course that his squadron stayed too far behind to be of any assistance. In Benbow's account, on the 20th only the Bredah and the Ruby were near the enemy, with the rest of the English ships including the Defiance three to five miles astern. On the 21st during a two hour battle the Admiral claimed Kirkby though within point blank range of an enemy ship

refused to fire. Again on the 22nd and 23rd Benbow described the rest of his ships as being three to four miles astern with the line much out of order. On the 24th he claimed only the Falmouth gave the Bredah any significant aid in disabling a French ship, which the enemy recaptured when the Defiance fled.

Kirkby, in his version, weakened his case by adding such excuses as:

"In this Skirmish the Admiral's longboat was sunk, which made it difficult for me (afterwards) to keep up with him, I being oblig'd to tow mine, and the whirling current in the small breezes made the Ship hard to govern, especially being so weakly handed."

To the accusation that he broke out of the line of battle to avoid the enemy he answered:

"First that I had but one Lieutenant left me, my Master weak with sickness, my Boatswain not worth speaking of, the only Mate I had that was good for any thing at Port Royal, little above two thirds of my Ship's complement (Officers and boys included) fit for service. Thus considering the Condition of the Ship (and the smallness of the breeze being such, that the Ship must have been beat all to pieces before I could get into point-blank shot of the Enemy)."

He accounted for his excess of unspent powder and shot thus:

"I forebore firing; for which I hear I have been blam'd by my enemies; but instead of allowing their censure, I am ashamed to see so much of the Queen's powder and shot fir'd away to so little purpose, and in a great measure disabling the squadron by vainly spending their ammunition in a country where they cannot be supply'd."

His account is peppered with references to the Admiral misreading the wind, badly positioning the line, missing opportunities to engage, and generally mismanaging the action. He concludes by reiterating his main point:

"Again, if the Admiral (in all the time of his leading the Squadron) had made it his business to engage the Van of the Enemy, he had either oblig'd Monsieur Du Cass to fight our whole line, or we must have driven him so far from the two Ships (which sail'd worse than any in our Squadron) that he could afterward have afforded them no Succour."

However, he negated this thrust by immediately describing his reaction when on the 24th the English squadron finally caught up with the French and their van actually pulled ahead of the enemy. At 2 P.M. he and Wade discoursed on the situation and decided to pay the Admiral a visit in order to inform him "that we did not believe it practicable to engage that Evening for several reasons besides the declination of the day." Kirkby shows some of his true nature in his

justification for this action. "I press'd for a Council of War, because having consider'd the former conduct of the Squadron, my doubts increas'd of a good event from the Admiral's government of the Squadron, while he lay in the hold with a broken leg, and in that condition to be rul'd by the capacity of Captain Fogg." Kirkby added insult to injury by blaming the Admiral for this missed opportunity which he himself had caused by insisting on a Council of War.

He ended his comments on his journal by criticizing the Admiral for calling off the action and heading for Jamaica the following day, suggesting that he, Kirkby, was more than willing to continue the battle, if an opportunity presented itself. "But after all our Care, our Resolutions were made void by our Flag's leaving the Enemy at twelve a clock at Night." This version does indeed differ greatly from Benbow's. The reader must decide which is more credible. Interestingly the author of the defence of Kirkby lists by name the sick and wounded of the Defiance as follows: Sick men before the engagement-9, wounded in the engagement-6, dead of their wounds-5. He adds that he has since been informed that twenty-five in total died of their wounds. The Defiance, I might add, as a 64 gun third rate ship of the line carried 420 to 445 men. The casualties were amazingly light given Kirkby's assertion that he was as actively engaged in battle as the Admiral, who lost 60 men dead and wounded.

On the day of his death Kirkby gave a paper to Captain Edward Acton and asked him to have it printed and conveyed to the Prince. Acton sent it to Burchett and it too is included in the 1705 defence publication. It is printed in full in *The Naval Miscellany* Vol. V. As in his earlier letter to Burchett he alleged Admiral Benbow's injudicious and ignorant conduct was the cause of his defeat and that the court-martial was ordered in dread of an inquiry into his own fault and that he further wished to hurry on the execution to further cover his own guilt. He writes: "he designed to cover his own defects with my destruction." Kirkby went on to allege that he was unjustly confined upon his return to Port Royal; that the Admiral spread slanderous reports about him and prevented his Chaplain from rebutting this libel; that the Admiral's emissaries promised immunity to those who gave evidence against Kirkby; that Thomas Langridge, the Admiral's Lieutenant browbeat the Yeoman of the Powder-Room into saying the concealment of powder was at Kirkby's order; that George Collingson, the Admiral's clerk, and Robert Thompson, his first Lieutenant, collected evidence against him "by one means or other, I mean fair or foul". He denied the truthfulness of the affidavits read against him, and maintained that they would not be affirmed by many men in the squadron when they returned home.

He repeated his main defence argument that he was prevented from firing on the enemy by the Admiral's failure to bring him within range. He argued that he was as much engaged with the enemy as the Admiral and criticised the court for refusing to compare damage surveys of the Defiance and Bredah. He further maintained that the Boatswain's assertion that Kirkby had forced the Master to amend his journal was false. He complained that the evidence of the Master and Midshipman of the Defiance was ignored by the court, as was the written Vindication of the Captains' Paper which he submitted to the court. He added that the Admiral pressured and browbeat the witnesses and was himself the drafter of the sentence. He concluded:

"By this may be seen, how a Commander in chief in the West Indies may carry any matter against an Inferior Officer, of which I am a fatal example".

Kirkby's Vindication of the Captains' Paper is also part of this pamphlet. In this defence Kirkby describes how a little after two, he and Wade went on board the Admiral to give their opinion that it was not practicable to endeavour to engage the French that evening. He mentions that because of the Admiral's indisposition he forbore mentioning to him that he had led them past the opportunity of engagement, that is when the British van was abreast the French. He states that it was Captain Fogg who suggested they put their opinions in writing. Kirkby further states that it was his idea to call for the rest of the Captains. He argues that the imperfections of the Paper were due to their sitting in a disorderly place with a confused noise about their ears. He added that he explained to the Admiral he and the other captains would be pleased to meet in the morning to consider methods of engaging the enemy effectually. He concludes that he was quite frustrated by the Flag's leading the fleet away from the enemy. Benbow's version differs in that he held the fleets were at an optimum position for engagement when the Paper was presented. This is substantiated by the French account which has the English pulling ahead in the evening. Benbow also was convinced that the captains had no intention of further engaging the enemy. We have only Kirkby's word that he suggested a further consultation for the following morning. Kirkby's version does not ring true, given Benbow's demonstrated strong desire to engage the enemy.

The apologist included statements by John Brown, midshipman in the Defiance, and by Mr. Martin, the Master of the ship. Both follow Kirkby's version of the action. However, this rendition of the Master's Journal does not include some of the disputed passages referred to in the Court Martial as having been altered. In particular it omits passages which describe the Defiance tacking around the disabled ship, firing her rear guns as they bore, and then firing a full Starboard broadside, and waiting at point blank range until after the Admiral bore away. It would appear that even the apologist questioned these details. The account by Midshipman John Brown is interesting in that the official court record does include two copies of the account written by Master's Mate John Brown, (folio 57-60 and 61-64). However, there is no mention in the record of any Midshipman John Brown. The accounts are clearly written by different persons but both lean towards Kirkby's version. Perhaps some confusion was caused by the similarity in names.

Also included in this 1705 Defence is a statement by legal council giving the opinion that Benbow erred in not himself presiding over the Court Martial. The Statute 13 Car. II, from which the Articles of War are drawn, says that commissions to call and assemble Court Martials are given to Vice Admirals and Commanders in Chief. (Article XXXIV) The lawyer, William Oldys, is of the opinion that the pretence of Admiral Benbow being himself a witness was not sufficient reason to excuse himself. Furthermore, Mr. Oldys was of the opinion that Kirkby was unfairly and unjustly treated in being denied the opportunity to disclose the survey report of the Defiance. He concluded that such an inspection would have determined the whole question. The Survey in question was also included in the publication.

"Survey of the Masts, Yards, and Hull of her Majesty's Ship Defiance, 31 August 1702.

Pursuant to an Order by the Honourable John Benbow Esquire, Vice Admiral of the Blew Squadron of her Majesty's Fleet, Admiral, Etc. of the Date the 31st of August 1702 to Us directed. We have been on Board her Majesty's Ship Defiance, and have taken a strict and careful Survey of the Masts, Yards and Hull of the said Ship, and do find the damnify'd as follows, viz.

The Mizen Mast sprung		Two small Cheeks.
The Mizenyard Shot,		Slinging and Fishing.
The Mainmast shot in three several places		Two Fishes
The Mainyard shot in the Slings,		Half an Anchor Stock and a Fish
The Maintopmast shot three foot below the Cap,	But may be se- cur'd and made	A piece of four or five inch
The Foreyard shot in two several places	serviceable by	Stuff, and three Hoops pieces of Oak and three fish over them.
The Foremast shot in the Hounds		A piece of Oak and three small Hoops.
The Knee of the Head shot near the Gammoning;		Lining with four inch Plank, and fastning over them.
In the Hull we do find thirty eight Shot, most of 'em betwixt Decks, and betwixt Wind and Water through.	Which may be repair'd by	Putting in of pieces, and shifting of some small matter of thick Stuff with two hanging Knees, and Some Iron Work, and Ring and Eye-Bolts that are wanting.

This certainly shows that the Defiance received several broadsides, but this was never in dispute. Kirkby's reaction under fire is the focus of the evidence against him. This damage could well have been received in the Defiance's thirty minute action on the 19th and briefer still run along the side of the disabled ship on the 24th. The Defiance does not appear to have been seriously afflicted and it did not require much in the way of repair. The damage described was nothing compared to that received by the Ruby which necessitated her early return to Jamaica. Nor was the Defiance crippled and left exposed to the concentrated fire of the French squadron as was the Bredah in the action of the 24th.

In Kirkby's defence his apologist also quoted from several letters written by friends who were at his execution. They describe how nobly he conducted himself. The Captain of the Bristol, Edward Acton, writes

"I do most heartily condole your misfortune by this fatal blow, but do assure you and all the Colonel's relations and friends, he lived and died to my knowledge (this three months hath been with me) a Gentleman, a Christian, a Man of Resolution, even to the hour of his death."

He further quotes from a letter by Kirkby to his sisters:

"I have met with the letter from you all three, and thank you all and the rest of my friends, who us'd any endeavour to save my life; I cannot be sorry you went to the wrong port, tho I should have been glad to have seen my dear sisters...I question not but God will bring the Truth to Light, and disburden my Relations of the weight of my disgrace."

Perhaps his most emotional appeal is given in this 1705 account of Kirkby's death.

When he came upon the deck to die, he appear'd as well dress'd, and with the same alacrity as if he had been going to visit some dear friend; and laying his hand twice upon his breast, said, I have something here tells me I shall be a happy soul. He made a speech which was generally approv'd by all the by-standers...that done, perceiving, as he thought, some of the File of Musketeers to have some concern for what they were appointed to do, he encourag'd them, and told them he freely forgave them, it was their Duty to do it, and giving them something, desired they would put him to as little pain as they could: then kneeling down (after praying sometime privately) he taking Captain Wade by his hand, which was the signal, he receive'd the fatal shot, April the 16th, 1703. Note, He wou'd not suffer his Eyes to be cover'd."

Cowper refers to an earlier "Account of the Execution of Col Richard Kirkby & Capt Cooper Wade" published in 1703 in which his parting speech is described as given "to Deter others of his country men from Cowardice for the future". If this is accurate, it would seem that in the end he may have felt some remorse and may even have accepted some responsibility for the mutiny. The only 1703 account of the execution I have found is that attached to the account of their trials. This states they:

"shewed at their Death a Courage and Constancy of Mind, which make it evident, that their Behaviour in the late Engagement did not flow from any Infirmary of Nature, but from the Corruption of their Minds. It is to be wish'd their Fate may have a proper Effect on those who are entrusted with such important Commands: And that the inflexibility shewn by Her Majesty on this Occasion, might deter others from accumulating the like Guilt, if they would avoid the like Punishment".

Certainly, Captain Acton's letter, referred to earlier, describes Kirkby as facing death courageously. In a speech the night before his death he "spoke a quarter of an hour to all the people in general to forbear swearing and debauchery and be obedient to their superiors." Wade in contrast was timorous and of low spirit.

Whatever Kirkby's final thoughts were, in his defence he does not satisfactorily explain away his tardiness and his half-hearted encounters with the enemy. For whatever reasons he

did not do his utmost to take, sink, burn and destroy the ships of the enemy; nor did he adequately come to the aid of other ships in the squadron. Moreover, the fact that he was not alone in withholding support, strongly suggests a conspiracy. It is possible that these captains held Tory sympathies and were reluctant to fight the French who supported the pretender James Edward, as King of England.

Kirkby's motives may have been jealousy in response to lack of promotion and lack of respect. He may have resented Benbow's attitude of moralistic superiority especially given Benbow's baser upbringing. Kirkby clearly resented being passed over for assignments and leadership. Whetstone, just five months senior to Kirkby on the Captains' list, had been given command of a squadron to reinforce Benbow, in June 1701. It took him eleven months to reach the West Indies. In the meantime Benbow rarely utilized Kirkby, the most senior captain on the station, to command an independent squadron. Initially he left Kirkby on his own at Barbados, and later sent others out on patrols seeking information and prizes. It is highly probable that Kirkby and Benbow had strongly worded disagreements over this and other matters, including politics and religion. Kirkby would not be imposed upon and spoke his sentiments freely. Benbow was known to be strict in discipline and expectations with his officers. He would not tolerate even the hint of insubordination. They may have differed particularly on the issue of strategy. Kirkby believed in injuring the enemy's trade while Benbow was more inclined to take on the enemy's warships. Kirkby's letters to Burchett, emphasizing he was next in line, indicate he counted on vacancies developing for his advancement. Wade's exclamation that this would be another parliament business suggests the disgruntled captains had discussed in advance ways of removing Benbow if he did not succumb to disease or the enemy.

