

**BRAVE BENBOW DOCUMENTARY SCRIPT**

An adaptation of the book 'Brave Benbow'

By William A. Benbow

First Draft by William Benbow

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A documentary in two parts

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**PART ONE**

Roots: 1651 – 1666

Learning his Trade: 1667 – 1687

A Call to Arms: Benbow rejoins the Navy: 1688 - 1690

The Channel War (War of the English Succession): 1690 – 1692

The Channel War: 1693 and 1694



<i>Visuals</i>	<i>Audio</i>
<p><b>CLIP:</b> Ships fighting</p> <p><b>TITLE: BRAVE BENBOW</b>  <b>SUB-TITLE: THE BENBOW MUTINY</b>  <b>DOCUMENTARY</b></p>	<p><b>SONG:</b> The Death of Admiral Benbow</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE DEATH OF ADMIRAL BENBOW</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>'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.</p> <p>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.</p>

**PAINTING:** NMM BHC2546 Admiral John Benbow, by Godfrey Kneller,



**NARR:**

Historians describe Admiral Benbow as a mystery.

He never won a major battle as admiral. His death received little if any notice from the Naval authorities or Government of his day. Yet, he has always been a popular hero – a model of the honest, brave British tar.

How did he become such a legendary hero.

This painting of Admiral Benbow was done for the Royal Court, just before his final voyage to the West Indies. It is interesting because unlike most formal portraits of military leaders, Benbow is not holding the traditional staff of office, but is brandishing a sword: he was a fighting Admiral. And as a fighting Admiral his name is renowned in story, folksongs and scores of British pubs.

**PICTURE:**



**CLIP:** Panning shots of inside of pub

**NARR:**

Robert Louis Stevenson begins Treasure Island in just such a pub as this: The Admiral Benbow in Penzance, Cornwall.

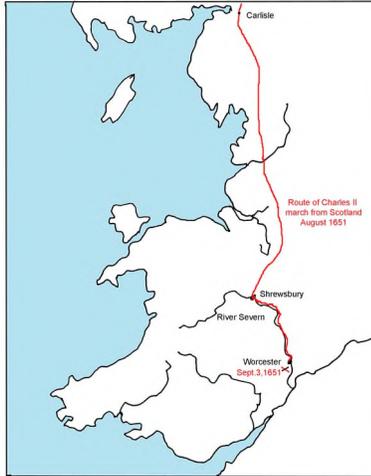
At the only pitched action in which he commanded a fleet, at the **Battle of Santa Marta**, also known as “**The Action of August 1702**”, on the Spanish Main, the captains of his ships failed to give him proper support – practically ran away. Benbow fought on as long as he could, but was forced by his captains to call off the fight.

Yet Benbow was later remembered as “the Nelson of his day”. Ballads were sung and his heroic deeds were written on paper “broadsheets” and posted on the walls of sailors’ favourite pubs. And scores of these watering holes were renamed “The Admiral Benbow” just like this one in Penzance, Cornwall.

Benbow’s history began in the year of his birth on a blood-soaked field near Worcester in 1651.



**ANIMATION: MAP OF CHARLES' MARCH**



**NARR:**

As the younger Charles progressed through Shrewsbury and south to Worcester he called for loyal followers to rise to his cause and fight the Parliamentary forces led by Oliver Cromwell.

**PAINTING:** Battle of Worcester by Thomas Woodward, City of Worcester



**NARR:**

At Worcester Charles met Cromwell's army and was roundly beaten by the Roundheads. He barely escaped with his life by hiding in a tree.

**PAINTING:** Cromwell NMM BHC2638



**ENGRAVING: Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester**  
From Cromwelliana published by Machel Stace,  
Westminster, 1810.



**NARR:**

Most of those who had answered his call to arms were caught, including several Earls, and many senior officers of his army including a number of Colonels. The victorious Parliamentary army, enraged over the escape of Charles, decided to make an example of their most well known captives: one was the Cavalry Colonel: **John Benbow**.

**Woodcut: Colonel John Benbow**  
From the Loyall Martyrology 1665



**NARR:**

Benbow had once served as a Captain in the Parliamentary forces and so was considered a traitor for changing sides. His former commander was now Governor of Shrewsbury, and chaired his Court Martial. He did not recognize the legitimacy of Benbow's Royal commission as Colonel, so tried him as a Captain.

This picture of Colonel John Benbow is from the cover of a booklet published in 1665 after Charles II was finally restored to his throne. It is titled "The Loyall Martyrology" and tells of the loyal Royalists who died fighting for their King.

**PICTURE:** Shrewsbury Castle



**CLIP:** Video around castle

**NARR:**

Colonel Benbow was convicted of Treason and executed. The promise to spare his life was ignored. Colonel Benbow was shot in his home town: in the cabbage garden of the Castle at Shrewsbury. He is said to have died bravely.

**PICTURE:** Colonel Benbow's gravestone



**CLIP:** Video of St. Chad's Church, grave

**NARR:**

Colonel Benbow is buried in the Church Yard of St. Chad's Church, Shrewsbury.

Inscription:

“HERE LIETH THE BODY OF  
CAPTAIN JOHN BENBOW,  
WHO WAS BURIED YE OCTOBER 16, 1651

His estate was probated by a kinsman,  
also named John Benbow.

**COAT OF ARMS of BENBOW**



**NARR:**

Colonel John Benbow's family were minor gentry from the Newport area of Shropshire, just a few miles from the county seat, Shrewsbury. One of the more prominent members of this tribe had risen to be Clerk of the Crown in the early 1600s. The Newport Benbows used a coat of arms, made up of two bows between two bunches of arrows; and a crest of a Harpy, a savage mythological bird with the head of a woman, that snatches up opponents for punishment by the Furies.

The arms are those of a warrior; weapons ready. One version has an arrow through the Harpy's breast.

**PICTURE:** Milton Alms dish



**NARR:**

A strong connection between Colonel Benbow and our Admiral Benbow is seen in the admiral's use of this coat of arms.

In Admiral Benbow's day, the use of a coat of arms was a coveted sign of nobility. It marked you as a gentleman, a person worthy of respect. It is significant that Benbow chose the Newport Arms of Colonel Benbow for his own use. By doing this he clearly claimed a connection to the martyred Colonel and to his noble roots.

There are three remaining pieces of evidence showing his use of the Colonel's arms. After his death, his daughter Katherine gave a Silver Alms dish with this coat of arms to the parish Church in Milton, near Oxford. This was Admiral Benbow's summer home. A similar coat of arms appears on Admiral Benbow's grave marker, and on that of his son.

In addition Benbow is known to have displayed his coat of arms on his home in Deptford. It clearly was important to him to so mark his family's status and heritage.

**CLIP:**

Video of Milton Manor, St. Blaise Church, Alms dish.

**ENGRAVING: NMM PAD4368 Admiral Benbow by John Chapman 1797**



**NARR:**

The future Admiral John Benbow was probably born in the same year as the Colonel's death, 1651.

His daughter, Katherine, recounts that Colonel Benbow, this hero of the English Civil War, was his uncle.

No record has been found of the Admiral's birth, but this is understandable: parish records were not well kept during Cromwell's rule when the English Church was persecuted.

However, his grave marker proclaims he was in his 52<sup>nd</sup> year in 1702.

This engraving shows a youthful Admiral Benbow, in the armour of a warrior, like his uncle.

**PICTURE: Mardol Street, SHREWSBURY S**  
by T.S. Boys, Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery



**NARR:**

Admiral Benbow's upbringing in Shrewsbury is confirmed in his 1703 obituary. This states that young John attended the 'free school' in Shrewsbury as a youngster. We know that later, Admiral Benbow's sister, Elinor, ran a coffee house in Shrewsbury, and is buried there in St. Marys Church yard.

There is a tale that Elinor kept a portrait of their uncle, the martyred Colonel, in her coffee house, and that one of his judges, upon visiting her coffee house, was marked by blood on his hands when he pulled off his gloves.

In later years Admiral Benbow made regular donations to St. Marys Church and was entertained by the Shrewsbury town council in June 1698.