As well as appealing to their Tory sympathies, Kirkby may have been able to persuade the other captains to follow him on the basis of Torrington's 'fleet in being' position. Their written reasons for not engaging the French suggest this philosophy. They magnify their own weaknesses and overstate the enemy's strength and conclude: "For which reasons abovementioned Wee think it not fit to Ingage the Enemye at this time". Like the French, there were many English captains who believed it more prudent to avoid conflict, especially so far from home. The West Indies lacked even primitive facilities for repairing and resupplying ships. "He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day."

Though charged with cowardice Kirkby was condemned basically because of his self-preserving behaviour. However, this in itself was not uncommon according to historians Peter Kemp and N.A.M. Rodger. The exposed Quarter Deck was an exceptionally dangerous place to be. Perhaps courage and cowardice are too readily attributed to men's actions. Kirkby and his followers believed they were acting prudently, expediently, and in the best interest of their ships and men yet were found guilty of cowardice. Benbow on the other hand would not break off the battle though himself wounded, his men decimated and his ship nearly destroyed, so is remembered for his courage. Patrick O'Brien, a modern writer on naval warfare underlines the difficulty of judging men's hearts.

"Courage: here I am on the most shifting ground in the world. For what is it?
Men put different values on their lives at different times: different men value
approval at different rates--for some it is the prime mover. Two men go

through the same motions for widely different reasons; their conduct bears the same name." (The Mauritius Command p.125)

John Keegan in *The Face of Battle* suggests all men are afraid in battle. Some overcome their fear by a moral commitment to the cause over which they fight, or by a commitment to their peers. Some, less committed, fight only because they are compelled by others.

"What battles have in common is human: the behaviour of men struggling to reconcile their instinct for self-preservation, their sense of honour and the achievement of some aim over which other men are ready to kill them. The study of battle is therefore always a study of fear and usually of courage; always of leadership, usually of obedience; always of compulsion, sometimes of insubordination." (Keegan, p.302)

The Kirkby family crest has the motto "More Majorum", that is, "in the custom of my ancestors". A more recent member of the clan, James Lewis Kirby Jnr. of Claremont Virginia, has amended the arms and chosen the motto "Cautious Courage". The College of Arms lists Richard Kirkby in the Kirkby family pedigree with this bare epitaph:

He was a Captain in the Navy, and died unmarried in April 1703".

Unsuported thus he fought, nor would run, nor would run,
Unsuported thus he fought, nor would run
Till his ship was a mere wreck,
And no man would him back
For the others would not slack to fire a gun, fire a gun,
For the others would not slack to fire a gun.

ADMIRAL BENBOW'S LEGACY

Historians have been quite divided in their commentary on the Benbow mutiny; some seeing it as a cowardly desertion of brave Benbow, while others depict it as provoked by him or due to his own limitations. One of the earliest of his critics was Joseph Burchett. Benbow and Burchett had been shipmates on board the *Britannia* in 1692 when Benbow was Master of the fleet at Barfleur and Burchett was Admiral Russell's secretary. In 1702, as Secretary of the Navy, Burchett had received correspondence from Kirkby including his Journal and his final statement which was intended for the Prince. Burchett must have passed on this material to the anonymous writer of the 1705 defence of Kirkby, or was himself its author. He was persuaded by Kirkby's arguments and quite likely made appeals on his behalf to the Prince, as requested. Perhaps Benbow had not treated his old shipmate with proper respect in his many appeals to the Admiralty; and Burchett may have also resented Benbow's inclination to go above the Admiralty, to the Lords Justices. It is also possible that Kirkby had ingratiated himself with Secretary Burchett in a more material way, in order to obtain his posting to the West Indies. In 1720 Burchett wrote a history of the Navy titled the Complete History of the most remarkable Transactions at Sea from the Earliest Accounts to the Conclusion of the last War with France or in short War at Sea. In it he wrote that Benbow was at fault for not immediately replacing his delinquent Captains. Kirkby had made this very point in his letter to Burchett, in reference to the 28th article of the Fighting Instructions.

"As I have forborn mentioning the names of those two unhappy Gentlemen who suffered (one of whom on other occasions had distinguished himself) more for the sake of their relations than any other consideration, so this much may be observed as to Vice-admiral Benbow's conduct, that although he was a good seaman and a gallant man, and that he was qualified in most respects to command a squadron, especially in the West Indies, in which part of the world he had long experience; yet when he found his captains so very remiss in their duty, I think he ought, in point of discretion to have summoned them; and even

that at first, on board his own ship, and there confined them; and placed their first lieutenants in their rooms, who would have fought well, were it for no other reason than the hopes of being continued in those commands, had they survived." (Burchett, p.598)

This makes sense in hindsight. It may not have been so easy in the heat of battle and in the face of a conspiracy the size of which was unknown to Benbow. With the French on one side and unsure of his own forces I do not believe we can fault him for giving the Captains every opportunity to reconsider and join the battle more heartily. Burchett further adds that Benbow erred in delegating his authority to hold a court-martial to Rear-Admiral Whetstone as only Vice-Admirals are technically allowed to conduct a court-martial. This too is drawn from the 1705 publication. In 1742, in his *Naval History*, Dr. John Campbell argues that Benbow was justified in not conducting the court-martial himself for two very good reasons: firstly he was too ill of a fever which resulted from his leg being cut off, and secondly common sense ruled that his great personal interest in the affair might bias his judgement. In further support he notes that the Queen and government ratified the Court-martial and upheld the sentences. However, the extent of the contemporary effort to expunge the affair from British history is evident in its total absence from Bishop Burnet's *History of His Own Time* published in 1734. Campbell is not sympathetic with this subterfuge. He begins by chastising Burchett.

"The captains who suffered, had some very great relations; and, in all probability, a desire of being well with them, prevented the inserting the names of these offenders in this celebrated performance. But to be so tender of them; and, in the very same breath, to attack obliquely the character of so worthy a man as Admiral Benbow, does no great honour to his history. Bishop Burnet, likewise, who is so ready on every occasion to attack the character of Sir George Rooke, Vice-admiral Graydon, and many others of our naval commanders, is wholly silent in respect of this business; there being not the least trace of it in any part of his works, influenced no doubt by the same motive, that wrought so powerfully upon Secretary Burchet." (Lives, vol.iii, p.378)

Campbell suggests that had Mr. Burchett become better acquainted with this affair he would have learned the following:

"The admiral was an honest, rough seaman, and fancied that his command was bestowed upon him for no other reason, than that he should serve his country: this induced him to treat Captain Kirby, and the rest of the gentlemen, a little briskly at Jamaica, when he found them not quite so ready to obey his orders as he thought was their duty; and this it was that engaged them in the base and wicked design, of putting it out of his power to engage the French; presuming that, as so many were concerned in it, they might be able to justify themselves,

and throw the blame upon the admiral, and so they hoped to be rid of him."
(Lives, vol.iii, p.378)

"The true design of Colonel Kirkby, who was the ringleader of this business, was to have let the Admiral fall into the hands of the French, and then have thrown the blame of all that happened upon his rashness and ill conduct; and the reason of his bearing this ill-will to that gentleman, and meeting with such concurrence in other officers, was the strictness of the Admiral's discipline, who thought that men would never behave well, if not encouraged to it by the example of their officers." (Biographia, p.687)

Campbell thus believed that the captains' initial plan was to prevent Benbow from engaging in a confrontation with French warships. When this failed, Kirkby held back his squadron in the hope that the French would destroy or capture the Admiral. Thomas Lediard, in his Naval History of 1735 agrees that the Mutiny was prearranged. "Cowardice may be natural, and beyond a Man's Will or Power to overcome; But Treachery must be premeditated and wilful. Their Sentence was certainly very just." Lediard quotes from another history of the day, the British Empire in America wherein the author observes "during the whole Course of the Wars between England and France never two Englishmen brought such Dishonour on their Country, as Kirkby and Wade." (p.744) Lediard attributes their behaviour to avarice. He refers to The Life of Queen Anne which states that "men perfectly scrambled for the revenues of the crown, and made their private fortunes out of the nations treasure. When money, oftener than merit, gained admission to a command, no wonder that such scoundrels as Wade and Kirkby were trusted with our men of war."

We learn from Campbell that some of Benbow's detractors sought to discredit him by claiming he was born of the lower classes and by implication rough and rude in his treatment of his more high born captains. Certainly he had a reputation for impatience and temper, but I doubt that this was foreign to the gentleman class. Campbell disputes the claim that Benbow is of low birth by relating information given him by Benbow's son-in-law, Paul Calton. In this genealogy the Admiral's ancestry is stated to be the Newport Benbow line which included an Uncle shot during the Civil War and a grandfather who was a Clerk of the Crown and was granted a coat of arms in 1584.

However, this thread of low birth is picked up by Blakeway and Owen in their History of Shrewsbury of 1825 in which they develop the Cotton Hill connection. They first discredit Campbell's source Paul Calton and then develop the theory that the Admiral was the son of a tanner and ran away to sea where he rose through the lower 'tarpaulin' ranks to oversee 'gentlemen' captains. Thus they lay the blame for the mutiny on class prejudice. There are however serious flaws in their argument and a strong case can be made for the pedigree given by Paul Calton. Of course, there may have been jealousy and envy amongst the captains, for Benbow's popularity, reputation and rank. Most captains hoped to proceed to Admiral and many no doubt were impatient for the few who held such rank to move on either by retirement or death. If we add to this Benbow's disregard for tact and indifference to making enemies I believe we have sufficient reasons for personal malice on the part of the captains, without recourse to

class prejudice. This is not to say that Benbow may not have been snubbed for the poverty of his youth if his family had indeed lost their wealth and property due to the Civil War, thus necessitating an early apprenticeship and his working on river boats, merchant ships and even privateering on his way to master's mate in the navy.

As we move forward through time writers continue to generally take one tack or the other in evaluating Admiral Benbow and his mutiny. Sir John Laughton in the Dictionary of National Biography (1885) takes perhaps one of the harshest views and is quite influential on subsequent authors. He accepts unquestioningly Blakeway and Owens criticism of Campbell and speculates severely on the baseness of Paul Calton's motivation in supplying such misleading information. With regard to the mutiny, he suggests the 'brisk' treatment of the captains by this 'honest rough seaman' may have meant a good deal of coarse language. He concludes that "though it does not lessen the guilt of the captains, it does check our sharing in the traditional admiration of the admiral who goaded them to crime"

Laughton also remarked on Benbow's fame being out of proportion to his actual accomplishments given his lack of involvement in major campaigns. Yet his effectiveness goes uncriticized by his contemporaries and he was in fact a national hero both in the Channel campaign and in the West Indies. He was particularly appreciated for keeping the trade routes open and protecting British and Dutch shipping. Campbell points out that his plans were well thought out and based on gathered intelligence. "The scheme formed by Admiral Benbow, for the destruction of the French force in the West Indies, and having a chance for the galleons, shews him to have been a very able and judicious commander." In his last campaign he prudently avoided the larger French and Spanish convoys and with guerilla like tactics encouraged the English privateers and his own warships to pick off stragglers. Charnock echoes these sentiments when he marvels at how Benbow thwarted French ambitions in the West Indies. He compares their force which numbered fifty ships of war at one time, against Benbow's twenty odd, which were further weakened by the backwardness of his captains. Yet he was able to counteract French intentions and rendered them totally ineffectual. (Charnock, v.ii p.239) Benbow successfully used intelligence information he gained to plot Du Casse's movements and eventually surprised him when their forces were more equal. He may well be criticized for his leadership yet he managed a six day battle in the Bredah so must have inspired no little willingness to fight in that ship's company. And the Ruby and Falmouth answered his call to engage more closely.

Laughton's view is also counterbalanced by the Navy League Journal which in 1904 published Twelve British Admirals. Here the Admiral is described as belonging "to the long aristocracy of British seamen, to those old sailors who discovered a startling eagerness for battle and courted war like a mistress." The article extols Benbow's "dogged courage in the face of circumstances of desertion and disaster." As to his rough character, it is pointed out that his portrait suggests nothing of the rough seaman and that it is recorded "that he was never seen drunk, though that was a common enough failing in his day; and he was well known for his consideration of the seamen." And for his treating Kirkby and the rest of the gentlemen a little briskly at Jamaica, "If an admiral may not speak his mind on occasion what would become of the discipline of the Service?" (p.31-38)

In 1938 J.G. Bullocke published his analysis of several famous mutinies in Sailors' Rebellion. He regards the Benbow mutiny as an unsolved mystery, believing that some "scandalous episode" must lie behind it.

"such a combination of his senior officers against him, amounting, as it did, to mutiny, cannot have been without cause; such personal dislike must have had a root in some dire offence that the Admiral had given them...it seems difficult to believe that four officers could be found to go to the lengths of Kirkby, Wade, Hudson, and Constable, merely because they had been treated a 'little briskly'. One is tempted to think that Kirkby was unhinged--not at the beginning of the trouble, but that he became so in the course of it, perhaps to recover afterwards when the fear of death was before his eyes, for his letter to Burchett, in which he tries to throw the blame on Benbow, is clever in some ways." (p.55)

Bullocke speculates that there is something psychologically significant in Kirkby's repeated exclamation that Du Casse had a respect for him. Perhaps what grated was that Benbow did not. He wonders: "Did it rankle to the extent of making him mad?"

More recently, in 1944, Sir Geoffrey Callender and C. F. Britton, in the Mariner's Mirror, argue convincingly that Sir Laughton erred in discrediting Campbell and his source Paul Calton.

"The tendency among students of Benbow's life has been to heap censure, odium, obloquy, and ridicule on Admiral Benbow's son-in-law...The case against Paul Calton, Paul 111, is quite definitely not supported by the evidence at present available...In the entire absence of evidence to show that Paul Calton intentionally and of malice pretence attempted to deceive Dr. John Campbell, the imputations made against the Squire of Milton--and indirectly against the Admiral himself--can no longer be sustained." (p.210, 212, 216)

Reginald Rees, a contemporary authority on Benbow, makes the following assessment in his article in the Shropshire Magazine in 1983.