**CLIP: Video of old Shrewsbury, St. Marys Church**

**ENGRAVING:** Cotton-Hill House  
Gentleman's Magazine Dec.1809



**NARR:**

A tradition grew up in Shrewsbury that the house where Admiral Benbow lived as a youth was on Cotton-Hill. It came to be known as Benbow House. The story evolved that Benbow was the son of a tanner, apprenticed to a butcher, and ran away to sea. For years a key hung on a tree in front of the house, supposedly left by the youngster. Under it was written: "Admiral John Benbow, Born 1651, The Nelson of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century".

We do know that the Newport Benbows owned tanneries, so they may have been connected to this Shrewsbury family.

**CLIP:**  
Video of re-enactment of Royalists and Parliamentary battle, or stills.  
Images of Civil War cavalry from Richard Clark



**NARR:**

In Katherine's account there were two brothers, both of whom served as Colonels in Charles' army. One of these Royalist officers survived and was her grandfather.

This family history is further reinforced in the Admiral's obituary which states that the Benbows had lost their wealth and status due to their loyalty to the Stuart monarchy.

**DRAWING:** Tower of London, British Museum, by Wenceslaus Hollar



**ENGRAVING:** NMM PAD1431



**CLIP:**

Video of exterior and interior of the Tower.

**NARR:**

Katherine tells a tale of the Admiral's father meeting the restored Charles II in the Tower of London, where he worked as an armourer, a little before the third Dutch War of 1665. Samuel Pepys, the famous diarist, records just such a surprise visit by the King to the Tower on November 8, 1664.

The King had come to the Tower to examine the magazines and arms. There he spotted the good old colonel, whom he had not seen in many years and who now had a fine head of grey hairs. The King immediately embraced him.

**CLIP:** Admiral's father meets Charles II at Tower of London

**CHARLES:**

My old friend Colonel Benbow, what do you here?

**BENBOW:**

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.

**CHARLES:**

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

**NARR: (VO)**

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. So, both Colonels fell martyrs to the royal cause, one in grief, and the other in joy.

**ENGRAVING:** NMM H1730 Rotherhithe river frontage and Angel tavern



**NARR:**

Katherine's story is supported by the local history in the Rotherhithe area of London, just across the Thames from Tower Hill, that Admiral Benbow was raised in that neighbourhood. This would place the Admiral, as a young teenager, quite close to the London docks and Thames River shipping.

**ENGRAVING:** Shrewsbury Museum Service (P/2005/0822) sy9665, Prospect of the Town of Shrewsbury and the Severn River



**NARR:**

The Admiral's obituary indicates that because of his family's poverty, he was forced to be apprenticed to a waterman, following the death of his father. Watermen were the sailors who manned the boats that took freight and passengers across and up and down the rivers and canals, including the Severn River. It is likely that young Benbow returned to his extended family in Shrewsbury and found employment with kin on the Severn. There are records of Benbows owning River Boats in the 17<sup>th</sup> century on the Severn.

So he was "bred to the sea", learned his trade from the bottom up, and became a professional sailor, called a "tarpaulin" or "tar" after the oiled canvas coats the sailors wore in bad weather.

**CLIP:** Admiral Benbow Pub, Shrewsbury



**BENBOW COMMENTATORS:**

**Bob:**

So, the evidence that we have suggests that Admiral Benbow was born around 1651 to the ancient family of the Newport Benbows, with a tradition of sacrifice for one's King and Country.

**Fred:**

Yes, and into a family that had lost their place in society because of their loyalty and sense of duty. The young lad was raised in Shrewsbury during the 1650s and moved to London in the 1660s when his father found employment in the Tower after the Restoration of Charles II.

**Bob:**

And following his father's death, when he was a young teenager, he apprenticed to a waterman in the Severn shipping trade, probably in the family business.

**Fred:**

We can imagine that he was raised with tales of the family's past glory and heroic deeds. And then what?