"It is also hard to avoid the conclusion that the Admiral's own conduct of the action, despite his unquestionable courage and devotion to duty, was less than competent, if not actually muddled. Since he himself apparently failed in several respects to follow the relevant official Fighting Instructions it was scarcely surprising that there was at least some genuine misunderstanding among his captains." (p.24)

However, the Fighting Instructions were extremely difficult to put into practice and quite limited by their rigidity. Mathew and Byng both discovered this. Benbow was actually quite determined and innovative given the circumstances of his reluctant Captains. His decision to concentrate his limited force on the enemy's rear was not unlike Nelson's a century later,

though for different reasons. In Benbow's case the majority of his ships were not prepared to form an effective fighting line. As well, communications were restricted to half a dozen flags so that, in Benbow's day, in order to direct his fleet, an Admiral was often forced to send his boat around the fleet or howl from ship to ship. It was not until the evolution of multiple signals that ships were able to communicate rapidly, thus enabling an Admiral to direct his fleet to adjust quickly to the necessities of the battle situation. Benbow's captains were able to plead confusion because of these limitations.

To sum up then, some historians have reacted to Campbell's uncritical praise with a great deal of scepticism. Sir John Laughton in particular has been extremely disparaging not only of Campbell's source Paul Calton, but of Benbow's character and actions as well. His article in the Dictionary of National Biography has had quite a negative effect on subsequent evaluation of Admiral Benbow. The mutineers are excused as men of high repute and the victim of the mutiny becomes the villain of the piece. Benbow is depicted as an ineffectual Admiral not meriting the renown bestowed upon him.

An analysis of the Court-martial testimony and Kirkby's written defence does not substantiate Laughton's view. Ample evidence was sworn against Kirkby, proving he failed on several occasions to adequately engage the enemy, and that for the most part he lagged behind the action. Granted, he may well have been denied an adequate defence. He claimed his witnesses were disbelieved and intimidated and that he was not allowed to present all relevant evidence, such as the Damage Survey of the Defiance. The court however did not dispute that he had been fired on, but that he did not remain engaged once this happened. The actual Damage Survey is not impressive and could just as easily have been used by the prosecution to demonstrate the Defiance's limited involvement. As far as the credibility of his witnesses, evidence was sworn that his Master did indeed alter his Journal, and when examined the Master so testified. Admittedly Kirkby was tried under hostile circumstances. Benbow was still alive, and feeling quite aggrieved, not just for himself, but for his country as well. He ensured Kirkby was prosecuted with a vengeance, and appears to have sanitized the court record. The testimony is repetitious, with identical phrases used by different witnesses, giving the impression they were coached. Defence testimony was considered insignificant and not preserved. However, none of this diminishes the overwhelming evidence against Kirkby. The facts really are not in question.

The real mystery is his motivation, and that of his followers. Several possibilities exist, from greed to politics to strategy to personal conflict to cowardice. It is this puzzle that has led some to look for provocation in Benbow. No evidence has been found to justify such a speculation. None of the mutineers accused their Admiral of so inflaming them. Their most powerful criticism was that they were confused by the combined signals to keep their line and engage the enemy. Common sense dictates that the last signal made, that is, to engage, should have taken precedence. Their claimed confusion thus smacks of obstructionism. Self preservation is more likely at the heart of their action. Benbow in his last letter to Nottingham bemoans the fact that Captains sent to the West Indies were reckoned as lost, due no doubt to the high incidence of sickness. The consequence of this view was that it was thought anyone could serve in those parts. We must assume that the difficulty in finding captains willing to go to the

West Indies often resulted in the least desirable types being accepted. Most of Benbow's captains had in fact been out of commission and on half pay for a number of years.

Kirkby, their leader, was known to most of them from their years of haunting the Admiralty for a posting. His reputation for acquiring prize money must have inspired them. Indeed, it took courage to sign on for an expedition to the West Indies, considering they had a better than fifty percent chance of dying there. For many it would be the hope of riches and not love of country which moved them to accept this posting. Perhaps we should not be surprised at their behaviour under fire, but marvel instead at that of Walton, Vincent, Fogg, and Benbow. Who would readily take their place in the hurricane of the Quarter Deck. The real enigma is what motivates some to place themselves in such intolerable and unrelenting peril. This fearlessness must have shamed and aggravated some of Benbow's captains and may have in itself provoked hard feelings. Certainly, timidity under fire was not uncommon.

A remarkably parallel incident occurred in 1708, again near Carthage. Sir Charles Wager knew Kirkby well. They had been together in 1695 in the Mediterranean when Kirkby lagged behind during the taking of the Content and Trident. Wager could not have been surprised at Kirkby's similar behaviour in the 1702 battle with Du Casse. In 1708 Wager led a squadron in an attack on Spanish galleons which were trying to join Du Casse at Havana. Two of his captains behaved as Kirkby had. He court martialled both of them for their fearfulness and caution: Timothy Bridges of the Kingston and Edward Windsor of the Portland. They had both sailed out of range, kept at a great distance from the battle, and did not follow Wager's orders to pursue the enemy. Both were dismissed the service. As mentioned earlier Sir Andrew Leake was involved in a comparable incident in 1704 near Carthage, Spain. Indeed, this type of behaviour was so common that Sir Charles Wager wrote to Sir Robert Walpole: "The Royal Navy will be a Dishonour to the Kingdom, till all the Borough Captains are killed." (Institute of Jamaica, Benbow file) No doubt he was referring to those captains who owed their positions to preferment and influence, particularly with the borough and Parliamentary powers.

This was a time when discipline was not well established and qualities of personal leadership were paramount. Clearly, Benbow's mutinous captains must have resented and disliked him. However, despite his bluntness there is no evidence that he was an unfair or malicious commander. On the contrary, he was highly thought of both by the ordinary seamen and the nation as a whole. He brought to the West Indies a reputation of concern for his men and zealotry in battle. His "Legacy" is his example. His lone and unrelenting stand against the enemy was an inspiration not only to Captain Christopher Fogg of the Bredah, Captain George Walton of the Ruby and Captain Samuel Vincent of The Falmouth but to countless others through the centuries and indeed rightly earned him the epitaph "Brave Benbow".

John Keegan in The Face of Battle describes courage as seen by British officers a hundred years later at Waterloo in terms reminiscent of Benbow.

"It was the receipt of wounds, not the infliction of death, which demonstrated an officer's courage; that demonstration was reinforced by his refusal to leave his post even when wounded, or by his insistence on returning as soon as his wounds had been dressed; and it was by a punctiliousness in obeying orders

which made wounds or death inevitable that an officer's honour was consummated." (Keegan, p.191)

Keegan in a companion book, The Mask of Command, in portraying Alexander the Great, describes courage more passionately in a style he calls Heroic Leadership. Parallels with Benbow are easily made. Both led by theatrical example. Both had a pattern of brashness in battle and impatience with those who were cautious. Both were boastful and insulting in matters of battle prowess. Both sought victory through decisive, ruthless, offensive action and spurned strategic security. Both utilized their reputation for boldness to strike fear in the enemy. Both called upon patriotism and strove to lead visibly by their ostentatious dress. Both accepted personal exposure in battle and suffered many wounds. Both had a strong personal will to maintain pursuit of the enemy. And both were known for their unblinking courage, ferocious energy, and savagery in battle.

Similarities with Wellington are also evident in Keegan's assessment. Like Benbow, Wellington was strong on discipline with his officers. He was impatient with them for shirking their duty, and described them as "croakers...gentlemen who like their ease and comfort...they exaggerate the numbers of the French army and diminish our own." He complained that court martials lacked teeth in that fellow commission-owners of the landed class would rarely find each other guilty. He complained that the difficulty was not in getting officers and men to do their duty in action, but in bringing them to the point where action can be fought. As with Benbow this often resulted in an explosive temper and by his impatience with those who failed to meet his exacting standards. Similarly he tried to control his officers with a hand of iron, insisting on never ending drill and exercise. Like Benbow he was oblivious to danger, and like Benbow he obeyed his sovereign unquestioningly. "I am nimmukwallah, as we say in the East; that is, I have eaten of the King's salt, and therefore I conceive it to be my duty to serve with unhesitating zeal and cheerfulness, when and wherever the King or his Government may think proper to employ me."

Leaders of this ilk are not easy to follow. Benbow made many enemies amongst his peers with his impatience and sharp tongue. This may have tipped the scales and moved Kirkby and the others from passive resistance to open rebellion. Perhaps this is Benbow's tragic flaw; that he was insensitive to the effect his sharp tongue had on others. This too is his legacy, a lesson for all who would lead others. He was also blinded by his idealism. For Englishmen not to do their 'duty' was incomprehensible. He appears to have been truly amazed when he discovered the 'snake in the grass', that is, that his Captains had made up their minds not to fight. He must have attributed it to their dislike for him, for he suggests that "if this be allowed, there is no going to sea for a Flag etc. unless he carry his father, sons, or brothers to assist in the day of battle." But if his greatest weakness was his lack of tactfulness his strength was his tenacity. He led by example and was dismayed and incredulous when others were not as zealous. "I thought always till now that a good example would make any body fight." (CSP.Col.Sep.11,1702) Unfortunately his strength in battle, a British bulldog attack, was his undoing when used with his own captains.

Charnock in 1795 put it well:

"Admiral Benbow, as to whose character his bitterest enemy cannot deny him the honest reputation of brave, active and able Commander; while on the other, his warmest friends and admirers must allow he wanted those conciliatory manners which is necessary to secure the personal attachment and regard of the officers he commanded." (p.239)

Effingham, Grenville, Raleigh, Drake,
Heres to the bold and free
Benbow, Collingwood, Byron, Blake,
Hail to the Kings of the sea.

Admirals all for England's sake
Honour be yours and fame
And honour as long as the waves shall break
To Nelson's peerless name

Admirals all they had their say,
Their echoes are ringing still,
Admirals all they went their way
To the haven under the hill.

But they left us a kingdom none can take,
The realms of the circling sea,
To be ruled by the rightful sons of Blake,
And the Rodneys yet to be.
(from 'Admirals All' by Sir Henry Newbolt)

And those found most to blame, they were shot, they were shot,
And those found most to blame, they were shot;
Brave Benbow then at last,
For grief of what was past,
In a fever died at last; by hard lot, by hard lot,
In a fever died at last, by hard lot.

IN MEMORIAM

News of the Admiral's death reached England in February, 1703. The London Gazette, February 8, 1703:

"Port Royal in Jamaica, Dec. 12. Rear Admiral Benbow died here the 4th of the last Month, of the Wound he received in the late Engagement with Monsieur Du Cass." (3886)

An obituary of the day by John Le Neve, "records his death as a person of great temperance and great courage." The Dutch issued an obituary in February 1703 in their Historical and Political Monthly Mercury published in the Hague. This was regularly translated into English and printed in London. It contains the earliest biographical sketch of Benbow.

"About the beginning of this Instant, Letters from Port-Royal, in the Island of Jamaica, dated the 12th of December, brought the unwellcome News of the Death of Rear-Admiral Bembo, who, upon the 4th of the same Month died of the Wound he receiv'd in the Engagement with M. Du Casse, of which we gave a Relation in the Month preceding. This Rear-Admiral, John Bembo, was born in Shrewsbury, in the County of Salop, and bred up in the FreeSchool there: And tho' the Family of the Bembo's were none of the Meanest, yet were they so reduc'd for their Loyalty, that he was bound Prentice to a Waterman; afterwards he us'd the Seas, and set up for a Privateer in the West-Indies. At length he attain'd to the Master of Attendance at Deptford, wherein he continu'd for some Years. In the late War, he was made choice of for the Bombing of the Sea-Coast Towns of France, wherein he rais'd himself to the Reputation of being an able and valliant Seaman, that he was sent Admiral of a Squadron of Men of War to the West-Indies. He was a Man of that Temperance, that never any of his nearest Relations or Intimates ever saw him disguis'd in Drink. He was also naturally very Charitable; insomuch, that the Parish where he was born will miss his Annual Benevolence. He was of an undaunted Resolution, Bold and Daring, and deserv'd a better Fate, then to be so basely and cowardly Deserted by the Captains under him, who had they done but half their Duty, might perhaps have preserv'd him still for the Service of his

Country, which he lov'd beyond his Life. The Bravery of his Soul condemn'd the Loss of his Leg, which did not trouble him half so much, as he express'd himself in a Letter to his Wife, as the Villainous Treachery of his Captains, which hinder'd him from totally destroying the French Squadron. About Nine Weeks after the Loss of his Leg, he fell sick of a Fever, which in a short time put a Period to his Days."

William Whetstone sent his official notification of the Admiral's death on November 25th. His account is significant in that it indicates a contributing factor to Benbow's demise was the severe depression he slipped into following the mutiny.

"I humbly present his Royal Highness and Council an account that on the 4th of this month Admiral Benbow died and by all judged to be by the wound of his leg which he received in battle with Monsieur Du Casse; it being not set to perfection which malady being aggravated by the discontent of his mind threw him into a sort of a melancholy which ended his life". (Adm.1/2641)

The Bredah's new captain, Robert Thompson, noted the death in his journal:

"Wednesday Nov. 4 (at anchor in Port Royal harbour) About 2 in the afternoon Adm. Benbow Died being cast into Feaver by the Anguish of a piece of Bone taken out of his Wound.

Thursday, Nov. 5 This day the Honble. John Benbow, Esq., Vice-Admll & Commandr in Chief etc. was Interr'd in Kingston Church in Jamaica his Funeral being Solemnized by most of the Gentlemen upon the island We fired thirty Guns and the rest of the ships according to their Rates, the solemnity being Over we took in the Flagg.