**Bob:**

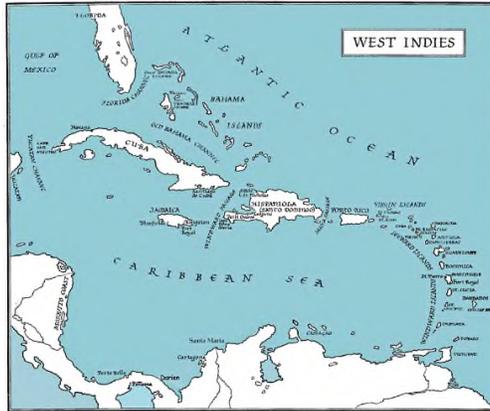
Well, the obituary tells us that "Afterwards he us'd the seas and set up for a Privateer in the West Indies"

**Fred:**

Let's be off then, to the West Indies.

## Learning his Trade: 1667 - 1687

### MAP: West Indies



### NARR:

The Severn flowed into Bristol, which serviced the major West Indies trade.

We can imagine that young Benbow, bored with the mundane to and fro of a waterman, jumped at the chance to seek fame and fortune as a privateer in the distant and exotic Caribbean. Benbow would have been in his late teens at the end of the 1660s when the government of Jamaica encouraged privateers.

Privateers were local seamen who were licensed by the government to harass Spanish possessions and shipping in the Caribbean.

### ENGRAVING: Henry Morgan, Bridgeman Art Library and NMM PAD2636



### NARR:

Like pirates they could attack enemy ships or colonies and capture them as 'prizes'. The difference was that they carried a letter from the English governor as a license. This allowed them the protection and safe haven of Port Royal, the English capital of Jamaica.

Henry Morgan, was the leader of these privateers, and led many of these attacks.

### CLIP:

Video of Port Royal, Fort Charles

**ENGRAVING: Spanish destroyed by Captain Morgan**  
**Bridgeman Art Library and NMM PAD5126**



**NARR:**

Benbow would have learned his fearless and fierce fighting tactics from Morgan. He would have learned to lead by example to charge into the fray, to fight up close: ship hard against ship, to terrorize and then board the enemy.

This Engraving shows Morgan destroying Spanish ships and capturing their treasure.

**CLIP:** Ships fighting on the Spanish Main from film.

**NARR:**

But, the privateers were too successful. Spain signed the Treaty of Madrid with England in July 1670, recognizing English possessions in the Caribbean.

In exchange, England agreed to curtail privateering in the Indies.

So this lucrative and rapid route to restored fortune was blocked to our young seaman.

Benbow and the other privateers had to take up more civilized positions in merchant ships trading in the Caribbean and Mediterranean.

**PAINTING:** Jean-Baptiste du Casse, Wikipedia Musee de France



**NARR:**

It is worth mentioning one other famous Privateer: Jean Baptiste du Casse. He rose to fame when privateering came back into vogue with the French wars in the 1690s.

Du Casse began his career in the perilous slave trade, became leader of the French buccaneers, a French Admiral, and governor of Saint Domingue on Hispaniola. In the 1680's and 90's he preyed on Dutch, English and Spanish merchantmen. He raided English settlements on Jamaica, and in 1696 joined in a successful raid on the great port of Cartagena on the Spanish Main. He was the last of the great buccaneering leaders.

And he was Benbow's nemesis.

**PAINTING:** NMM BHC3582 English two decker



**NARR:**

The first official mention of our future Admiral is when young John Benbow joined the Royal Navy in 1678. Pay book records indicate one of his first ships was the 42 gun Phoenix which he joined as a Master's Mate or junior navigator in January 1678, when he would have been about 27 years old.

The Phoenix was part of the squadron of Vice-Admiral Arthur Herbert, destined for the Mediterranean.

It was customary for merchant seamen to enter the Navy at one rank lower than their merchant station, so Benbow probably had experience as a master of merchant ships.

On merchant ships the Master was the Captain as well as the navigator, so Benbow came with considerable experience as a professional seaman.

**Clip:** A ship of the line rushing through the water from film (ostensibly the Rupert).

This painting by William van de Velde the Younger is of the Resolution, a sister ship to Herbert's flagship, the Rupert.