Monday, Nov. 9 Capt. Vincent, Capt. Harris, Mr. Collinson & myself took an inventory of the deceased Admlls effects by order from Rear Adm: Whetstone." (Adm 51/4130)

A 1704-6 account by a contemporary merchant seaman, Robert Park, in The Art of Seafighting, gives a popular view of Admiral Benbow:

"Not to mention the former Actions of Rear-Admiral Benbow, the last is enough to immortalize that Famous Gentleman in history. His very exit will veil the Deeds of Ancient Heroes, as the sun the stars when upon the Meridian. Future Ages will slight the musty Records of the Greeks and Romans, if some Ingenious Pen transmit to Posterity a bare narration of our Captain's Fortitude. How highly will they approve his unaffected zeal for his Country, that made not the Villainy of his Captains a Cloak to Retreat? How will they stand amazed at his undaunted Courage, that exposed his Feverish Body to the Scorching Rays of the Sun; and wounded to the Enemy, whom he charged through Fire

and Smoak? Nothing could Shake his resolution! The loss of his Legs did not afflict him; nor the Symptoms of Death terrifie him. If his Serenity of Mind was a little clouded, the cowardice of these Damned Villains caus'd it, that he could not serve his Country when favoured with so fair an opportunity. O, unfortunate People to lose a man more valuable than the Indies." (Quoted by John Leyland, *The Mariner's Mirror*, October 1911, p.274)

As we have seen these sentiments were not echoed by everyone. The controversy surrounding his life continues with his place of burial. Sir John Laughton, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, states he was buried in the Chancel of St. Andrew's Church, Kingston, where a slab of blue slate marks his grave. The inscription is as follows:

"HERE LYETH INTERRED THE
BODY OF JOHN BENBOW,
ESQ, ADMIRAL OF THE WHITE
A TRUE PATTERN OF ENGLISH COURAGE,
WHO LOST HIS LIFE
IN DEFENCE OF HIS QUEENE
& COUNTRY NOVEMBER Ye 4
1702, IN THE 52nd YEAR OF
HIS AGE, BY A WOUND IN HIS LEGG
RECEIVED IN AN ENGAGEMENT
WITH MONSr DU CASSE BEING
MUCH LAMENTED."

Sir Laughton, with his usual scepticism, claims the inscription is curiously inaccurate. Benbow, he says, was Admiral of the Blue and "it overstates his age by two years and it emblazons as his the arms of a family with which he had no connection." (DNB) The researches of Callender and Britton have already shown that the Admiral did in fact use such a coat of arms and its very use adds to the evidence of his connection to the Newport Benbows. His rank is recorded in *The Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy* as follows:

"L.
CA. 30 Sept. 1689,
CA. 13 Apr. 1691
RAB 1 May 1696
RAR 14 Apr 1701,
VAB 30 June 1701,
VAW 19 Jan. 1702,
d. 4 Nov. 1702."

Obviously, the Admiralty granted him a promotion to Vice-Admiral of the White while he was in the West Indies, though possibly after his death, in January 1703. With the great

distances involved this information was not generally known and so the very accuracy of the grave marker is further attested. As to his age, no record of his birth has yet been found so he may well have been in his 52nd year.

Campbell suggests an alternate burial site in his *Memoirs of Vice-Admiral Benbow*. He refers to the *Mercure Historique et Politique*, tom xxxiv p. 335, "Where it is said, his body was sent for home in order to be solemnly interred at the public expense, which considering the manner of his death, would have been certainly right." (*Lives*, vol.iv, p.223) Charnock in his *Biographia Navalis* of 1795 concurs with this account and adds "This appears to be confirmed by the testimony of several very ancient people still living at Deptford, who although they do not remember the funeral itself, have a perfect recollection of hearing it spoken of as a recent event." (p.240) According to these sources he was buried in the church-yard of St. Nicholas, Deptford, "in the north-west angle, formed by the projection of the steeple beyond the body of the church." Apparently a plain flat stone was laid over his remains but this has since disappeared so no evidence remains of the place of his interment save this tradition.

The uncertainty of the Admiral's final resting place is further discussed by Frank Cundall of the Institute of Jamaica, in a letter to the *Times* dated December 24, 1912. He states the Church in Jamaica containing the inscribed slate is St. Thomas, Kingston and not St. Andrew, thus further discrediting Sir Laughton's account. However, it is in the parish record of St. Andrew that the burial is noted on Nov. 5, 1702. It states that Admiral John Bembo had died at Port Royal on November 4. St. Thomas is the parish church of Kingston, whereas St. Andrew is on the outskirts. Cundall relates that there was an old tradition that Benbow was buried at Greenwich, just west of Kingston, where he had built his naval hospital. He points out this would be compatible with the entry in St. Andrews register at Halfway-Tree as Greenwich was in that parish. He adds, however, that James Knight who was member of the Assembly for Kingston in 1722 and following, says in a manuscript history of Jamaica in the British Museum that: "He was buried the day following his death in the church at Kingston, greatly lamented by all ranks of people." Cundall suggests that perhaps when two rectors took part in a burial, each recorded it. No records for Kingston parish church survive for that era. He also refers to an interesting find in 1883 when work was done to support the foundation of the east wall. A large vault under the altar was opened and in it was found a coffin covered with the remains of velvet and gilt ornaments, apparently of a most expensive character, which was at the time thought to be Benbow's. However, no definite identification was possible.

Although the blue slate marker has been moved recently, to accommodate another renovation of the altar area, it is still in a high state of preservation and on the left hand side near the front of the church. The coat of arms is clearly visible and identical to that depicted by the *Naval Chronicle* in 1808. Kingston Parish Church has been rebuilt following a devastating earthquake in 1907, but still remains the centre of the populous downtown area of the city. A brief article on Benbow in the *Boston Sunday Globe* of August 5, 1956 states "No honour roll of the brave, can be complete without heroic Benbow who sleeps in the cool gloom of the ancient church in Jamaica's capital city." I must say that when I visited the church in December 1989 it was far from cool, and certainly not gloomy.

As for the Deptford legend, Callender and Britton suggest that the St. Nicholas stone marker and grave belonged to the Admiral's son John and was mistaken for that of the Admiral.

Certainly, the Admiral's son was buried in St. Nicholas, Deptford, but in a family vault within the Church itself and not in the Church yard. The Inscription clearly refers to the Admiral's son and could not easily be confused. Callender and Britton refer to the Naval Chronicle of 1808 and fail to trace the statement of St. Nicholas as the Admiral's final resting place to its much earlier reference in the *Mercure Historique et Politique*, pointed out initially by Campbell. This Journal, in March of 1703 published a letter written from Port Royal, describing the Vice Admiral's death from wounds inflicted during his fight against Monsieur Du Casse. The Mercury adds this interesting detail:

"(The Queen) also ordered that the body of Admiral Benbow be brought back from Jamaica for an honourable burial in London, since this Admiral died of his wounds." (Translated from the Political Mercury, March 1703, p.335.)

This certainly adds weight to the tradition that he was buried at St. Nicholas, his home parish. It is possible that he was initially buried in St. Thomas church, Kingston, Jamaica, with a memorial marker laid by grateful merchants and comrades. Then later, on the Queen's orders, his remains were exhumed and returned to England for reburial in his homeland for the sake of his family and to show his country's gratitude.

St. Nicholas, the ancient parish church of Deptford still stands. Its environs have greatly changed. The great Sayes Court grounds are now an extensive housing estate and the church abuts a Power Station. Evelyn Street leads to Deptford Green which still runs past the Church and Benbow Street cuts over to Hughes Fields. The whole area is now covered with decaying brick buildings and has a distinctly East London flavour. St. Nicholas, with its long association with the Royal Dockyards, is described as the Westminster Abbey of the Navy in a pamphlet written by its current priest Graham Corneck. The Church contains the tomb of Christopher Marlowe and a superb wood carving by Evelyn's protegee Grinling Gibbon, "The Valley of Dry Bones. Many naval heroes worshipped here including Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. The Church was honeycombed with private burial vaults which over time were robbed for their lead. Many of these were filled in and their ledger stones moved to the sanctuary floor. Most notable is the stone from the Benbow vault in which had been buried the Admiral's wife Martha and his sons William and John. The rubble has recently been cleaned from these vaults and they can now be viewed running beneath the church. According to the pamphlet the legend persists that the Admiral himself was buried outside the church near the Tower.

Still, the mystery of his final resting place remains. Perhaps it is fitting for his spirit to be associated with both his English Naval roots in Deptford and the land he defended, Jamaica.

If no marker remains to mark the St. Nicholas tradition, a more lasting one was erected in St. Mary's Church, Shrewsbury in 1843. Henry Pidgeon wrote a short Biographical Notice of Admiral Benbow with a Description of the Monument to mark its erection. He notes that the community originally began to collect funds for such a memorial in 1828, with Admiral Owen, another of Shrewsbury's courageous townsmen, being a liberal contributor. Unfortunately various circumstances delayed the project until in 1841 the committee under the chairmanship of the Rev. W.G. Roland commissioned the monument to be created by the sculptor John Evan Thomas of London, a pupil of the celebrated Sir Francis Chantry. Pidgeon commented on the

irony of life in that of those who set out in 1828 to raise such a lasting monument to the Admiral, half had passed away and half of the remaining had left town. Their intention was however admirable, namely that "this tribute of respect, in remembrance of one whose name is a distinguished ornament to his native place, shall exist when generations shall have passed away, and stimulate the bosom of many a young warrior to heave in emulation of his feats of heroism, and to support, with untiring energy, his country's cause, and his country's glory." (Pidgeon, p.3)

This sculpture now hangs on the eastern wall of the Baptistery of St. Mary's on the left side of the church over the doorway leading to the vestry. It is supported by two brackets which hold the table of the design, upon which is the following inscription:

"ERECTED BY PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION TO COMMEMORATE THE SERVICES OF
JOHN BENBOW ESQ VICE ADMIRAL OF THE BLUE,
A SKILFUL AND DARING SEAMAN
WHOSE HEROIC EXPLOITS LONG RENDERED HIM THE BOAST OF THE BRITISH NAVY
AND STILL POINT HIM OUT AS THE NELSON OF HIS TIMES.
HE WAS BORN AT COTON HILL IN THIS PARISH, AND DIED AT KINGSTON IN JAMAICA,
NOVEMBER 4TH 1702, AGED 51 YEARS
OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN HIS MEMORABLE ACTION
WITH A FRENCH SQUADRON OFF CARTHAGENA IN THE WEST INDIES,
FOUGHT ON THE 19TH AND FIVE FOLLOWING DAYS OF AUGUST IN THAT YEAR"

Pidgeon described the upper part of the monument thus:

"Above this, and between two pilasters, supporting a pediment, with a small shield in the centre, is a beautiful representation, in basso relievo, of the celebrated 'Benbow Frigate', in full chase of the enemy, and pouring a broadside into another vessel, the stern of which is visible, amid clouds of smoke, in the distance; the foam of the ocean, and other minute details, being cut with extraordinary fidelity and effect. Over this rises a pyramid of black marble, on which is a fine medallion bust of the Admiral in alto relievo-considered to be an excellent likeness, as taken from the portrait presented by Mrs. Hind, sister of the Admiral, to the Corporation of Shrewsbury. The Sail of a ship, supported by a yard-arm, appears gracefully suspended over the bust, the lower portion of which, on one side, being entwined round the fluke of an anchor, the corresponding one having a cannon, with the muzzle resting on a cluster of balls."

This monument is indeed impressive and of course must be seen in the soft mellow light of the grey stone Church setting to be truly appreciated.

The portrait referred to by Pidgeon now hangs in the Clive House Museum, Shrewsbury. In 1808 Archdeacon Hugh Owen described this painting, donated by the Admiral's sister, as hanging in the Grand Jury Room of the Shrewsbury Guildhall, beside portraits of George I and II. Benbow is depicted "as a handsome man, of long visage, aquiline nose, brown complexion, and marked physiognomy, not much unlike the Sovereign whom he chiefly served." (Owen, p.419) The painting must have been sold to private interests, possibly about 1835. In 1902 it was pres-

ented to the museum by the Rev. J. Auden. Benbow is wearing a long brown full bottomed wig, a grey coat trimmed with gold buttons, and a high white tied neck scarf fastened with a jewel. Draped over his shoulders is a red cape. He is holding a truncheon in his right hand while his left rests on a cannon. Over his right shoulder are navigational instruments including a backstaff, globe and dividers, while in the background to his left is a ship of war. The face is well executed but the rest is not remarkable. The hands especially are poorly represented.

A more well known portrait was painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723). The portraits are quite similar, particularly in the pose. However, Kneller's is by far the better. He probably painted the Admiral around 1701, whereas we know Benbow visited his sister in Shrewsbury in 1697 and was well received by the town officials. Despite the likelihood that Kneller's is the more recent portrait, Benbow appears younger, healthier and more refined in this rendition. Kneller's version hung in the Admiral's Hall Hampton Court Palace and then in 1824 was presented by George IV to the Greenwich Hospital Collection of the National Maritime Museum. It has been on display there recently with other portraits by Kneller, in the Discovery and Seapower gallery. Significantly Benbow's portrait hangs beside that of his King, William 111. The Admiral is seen in a dark brown coat, with breastplate, a white tied neck scarf and short brown full bottomed wig. He is holding a sword in his right hand, while his left rests on a cannon. In the background is his flagship with blue pendant at the fore. Sir John Laughton describes the painting as follows:

"It represents a man of lithe figure, dark complexion, and clear-cut features, very different from the idea we might otherwise form of one so specially described as 'a rough seaman.'"

Engravings have been made of both Benbow portraits. Kneller's Painting was engraved by W. T. Mote in 1832 and published in Locker's Naval Commanders, while an earlier version by H. R. Cook appeared in the 1808 Naval Chronicle. The Shrewsbury Painting was engraved by J. T. Wedgwood in 1817 for an edition of Campbell's Lives of the Admirals and again by D. Parkes and J. Basire in 1818 and published by J. Nichols and Son in Vol.LXXXIX.

The National Maritime Museum also has a painting by an unidentified artist, which includes Captain Benbow in the centre, Sir Ralph Delavall on the right, and possibly Captain Thomas Phillips seated. Benbow is holding a backstaff while the group is examining a globe. He is dressed in a brown silk robe, with a dark brown full bottomed wig. It is believed the painting was done in 1692-3.

In addition the National Maritime Museum has an engraving of a younger Admiral Benbow, published in 1797 by J. Chapman. His features are boyish, his wig cascades in curls over his shoulder and his neck scarf is finer. A sash cuts across his full shoulder and breast armour. As well the museum has a contemporary engraving of Admiral Benbow encouraging his men to fight. This shows him on deck gesturing to his men while his shattered right leg is tended. He still has on his hat and full wig. More recently A.D.McCormick has painted a similar scene, showing the wounded Benbow confronting his haughty captains, titled "The Last Fight of Old Benbow."

Admiral Benbow has also been remembered in naval ships. The first, a third rate of 74 guns launched at Rotherhithe in 1813 contributed her figurehead, a gigantic wooden portrait of

Benbow, to Portsmouth Royal Naval Dockyard. It stands today in the centre of the courtyard near the entrance. Children climb over the huge brown tresses which used to lead the Benbow into battle as their parents rush by unknowingly, heading to the memorial of a more recent hero, Lord Nelson's Victory. The H.M.S. Benbow was followed by a steam battleship of 10,600 tons in 1888 sporting two huge 16.25 inch guns, and finally a modern warship of 25,000 tons commissioned in 1914. This latter ship fought in the Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland in 1916. The Royal Naval base at Trinidad was known as Benbow until 1947. The Canadian Navy remembers the Admiral in Benbow divisions and during WW11 there was a Wren station in Ireland known as HMS Benbow.

But perhaps the most lasting and fitting memorials to the Admiral are those sentiments preserved in the many sea ballads of the British seamen and in the hundreds of Inns catering to them that bear the sign of The Admiral Benbow, including the fictitious one in Treasure Island. In England alone I have discovered four such inns, one in Penzance, another in Milton near Oxford, one in Shrewsbury on Swan Street and also in Ruxton XI Towns, Shropshire.

"Come all you brave fellows, wherever you've been,
Let us drink to the health of our King and our Queen;
And another good health to the girls that we know,
And a third in remembrance of brave Admiral Benbow."

ADMIRAL BENBOW'S PROGENY

According to Dr. John Campbell, Admiral Benbow left a widow and several children of both sexes. His sons apparently died without issue and so,

"his two surviving daughters became coheiresses of whom the eldest married Paul Calton, Esq. of Milton near Abingdon in Berkshire, the gentleman so often mentioned in the course of this article, and who deceased very lately at his seat before mentioned." (Biographia, p.688)

Campbell's information about the Admiral's children appears to have been derived solely from Paul Calton and lacks much detail. It is particularly interesting that he fails to mention the names of two of the Admiral's sons and stresses the daughters were coheiresses. His information that the sons all died childless is questionable and may be derived from self-interest.

The Admiral's will of 1701 is much more specific. In it he provides for his wife Martha and then lists five children: John, William, Richard, Martha, and Katherine. All were to receive equal shares of the Admiral's estate. The sons were to receive their shares at age 21 and the daughters at age 21 or the day of their marriage. He further stipulated that if any died their share would go to the surviving brothers and sisters equally. Also, he added that if each share amounted to above 1000 pounds apiece, then the surplus was to be divided amongst his sons equally.

This will was proved on March 10, 1703 so the estate was settled at that time to the extent that it could be, given the ages of the children and their whereabouts. Trustees were named to manage the estate until the children each came of age and see that it was distributed equally. We may deduce from the will that it was considerable, given that he saw each son receiving a minimum of 1000 pounds after the annuity had been established for his wife. It should be noted that as well as his Admiral's salary of 2 pounds 10 shillings a day he also received 1/8 of the value of all prizes taken under his command. The West Indies during the war years were particularly rewarding in this fashion.

The Admiral's wife Martha survived him 20 years, dying on December 1722 in Deptford. She received from the will an annuity of seventy pounds a year free of all taxes and charges, paid out of the interest on a mortgage of 2500 pounds on a property called Greenlands, in Hambleton Buckinghamshire. This annuity was to cease if she remarried. She also received all the household effects, on the condition they would be distributed equally among the surviving children upon her death. After the Admiral's death she petitioned the Admiralty for a pension and received 200 pounds per annum as a result of an order in Council dated 18 February, 1703. (Adm1/5149) The records of Naval Pensions indicate that she received this pension of 200 each year until the time of her death, "in consideration of the services and merit of her husband John

Benbow Esq. who died of his wounds received in a fight with the French in the West Indies". (Adm.181/1) For some unknown reason she again petitioned the Admiralty in 1711. (State Papers, Dom. 1711) It is believed she continued to live in Deptford and was buried in St. Nicholas Church. In her will dated November 20, 1721 she distributed her estate equally between her son William Benbow and her daughter Katharine Benbow.

Callender and Britton, in their 1944 article on Admiral Benbow in the *Mariners' Mirror* suggest that after the Admiral's death, Katherine, about fifteen at the time, naturally resided with her mother and tenderly cared for her until the time of her death.

Katherine

Katherine is thought to have been born in 1687, according to Blakeway and Owen who developed a pedigree for the Admiral in 1825. However, Callender and Britton suggest she was born in 1694, according to parish records of St. Nicholas Deptford, which would make her only eight at the time of her father's death. They further speculate that she and her mother must have paid occasional visits to their country house at Milton and that upon her mother's death in 1722 she moved permanently to Milton. There she continued her acquaintance with the owner of the Manor, Paul Calton and married him in 1723. The marriage is recorded in the parish records of St. Peter's, Cornhill, London. This corrects an earlier error of Blakeway and Owen who placed her marriage in 1709. Callender and Britton further speculate that her attractiveness to Paul Calton may have been her wealth. The history of the Caltons is one of bankruptcies and mortgages dating back to Paul's grandfather. Interestingly Paul's marriage to Catherine would have restored the Dower house to the main estate. As well, in 1723 Paul Calton and Katherine his wife mortgaged the manor to William Benbow, her brother, and Benjamin Fuller. (Victoria History, p.363)

Paul Calton's financial difficulties often created legal repercussions. In 1728 he is referred to in a suit brought against William Benbow wherein an elderly lady appears to have had her funds diverted from her natural heirs. Paul Calton is cited by William as an attorney-at-law who assisted him in advising the lady in question as to how best to utilize her funds. (C11/1208/52, London Record Office, Chancery Lane) In 1733 an action at Edinburgh between Paul Calton the Younger and Francis Abercromby and John Rochet concerned the discharge of a gambling debt. (Exchequer Depositions, 7 George II, Mich. 11)

It is likely that Dr. Campbell visited the Caltons in 1742 seeking information for his biography of the Admiral. At that time Catherine was the Admiral's sole surviving child, and so the repository of the family history, traditions, and heirlooms. It is particularly noteworthy that Campbell so confused the details of the information he received from Catherine that he referred to her as the eldest of the Admiral's daughters when in fact she was 10 years Martha's junior. It is to this sloppiness that Callender and Britton attribute the source of some Benbow errors, rather than misrepresentation by the Caltons.

A year later, in 1743 Paul Calton died, and on May 24, 1744 Katherine was granted the Prerogative Court of Canterbury Administration of her husband's estate. Callender and Britton

report she died that year aged 57 and left five children: two sons, Paul and Benbow, and three daughters, Catherine, Martha, and Mary. She and her husband had donated a silver Alms Dish to the local Milton Church, bearing the Benbow Arms which survives to this day and was given to commemorate the visit of Peter the Great and Admiral Benbow of 1698. Paul Calton Junior, died in 1752 and left the estate to his three sisters. (PCC Bettesworth 60, London Society of Genealogists) The Milton estate was sold in 1764 by Catherine, Martha, and Mary Calton, spinsters, to Isaac Barrett. However, the Victoria County History records that the Admiral's sword and telescope were preserved in Milton House. (p.362)

Milton House still stands in its stately grounds, now much enlarged from the Admiral's time. Its present owner, Mrs. Margaret Mockler, opens the Manor to the public on week-ends from Easter to the end of October. The original house built by Thomas Calton in 1663 was a simple redbrick square, three stories high, capped by a sloping roof with four elevations absolutely equal and with the front and back identical. Extensive wings were added when the house was sold to Isaac Barrett. Mrs. Mockler reports that Isaac actually bought the home for his brother Bryant Barrett, who being Catholic was unable to make the purchase. Bryant added a private Roman Catholic Chapel. The Admiral's telescope is still on view but the sword has disappeared. The Dower house once owned by Admiral Benbow is now the site of the Admiral Benbow Inn. This Inn contains an excellent copy of the Kneller portrait of Benbow, commissioned by Mrs. Mockler. The Manor overlooks the ancient parish church of St. Blaise, Milton. Here one can still view the silver Alms dish with the Benbow Coat of Arms donated by Katherine in memory of her father.

John

Blakeway and Owen give John's birth as 1681 and his death November 27, 1708, and show him as unmarried. The Dictionary of National Biography indicates he joined the navy as a volunteer on June 29, 1695, at about age 15, and served on the Northumberland. The Register of Commissions and Warrants (Adm.6 Index) indicates John was recommissioned as a Volunteer on March 3 1697 to the Lancaster, then on March 21, 1697 to the Cornwall and on April 5, 1697 he joined what had been his father's flagship that winter, the Shrewsbury. The "Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy" records that John was commissioned as a Lieutenant on 7 March 1700 and served on the Margaret. However, he did not remain but chose the more lucrative employ of an East Indies merchant ship. Campbell's account is as thus:

"He was intended by his father for a sea-man, and educated accordingly. His misfortunes began very early, viz. in the same year his father died in the West Indies; by being shipwrecked on the coast of Madagascar, where, after many dismal and dangerous adventures, he was reduced to live with, and in the manner of, the natives for many years, and at last, when he least expected it, he was taken on board by a Dutch Captain, out of respect to the memory of his father, and brought safe to England, when his relations thought him long since dead." (Biographia, p.688)

His experiences had so devastated him that he became quite melancholy and withdrawn, though many sought him out to hear of his adventures. He composed a large account of his journey but this was later lost. Campbell states he died several years after his return to England without issue. The Dictionary of National Biography suggests that his constitution was broken by the hardships of his savage life and adds that he lived in Deptford for some years in very humble circumstances, and died 17 November 1708. An account of this adventure was also written by Robert Drury, another of the shipwrecked sailors who later escaped to England. This was published in 1729 as Madagascar and may have been a compilation of Benbow's and Drury's accounts worked up by Defoe. In his will he distributes about 1700 pounds amongst his sister Martha, her husband Thomas Stringer, their daughter Martha Stringer, his sister Katherine Benbow, and his brothers William Benbow and Richard Benbow. Katherine, William and Richard were all under 21 when the will was drawn up. The remainder of the estate he left to his mother. She proved the will on November 10, 1709.

He was buried in the Church of St. Nicholas Deptford in a family tomb located by the present altar. On it is engraved the Benbow coat of arms and the following inscription:

"Here lyeth ye Body of
John Benbow Elder Son
of Adm. John Benbow
viz. Admiral of Ye White
By Martha His wife
He died November ye 17, 1708
In ye 27th Year of His Age."

William

Campbell does not mention William by name so gathered little if any information about him from the Calton's. Parish records of St. Nicholas Deptford show William was baptised on 2 December, 1690. The Admiralty record of Commissions shows William was a Volunteer September 3, 1707, that is, an officer in training. The Commission is "for William Benbow (within the age) to be a Volunteer in the Burlington, Captain Thomas Mead, Commander." (Adm 6/9) In the margin, in the column for sponsors is written "Duke of Leeds". Now the Duke of Leeds, was Thomas Osborne, also known as the Earl of Danby, (b. February 20, 1632-d. July 26, 1712). He was a renown statesman who while chief minister to King Charles 11 organized the Tory Party in Parliament. As Lord High Treasurer in 1673-79 he is known to have enriched himself unscrupulously and so made many enemies. However, with uncanny foresight in 1677 he orchestrated the marriage of William of Orange to Princess Mary, daughter of James. He was instrumental in bringing William and Mary to the throne as one of the seven who signed the secret invitation which became the trigger to the whole Glorious Revolution. He personally

raised northern England in support of William. His political career was ended with his impeachment in 1695 for taking a bribe from the East India Company. No doubt his wealth and influence were little affected. He would be a extremely significant sponsor to a young man. The Benbow family must have retained some credit to have such a promoter. The connection may have been forged by the Duke of Leeds son, Peregrine Osborne, who became the Marquis of Carmarthen, a favourite of Czar Peter. Admiral Benbow and Carmarthen served together in the Channel fleet and no doubt spent many hours together at Sayes Court in consultation with Peter the Great.

The Register of Commissions and Warrants (Adm.6 Index) lists William as a Volunteer in September 1707 and again on March 14, 1711 in the Bedford Galley.

For further information we are indebted to an acquaintance of William's who was disappointed at Campbell's lack of information and so wrote to the Gentleman's Magazine in April, 1769. He suggests that Campbell's oversight may have been due to his source being biased.

"Now there was (I am informed) not long before Mr. Benbow died, a misunderstanding between Mr. Calton and him, which might prejudice Mr. Calton against him." (p.171-172)

One possible reason for this family conflict might be the 1728 lawsuit mentioned in the section on Katherine, wherein William was sued by certain heirs of an elderly lady for financial advice he gave her. In his defence he named Paul Calton as the source of his advice.

The writer to the Gentleman's Magazine wished to make up for Campbell's deficiency by providing what he knew of William. It would seem William tired of shipboard life for this author states that about 1710 William was admitted as a clerk under the comptroller of the store-keepers accounts at the navy office, earning 50 pounds per year. This was a respectable income comparable to that of a master carpenter and about twice that of a school master. Obviously he was well educated and no doubt was aided to some degree by friends of his father, possibly again by the Duke of Leeds, as jobs such as this were given through patronage. Despite his good abilities and the memory of his father he received no promotions and so in 1723 resigned. His most prominent sponsor, the Duke of Leeds was long dead. Also, the writer indicates a personal unhappiness was thought to have hastened his decision. He fell in love with the daughter of an eminent brewer and applied to her father for his consent to court her. When the old man heard whose son he was he showed some interest but upon learning the young suitor's salary he forbade any further action with the comment that he gave his own clerks more than that.

This must have quite devastated William for he never married and shortly thereafter resigned from the navy office. Interestingly he moved to the country and lived for some years with his sister and brother-in-law Mr. Calton, at Milton, near Abingdon in Berkshire. However, a few short years later they had a falling out:

"But by some disgust, (by what occasioned I know not) he left him, came up to London, and took lodgings in the city; where not long after, viz. in the beginning

of April, 1729 he was seized with a violent fever, which carried him off in a few days."

The writer adds some details about William having his brother John's manuscript of his adventures in Madagascar. Apparently it was only a journal like those kept by every sea officer and not a large and extensive work as Campbell was led to believe. In 1714 William's lodgings near Aldgate burned and he had only time to save himself and so lost his possessions, including this journal.

From Chancery records we learn that 1714 was a bad year for William in another respect. He was sued for repayment of money which he had borrowed for gaming, a problem he shared with his friend Paul Calton. (C11/3/2, London Record Office)

It is interesting that he started his employment as a Naval clerk shortly after the death of his brother John and left the position after receiving his inheritance from his mother in 1723. It was after this that he loaned mortgage money to Paul Calton and went to live with him and Katherine in Milton.

William was buried in 1728 or 1729 at St. Nicholas Deptford, near his mother, and would have been about 38. He died without a will and his estate went to his sister, Katherine Calton, and to a niece. The PCC Administration was granted to Katherine on 19 April 1729, and it indicates William Benbow was late of the Parish of St. Dunstan in the East London and was a bachelor.

The Gentleman's Magazine writer describes William as follows:

"Mr. Benbow was of a strong athletic make...he was also a great proficient at cricket...He abhorred every thing that was mean and base, had much of his father's bold and dauntless spirit, and could not be so supple as to cringe and fawn upon those in power; but, at the same time he was generous, courteous, and obliging to his friends. He was not addicted to any vice, had a just sense of religion, and good natural parts, not wholly uncultivated by learning.

Several of his letters, which are now lying before me, shew that he was able to converse with his friends ingeniously and politely. Mr. Benbow was fond of Epitaphs, and had made a large collection of them, both grave and humorous, with which he used frequently to amuse his friends."

One of these was that of W. Lowndes, Secretary to the Treasury in Queen Ann's Reign and perhaps suggests a side of William's own character.

"No ways or means, against the tyrant Death
Could raise supplies to aid thy fund of breath,
O Lowndes, it is enacted, soon or late,
Each branch of nature must submit to fate:
Each member of that house where thou didst stand,
Intent on credit, with thy bill in hand,
Shall equally this imposition bear,
And in his turn be found deficient here;

But trust in heav'n, where surplusses of joy,
And endless produce, will all cares destroy;
And may'st thou there, when thy accounts are past,
Gain a quietus which shall ever last."

Martha

The Admiral's eldest child was born in 1679 according to Blakeway and Owen. She married Thomas Stringer and then Samuel Robinson. The parish record of St. Botolph Without Aldgate shows Martha Benbow christened on April 8, 1684 with parents John Benbow and Martha. If born in 1679 she would have been 23 at the time of her father's death. She is mentioned in her brother John's will of 1708 as married to Thomas Stringer and they have a daughter Martha Stringer. After her death, her second husband, Samuel Robinson was granted the PCC Administration on July 14, 1719 which suggests she died some months earlier, at about age 38. She is described as a member of the parish of St. Steven Coleman Street, London, but died at Frilsom in Berkshire. Martha and Thomas Stringer had a daughter Martha who is mentioned in the will of her aunt Fra. Stringer of Stoke in the County of Darby. In this will dated 2 December 1727 Martha received 2000 pounds indicating her mother must have married into a wealthy family. (PCC Brook 64, Documents Section, London Society of Genealogists) One further point is of interest in this will: one of the witnesses is Richard Cowley. This is of some importance in tracing the Admiral's third son Richard as I believe he may have married a young woman of this family.

Richard

Historical material on the Admiral's youngest surviving child is scarce. Blakeway and Owen give Richard's birth as 1680 but this does not fit the evidence of his brother John's will of 1708 which states Richard is not yet 21. Callender and Britton in a Corrigenda refer to parish records of St. Nicholas Deptford:

"It now appears that this Richard (born in 1680) must have died before the Benbows came to Deptford: for another son, baptized at St. Nicholas on 7 November, 1693, was then christened Richard. This child also must have died in infancy and is probably the 'son of Captain John Benbow' buried on 4 January 1694, though this entry is not as clear as it might be. On 19 August, 1696, a third son to be christened Richard was baptized at St. Nicholas Church: and this of course would be the youngest of the three surviving sons mentioned in the Admiral's Will." (P.218)

The neighbouring parish of Stepney St. Dunstan records the marriage of Richard Benbow and Elizabeth Cow(t)ley on September 18, 1714. This is also listed in The Bishop of

London's Registry of Marriage Licences, but on September 16. This gives Richard's age as 24 so does not match the 1696 christening. However the Cowley name is interesting in that it appears in connection with Richard's niece, Martha Stringer. This couple have a daughter Elizabeth baptised on 5 August 1716 but then vanish from the parish records.

Richard is not mentioned in his mother's will of 1722 so probably died prior to that date or had lost contact with the family. However, it is particularly noteworthy that no mention is made of any children of Richard.

An article appeared in the Leicester Mercury on October 21, 1926 in which Mr. Stewart Benbow claimed to be a descendent of the Admiral through his son Richard.

"It is through Richard that I trace my descent,' said Mr. Benbow. 'A few years ago I discovered that Richard, who fought as a captain under Marlborough, was married at a small village in Wales. He had three sons and one daughter, but they carried only to the second generations, apart from that of Thomas Benbow.

Thomas had one son, James, who was born in 1755, and was the father of my grandfather--John Benbow--who, likewise, had only one son--my father, the late Dr. Benbow."

Mr. Stewart Benbow had in his possession a Benbow coat of arms consisting of two bent bows and arrows and a harpy with the words "Hostis, Honori Ianidra" (Envy is the enemy of Honour). He further stated that the Admiralty had posthumously awarded the Admiral 4000 pounds in prize money and this formed the nucleus of a fortune of a hundred million pounds still held by the State.

Callender and Britton refer to Mr. Henry Stuart Benbow's claim as follows:

There died recently in Birmingham at the advanced age of 87, Henry Stuart Benbow, claiming direct descent from the Admiral's eldest son, Richard, who, he stated, married a lady called Talbot, although proofs of the marriage could not be substantiated. Mr. H. S. Benbow was the happy owner of an armorial achievement, oil-paint on panel, which he claimed had descended to him from Admiral Benbow himself. The coat, however, showed marked differences from that engraved on the Milton Alms Dish, both bows and arrows being shown in reverse...the arrows with their points uppermost and the bows with their grips side by side and their strings contiguous to the arrows. From this piece of evidence it would appear that some other non-armigerous branch of the Benbow family, related or unrelated to the Admiral had 'assumed' arms with a 'difference' but without authority." (p.140)

Stewart Benbow's dream of the Benbow treasure is a common legend in many Benbow families. Archdeacon Hugh Owen was one of the first to make a reference to such a fortune, in his book SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ANCIENT AND PRESENT STATE OF SHREWSBURY, published in 1808. He states:

However, a great part of the Admiral's fortune is said to lye in the Bank of England in the name of trustees among the unclaimed dividends. William Briscoe, hatter, an assistant of this corporation, who was living in 1748, was supposed to be his representative, but was unable to substantiate his pretensions. (p.420)

I have personally searched Chancery records, at the Public Record Office, for the period 1697 to 1760, utilizing an index provided by Chas. A. Bernau, found at the Society of Genealogists, London. No record of any unclaimed fortune was discovered.

Direct Benbow descent from the Admiral can only be through Richard unless some illegitimate child is discovered. No direct link has been confirmed. However, one further piece of evidence has been found to tease us into believing a line of descendants does exist.

The Society of Genealogists in London has in its possession the microfilmed Smith Collection, a large series of notes made by a professional Genealogist, Mrs. V.T.C. Smith who worked for V.L. Oliver, the historian for Antigua. These papers which were presented to the Society in 1913 contain West Indian pedigrees and other more general information on families from all over England. In it there is a "Genealogy of Admiral Benbowe". It shows the Admiral's son John and his death in 1708 at Deptford. As well it indicates two other unnamed siblings and then beneath these, the name of Samuel. His children are indicated but only one is named, his daughter Mary with her husband Herbert Heseldene. It would appear the author was indicating a relationship between Samuel and the Admiral but did not know the precise connection. The parish record of Stepney St. Dunstons shows that Mary and Herbert Heseldene were married in 1757 and had at least two daughters, Mary Magdalene and Frances.

Interestingly less than 15 miles northeast of Stepney an ancestor of mine named Samuel Benbow was also married in 1757. He was a school master in the Knolls Hill Free School in Stapleford Abbots, Essex. He too claimed a relationship to the Admiral.

Brave the Captain was: the seamen
Made a gallant crew,
Gallant sons of English freemen,
Sailors bold and true.

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APPENDIX

THE WILL OF VICE-ADMIRAL JOHN BENBOW

IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN.

I John Benbow of Deptford in the county of Kent, Esqr., Rear Admirall of His Maties Fleet, being bound out upon an expedition in His Maties Service, considering the frailty and uncertainte of human life doe therefore and for the avoiding of all suites and controversies which might otherwise arise after my decease, make this my last Will and Testament in manner and forme following (that is to say) I recommend my soul to Allmighty God who gave it hoping through the meritts and meadiation of my deare Savioure Jesus Christ to receive pardon for all my sinns And my body I committ to the Earth or Sea as it shall please God to order to be decently interred as my executores shall think meet And as touching all such worldly estate which it shall please God at the time of my decease to bless me with I give and bequeath and dispose thereof as followeth: (vizt) Impris. I give and bequeath unto my welbeloved wife Martha Benbow during the terme of her natural life (if she shall soe long continue my widdow and unmarried) one annuity of three score and ten pounds sterling per annum free and clear of and from all taxes and other charges whatsoever to be paid unto her quarterly out of the interest of a mortgage of Two thousand five hundred pounds to me made of certain lands called Greenlands in the Parish of Hambleton in the county of Bucks and out of all other my estate whatsoever But if my said wife shall happen to marry again then and from thenceforth the said annuity of threescore and ten pounds to cease determine and be utterly void anything herein to the contrary notwithstanding Provided alwaies that the said three score and ten pounds per annum thereby devised to my wife shall be and is hereby by me declared to be my intent and meaning in full recompense and satisfaction of her Dower and Thirds on any other demands whatsoever which one may claime out of any estate reall or personall which I shall have at the time of my death And that in case my said wife should make any demands of her Dower or Thirds or other demand whatsoever over and above the said three score and ten pounds per annum That then and from henceforth my devise of the said three score and ten pounds pr annum to cease and be utterly void item I give and bequeath all my household goods to and amongst my children yet my desire is that my wife have the use of them or such part thereof as shall be requisite dureing her life (if she continue my widdow and not otherwise) After her decease or marriage to be divided amongst my children or the survivours or survivor of them Item All the rest and residue of all and singular my lands tenements goods chattells moneys and estate whatsoever as well reall as personall and which shall be mine or due and oweing unto me at the time of my death after my debts and funerall charges paid and discharged I doe give will and devise the same unto and amongst my children John Benbow William Benbow Richard Benbow Martha Benbow Katherine Benbow to be divided amongst them share and share alike and to be paid unto my said sons at their several ages of one and twenty years, and to my said daughters at the age of one and twenty years or days of marriage which shall first happen And if any of my said children shall happen to depart this life

before they shall attain such ages or before such legacy shall be due and payable then I doe give and order and will that such deceasing child's portion shall be divided amongst the surviving brothers and sisters equally And my will and meaning is that the sume or sumes hereby by me devised as portions to my children shall untill such time as my said children respectively shall attaine the ages aforesaid by sett out at interest by my executors for such child or children's benefit my said executors paying out of the increase thereof to my said wife such sume as they shall think fitt for the respective maintenance of the said children and for their education during the time she continues my widdow But afterwards I recommend the care and education of my children to my executors But my will and meaning is that in case it shall happen that my estate reall and personall shall amount to above One Thousand pounds apeece to my children Then I give and devise such overplus unto and amongst my sons equally to be divided And if it should happen that it should not amount to One Thousand pounds apeece Then I give and devise One Thousand pounds apeece to my said sons and the rest to be shared amongst my said daughters equally And my will and meaning is that if I should purchase any estate in my life time or any to my use That the same shall be subject to my said devises and not that my heire shall by inheritance claime the same and by this my will his share of the devises before mentioned my will and intention being that he shall have noe greater share or proportion than the rest of his brothers And I doe hereby nominate and appoint my loveing friends Thomas Waring of London Merchant Nathaniel Baskerville of Shrewsbury Gentl Thomas Minshall of London Fishmonger Executors of this my last Will and Testament and my will is that my said executors and trustees be indemnified for any lawfull acts they doe by virtue hereof And I give and bequeath unto my said executors Thomas Waringe and Nathaniel Baskerville the sum of twenty pounds apeece And I forgive unto my said executor Thomas Minshall all the debt he oweth me by Bond And I give and bequeath unto my loveing sister Elinor Hind twenty pounds to buy her mourning I hereby revoke all former wills by me made and declare this to be my last will and Testament In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and sealed and published and declared this to be my last will and testament this tenth day of June in the thirteenth year of the raigne of our Sovereigne Lord William the Third over England King and Defender of the Faith Annoq' Domini One thousand seven hundred and one J Benbow --Signed sealed published and declared by the said John Benbow to be his last will and testament in presence of and the witnesses subscribed their names in my presence Richard Plowman Cha Baynton Nath. Beale.

Probated 1703.

Prob 11/469, folio 47, printed page 22-23, Public Record Office, London, Chancery Lane.

WILL OF JOHN BENBOW

In the Name of God Amen

This tenth day of the month Nov. Anno Domini 1708 And in The Seventh Year of the Reign of our Soverign Lady Anne Queen of Great Brittain I John Benbow son of John Benbow deceased about four years agoe on the Island of Jamaica Being sick and weak in Body but of sound and disposing mind and memory thanks be to God for the same considering natur's frailty and Deth's certainty do Make and appoint my last Will and Testament in Manner following first and Principally I recommend my soul unto the hands of God that gave it hoping and thereby believing through the Merits Death and Passion of Jeasus Christ my alone Saviour and Redeemer to have the full and free pardon of all my Sins and to be made partaker of Life Eternal My Body I commit to the Earth from whence it came to be decently Interred, And as to that Temporal Estate where with God in mercy hath been pleased to bless me after my Debts paid and funeral expenses Discharged I give dispose thereof as followeth first whereas my Brother in Law Thomas Stringer the Husband of my Sister Martha Benbow is indebted unto me the sume of eight hundred pounds little money I give four hundred pounds thereof to my said Sister Martha Two hundred pounds of and the remainder of the said debt I give to my Niece Martha Stringer the Daughter of my said Brother and Sister Item to my sister Katherine Benbow I give the sum of four hundred pounds to be paid unto her at the Age of one and twenty years or the Day of Marriage which shall first happen Item I Give to my Brother William Benbow two hundred pounds And the like sum to my Brother Richard to be paid them respectively when they shall severally attain one and twenty years of age Item I Give to my Aunt Higinbotham Widow 20 pounds To my Aunt Ellenor Hind in Shrewsbury 20 pounds To Mr. Thomas Minshall Fishmonger I Give 20 pounds and to Mr. Waring living in Cannon Street London I Give 10 pounds for Mourning and to Mr. Read a Woolen Draper in the Strand I Give 10 pounds for Mourning and to Mr. Foster of London Merchant I also Give 10 pounds for Mourning To Mr. Holland Mr. Salladine Capt. Bolton Mr. James Nash Junr Mr. Smith Bookseller and Mr. Brock Sword Cutler to each I give Twelve shillings for a Ring to wear in Remembrance of me To the Three Maid Servants now living with my Brother Stringer I Give 5 pounds a piece for Mourning All the rest and residue of my Estate whatsoever either Real or personal thereby give Leave and Bequeath to my Dear and Honoured Mother Martha Benbow and doe hereby nominate and appoint her full and sole Executrix of this my last Will and hereby Revoking making void and of none Effect all former and other last Wills and Testamentary Disposures whatsoever either verbal or in writing. Do will that these presents only and none other be held respected and taken as my last will which may take Effect after my decease In witness whereof I the said Jn Benbow have hereunto put my hand and seal the Day and Year herein first before written - Jo: Benbow Signed Sealed Published and declared by the Testator John Benbow as and for his last Will and Testament in the presence of us who as witnesses have here unto subscribed our names in his presence William Stringfellow H. James Dollise William Scorey Notary. Proved 10 November 1709 by Martha Benbow the mother of the deceased and Executrix named. PCC Lane 238.

THE WILL OF MARTHA BENBOW

In the Name of God Amen.

I Martha Benbow of Deptford Widow the Relict and late Wife of Admiral John Benbow Decesed being Sick and weak of Body but of sound and perfect mind and memory praised be to almyty God...and calling to mind the uncertainty of this transitory Life do make my last Will and Testament in manner and form following. That is to say, Imprimis I commend my Soul unto the Hands of Almyty God my Creator and hoping and assuredly believing through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ my only Saviour and Redeemer to have free pardon and Remission of all my sins My Body I commit to the Earth to be decently buried at the discretion of my Executor hereafter named And as for what worldly goods and Estate it hath pleased God in his great Mercy to bestow upon me after my Debts Legasies are paid and funeral Expences discharged I do give Devise and bequeath the same as followeth , viz. First and Last I do give Devise and bequeath unto my son William Benbow and to my daughter Katherine Benbow all and singular my Estate both real and personal whatever nature kind or quality whatsoever whether it consists in Plate redy Mony Jewell Debts Bond or other wise however to be equally divided between them share and share alike And lastly I do hereby name make constitute and appoint said son and daughter William Benbow and Katherine Benbow my joint and Coexecutors in Trust to see this my last will performed and I do hereby Revoke all former and other wills by me heretofore made and do publish and declare these presents and none other to contain my last will and Testament in Witness whereof I the said Martha Benbow have hereunto set my hand and Seal. The Twentieth Day of November Anno Dom 1721 and in the eight year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord George by the Grace of God of Great Brittain, France and Ireland King defender of the Faith Etc.

Martha Benbow Signed Sealed and Delivered in the presence of us Elizb Stanton Mary Shire

Probated January 1722/3.

Prob 11-589, frame 8, 1723, Public Record Office, London, Chancery Lane.

HISTORICAL DATES

1558-1603 Elizabeth 1, Queen of England.
1603-1625 James VI (Stuart) of Scotland became James I, King of England.
1625-1649 Charles 1, King of England.
1642-1651 Civil War in England.
1649 Charles 1 beheaded by Parliament.
1651 Battle of Worcester, Oliver Cromwell defeated Charles 11.
1649-1660 The Commonwealth, England a Republic.
1651 Possible year of birth of Admiral John Benbow.
1651 Captain John Benbow captured and shot as a Royalist.
1652-1654 First Dutch-English naval war.
1655 William Penn took Jamaica from Spain for England.
1660-1685 Restoration. Charles 11 King of England.
1665-1667 Second Dutch-English naval war.
1665 The Great Plague decimated 1/4 of the population of London.
1666 The Great Fire of London; 4000 dead, 13000 houses destroyed.
1667 Treaty of Breda: Dutch English peace.
1668-1670 Henry Morgan sacked Portobelo, Maracaibo, and Panama.
1670 Treaty of Madrid. Spain recognized English holdings in Caribbean.
1672-1674 Third Dutch-English war.
1678 John Benbow enlisted as Masters mate on the Rupert, Portsmouth.
1685 James 11, King of England.
1688 James 11 driven out of England by William of Orange.
1688 John Benbow possible pilot of William's invasion fleet.
1689-1701 William of Orange became William 111, King of England.
1688 War between England and France, which supported James 11.
1690 Battle of Beachy Head.(Benbow credited with saving the fleet)
1692 Battle of Barfleur and La Hogue (Benbow Master of the Fleet).
1693-1695 Benbow led attacks on St. Malo and Dunkirk.
1696 Benbow promoted to Rear Admiral of the Blue, Channel Fleet.
1697 Treaty of Ryswick, peace between England/Holland, France and Spain.
1698-1700 Admiral Benbow's first West Indian tour.
1701 April 14 Benbow promoted to Rear Admiral of the Red.
1701 June 30 Benbow promoted to Vice Admiral of the Blue.
1701 September, Benbow sailed for the West Indies, arrived in November.
1702 January 19, Benbow promoted to Vice Admiral of the White. (1703?)
1702 May: War between the Dutch English allies and France and Spain.
1702 August 19, Admiral Benbow attacked Du Casse near Carthagena.
1702 November 4, Admiral Benbow died of his wounds.

BALLADS

THE HIGH BARBAREE

The length and breadth of England they toasted Benbow's name
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed he!
And told again the story that blazoned first his fame
All a'cruisin' down the coast of the High Barbaree!

And look-out in the crow's nest said, 'There's naught upon the lee,
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed he!
But there's a privateer to windward and she's sailing fast and free,
All a'cruisin' down the coast of the High Barbaree!

'Oh Quarter! Oh Quarter! those pirates smartly said,
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed he!
But the quarter Benbow gave them was to top them at the head,
All a'cruisin' down the coast of the High Barbaree.

When Benbow came to Cadiz he took those heads ashore,
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed he!
His servant bore them in a sack and Benbow walked before
All a'telling of his triumphs on the High Barbaree.

The officers of Revenue said 'Open up your sack,'
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed he!
He said 'It's salt provisions that will make a tasty snack'
All a'cruisin' down the coast of High Barbaree!

The Magistrates said, 'Open up' and so the bonds fell free,
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed he!
And thirteen heads came rolling out for all of Spain to see
And to shudder down the coast of the High Barbaree!

Now Benbow is an Admiral and off to try his chance,
Blow high! Blow low! And so sailed he!
God bless the King of England and curse the King of France,
And bring back the winds that blew him on the High Barbaree.

*From BENBOW WAS HIS NAME by Caryl Brahms and Ned Sherrin.

ADMIRAL BENBOW

Oh, we sail'd to Virginia, and thence to Fayal,
Where we water'd our shipping, and then we weigh'd all.
Full in view on the seas, boys, seven sails we did espy;
Oh, we manned our capstan and weigh'd speedily.

The first we came up with a brigantine sloop,
And we ask'd if the others were as big as they look'd;
But turning to windward as near as we could lie,
We found there were ten men-of-war cruising by.

Oh! we drew up our squadron in very nice line,
And boldly we fought them for full four hours' time;
But the day being spent, boys, and the night coming on,
We let them alone till the very next morn.

The very next morn the engagement prov'd hot,
And brave Admiral Benbow receiv'd a chain shot;
And when he was wounded to his merry men he did say,
'Take me up in your arms, boys, and carry me away.'

Oh! the guns they did rattle, and the bullets did fly,
But Admiral Benbow for help would not cry.
'Take me down to the cockpit; there is ease for my smarts.
If my merry men see me it will sure break their hearts.'

And there Captain Kirkby proved a coward at last,
And with Wade played at bo-peep behind the main-mast;
And there they did stand, boys, and quiver and shake,
For fear those French dogs their lives should take.'

The very next morning, by break of the day,
They hoisted their top sails and so bore away;
We bore to Port Royal, where the people flocked much
To see Admiral Benbow carried to Kingston Church.

Come, all you brave fellows, wherever you've been,
Let us drink to the health of our King and our Queen;
And another good health to the girls that we know,
And a third in remembrance of brave Admiral Benbow.

THE DEATH OF ADMIRAL BENBOW

Come, all ye seamen bold, lend an ear, lend an ear,
Come, all ye seamen bold, lend an ear:
'Tis of our admiral's fame,
Brave Benbow called by name,
 How he fought on the main you shall hear, you shall hear,
 How he fought on the main you shall hear.

Brave Benbow he set sail for to fight, for t fight,
Brave Benbow he set sail for to fight;
Brave Benbow he set sail
With a sweet and pleasant gale;
 But his captains they turned tail in a fright, in a fright,
 But his captains, they turned tail in a fright.

Says Kirkby unto Wade, 'I will run, I will run,'
Says Kirkby unto Wade, 'I will run.
I value not disgrace,
Nor the losing of my place;
 For my enemies I'll not face with a gun, with a gun,
 For my enemies I'll not face with a gun.

'Twas the Ruby and [Bredah] fought the French, fought the French,
'Twas the Ruby and [Bredah] fought the French;
For there was ten in all,
Poor souls, they fought them all;
 They valued them not at all, would not flinch, would not flinch,
 They valued them not at all, would not flinch.

Hard fortune that it was by chain shot, by chain shot,
Hard fortune that it was, by chain shot,
Our admiral lost his leg,
And of his men did beg,
 'Fight on, my British boys; 'tis my lot, 'tis my lot;
 Fight on, my British boys; 'tis my lot.

While the surgeon dressed his wounds thus he said, thus he said,
While the surgeon dressed his wounds thus he said:
'Let my cradle now in haste
On the quarter-deck be placed,
That mine enemies I may face till I'm dead, till I'm dead,
That mine enemies I may face till I'm dead.

And there bold Benbow lay, crying, 'Boys' crying, 'Boys,'
And there bold Benbow lay, crying, 'Boys,'
'Let us tack about once more;
We'll drive them all on shore:
I value not a score, nor their noise, nor their noise,
I value not a score, nor their noise.

Unsupported thus he fought, nor would run, nor would run,
Unsupported thus he fought, nor would run
Till his ship was a mere wreck,
And no man would him back,
For the others would not slack to fire a gun, fire a gun,
For the others would not slack to fire a gun.

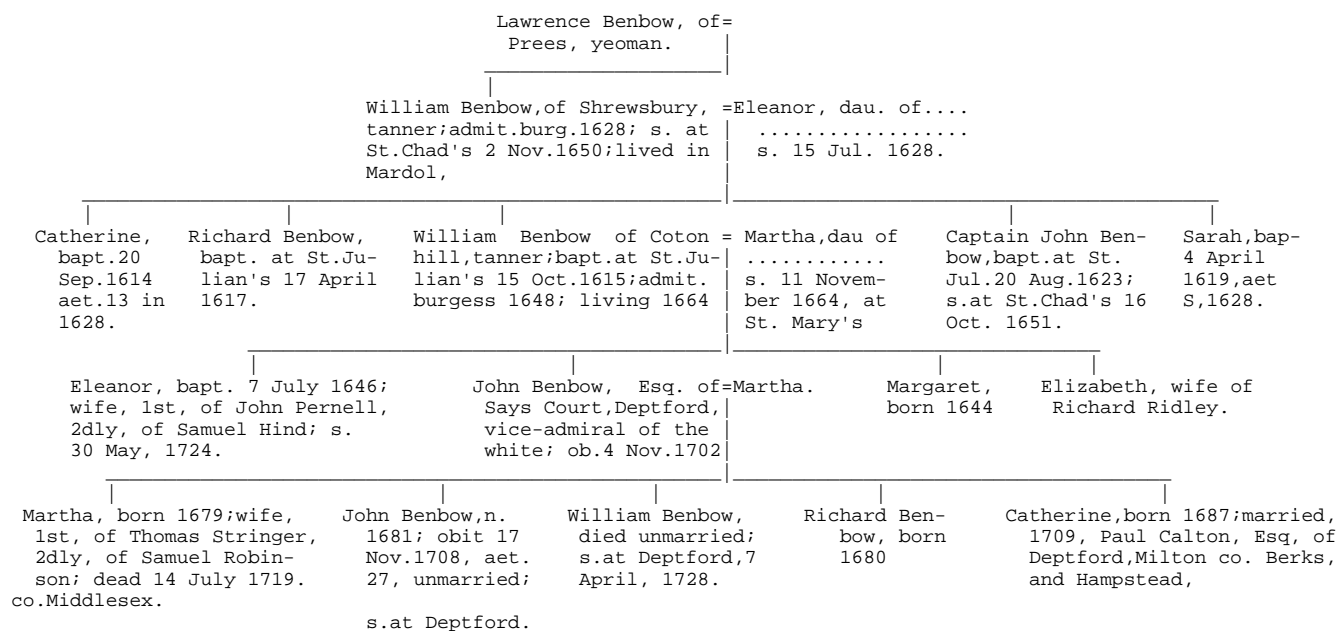
For Jamaica then at last he set sail, he set sail,
For Jamaica then at last he set sail,
Where [Whetstone] he did try,
And those cowards that did fly
And from the French in fright turned tail, turned tail,
And from the French in fright turned tail.

And those found most to blame, they were shot, they were shot,
And those found most to blame, they were shot;
Brave Benbow then at last,
For grief of what was past,
In a fever died at last, by hard lot, by hard lot,
In a fever died at last, by hard lot.

Naval Songs and Ballads, ed. C.H.Firth, London, Navy Records Society, 1908.

PEDIGREES

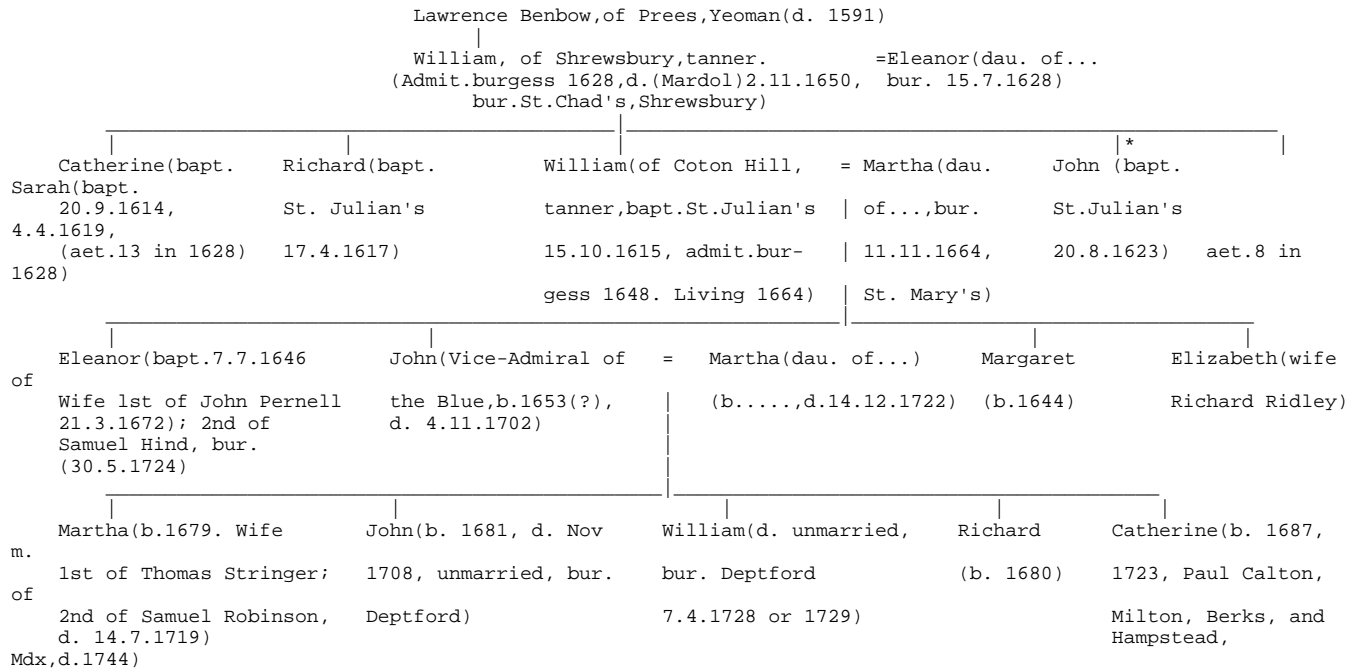
PEDIGREE of COTON HILL BENBOWS



Blakeway and Owen, A History of Shrewsbury, London, 1825, p. 390.

PEDIGREE OF VICE-ADMIRAL JOHN BENBOW

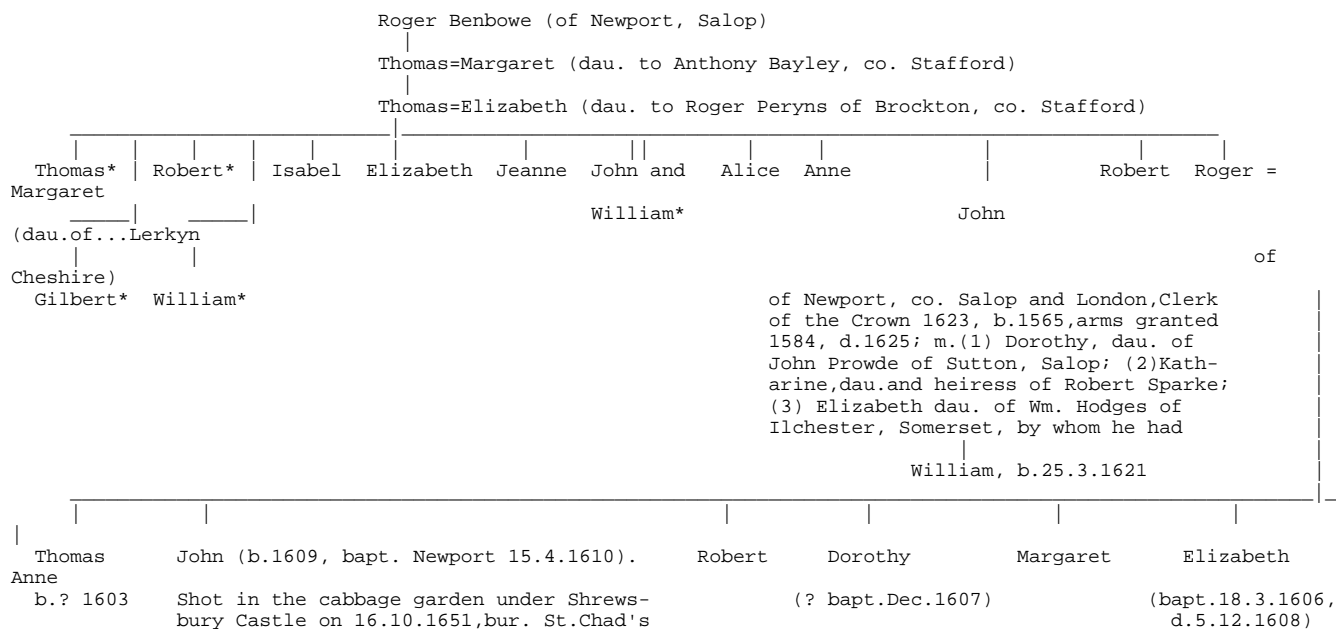
(Based on that in the History of Shrewsbury by Owen and Blakeway, with addenda and corrigenda from other sources)



*Described erroneously as 'Captain' by Owen and Blakeway, who maintain that he was shot 16.10.1651, the date of the execution of John of the Roger Benbow descent.

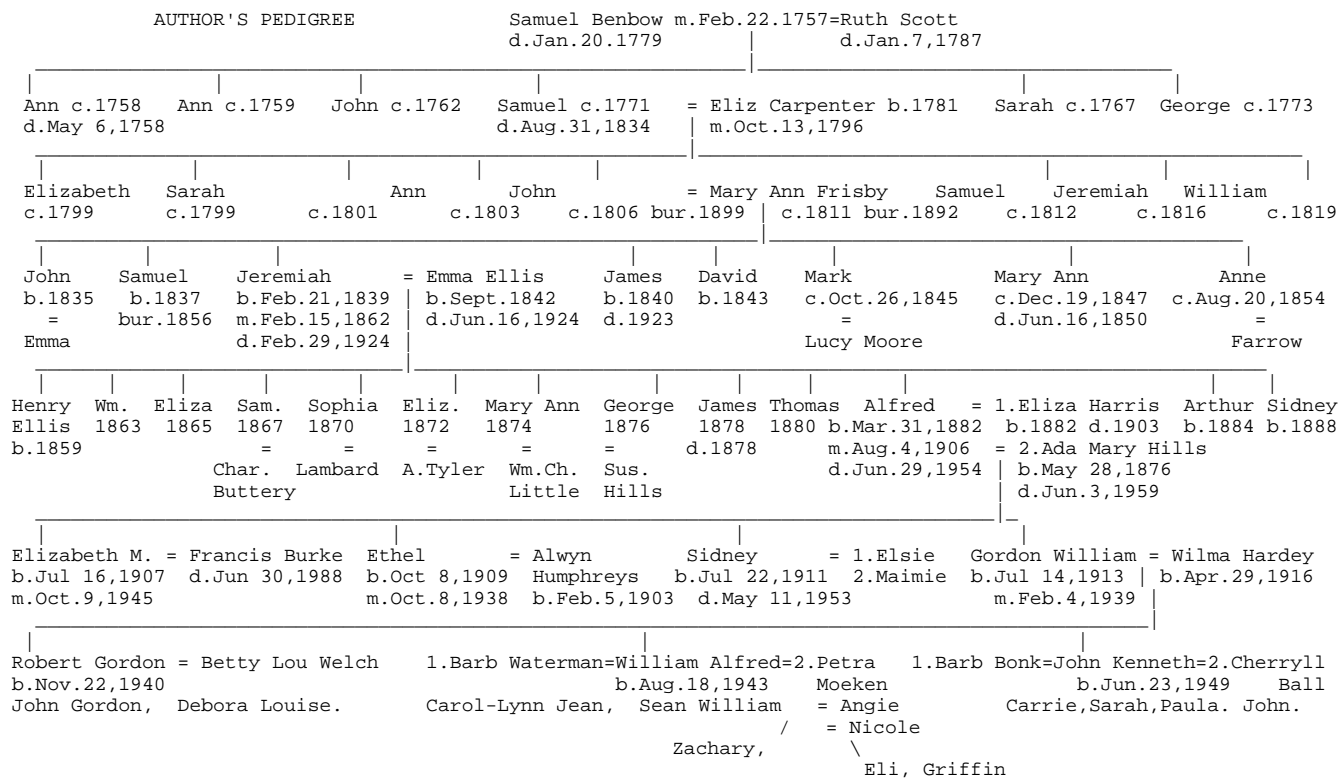
Calender and Britton, "Admiral Benbow, Fact and Fiction", The Mariners' Mirror, vol. xxx, (1944), p.130.

PEDIGREE OF THE BENBOWS OF NEWPORT, SALOP
(Based on The Visitations of Shropshire, vol. 1, edited for the Harleian Society by Grazebrook and Rylands)

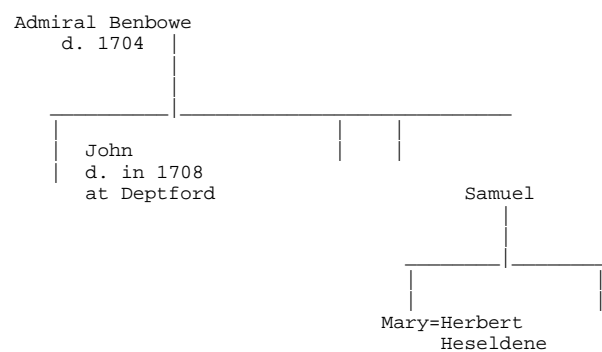


Notes. Biographers repeat the statement that Roger, the father of Thomas and John, had a numerous family, but it would seem that it was his father, Thomas who should have had this ascription.
* Died without heirs

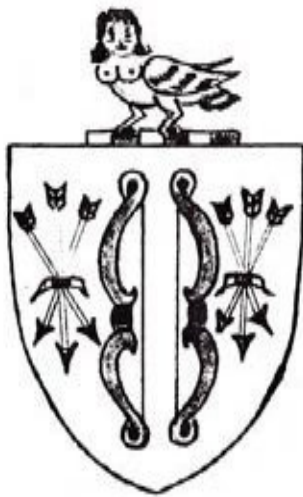
Calender and Britton, "Admiral Benbow, Fact and Fiction", The Mariners' Mirror, vol.xxx, (1944), p.135.



GENEALOGY OF ADMIRAL BENBOW



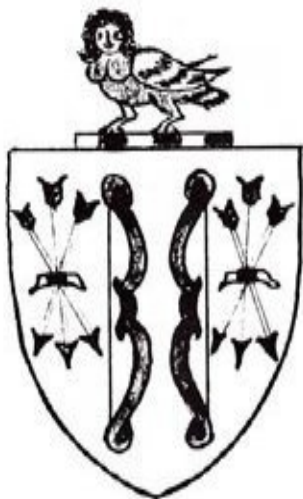
Smith, V.T.C. Smith Collection, London: Society of Genealogists,
Microfilm 966, vol.23, p. 204.



Newport Benbow Arms
Granted 1584 to
John Benbow



The Milton Alms Dish
Hall mark: 1679-80



The Tomb of Adm. Benbow
Kingston Parish Church
&
The Naval Chronicle
vol. xx



Stewart Benbow
Calender and Britton
p.140-141