**ENGRAVING:** Admiral Lord Torrington, British Museum, AN397141



**NARR:**

Herbert served as vice-admiral or second-in-command in the Mediterranean station until May 1679 when he accepted full command.

He later became Admiral, the Earl of Torrington, and was a major patron and promoter of Benbow's career.

**MAP:** Mediterranean



**Narr:**

**ETCHING:** NMM PAD6938, Tangier, by Wenceslaus Hollar



**CLIP:**  
Video of Tangier shoreline

**COPPER ENGRAVING: Tangier c.1618**



**COPPER ENGRAVING: SALE c.1618**



**COPPER ENGRAVING: Algiers c1690**



## **NARR:**

The coast of North Africa was thick with pirates. 160 British merchant ships were listed as captured by Algerians between 1677 and 1680. This translates into a probable 7,000 to 9,000 British men and women killed or taken into slavery in those years

England's response was to base a squadron of warships to patrol the Barbary coast, particularly around Moroccan ports such as **Sale**, and Algiers.

Their main base was **Tangier**, at that time an English possession.

These three Copperplate engravings show Tangier, Sale, and Algiers in the 1600s.

**PAINTING:** NMM BHC0893 Action with Barbary pirates.



## **NARR:**

Shortly after Herbert's fleet arrived off Cape St. Vincent, in March, 1678, the Phoenix engaged the Tiger, a large Algerian ship of 40 guns. The Rupert and the Mary came to her assistance. Herbert closed to within half cannon shot before he unleashed his broadsides.

The battle was extremely close and vicious as the Algerian fought on despite having lost about two hundred men. The Rupert suffered about fifty casualties, many on the quarterdeck including the death of a lieutenant and many officers. Herbert himself suffered a wound to his eye but fought on until the Tiger struck its colours, indicating surrender.

Benbow benefitted from Herbert's need to replace his deceased officers. On April 30, 1678 Herbert promoted Benbow to the Rupert. He must have fought well to have caught the attention of his superiors.

He was promoted again in June 1679 to the position of Master of the Nonsuch under future Admiral George Rooke. Benbow must have excelled in his trade as a professional seaman and navigator, and clearly had gained the patronage of Admiral Herbert.

In July 1680 Cloudesley Shovell took over command of the Nonsuch. Shovell also later became an Admiral of renown, and booster of Benbow's career.

This Painting, by Willem van de Velde, the Younger, gives detail of an Action with Barbary Pirates, about 1678. Again, we see a large English two-decker such as the Rupert engaging on both sides.

In the left foreground is a damaged Barbary ship.

**PAINTING:** NMM BHC0323



**NARR:**

In March **1681** Benbow ran afoul of one of the other ship's captains

The Adventure under **Captain William Booth** engaged the Algerian Golden Horse. The ships fought to a standstill until a distant ship appeared under Turkish colours. Booth broke off, fearing that he was outnumbered, but was dismayed to see the **Golden Horse** surrender to the late comer which turned out to be the Nonsuch, now under Captain Francis Wheeler with Benbow still as Master.

Captain Wheeler refused to share the prize or to relinquish the Algerian's colours to Booth. Back in Tangiers, the tension escalated between the officers and men of the two ships.

This Painting by Willem van de Velde, the Younger, shows an English two decker and a Barbary two decker in Action, around 1680. The Barbary ship is on fire.

**CLIP:**  
Benbow in Tangier Pub

Benbow and a group of his Nonsuch mates sneer and snicker at a table of Adventure junior officers.

**Benbow:**

"Landlord, I am surprised you serve Poltroons in this establishment. You'll drive away all your decent trade."

At which point the 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant of the Adventure bristled back:

**Lieut:**

"And I am surprised that you serve those who hide behind false colours; Aye, and steal the captured colours rightly due the real victors"

**Benbow:**

"Tis not we who are false: twas your Captain Milksop who kept his ship a full canon shot to windward while we hotly engaged the enemy. No doubt he feared soiling his fine pantaloons."

A general melee breaks out.

<p><b>PICTURE:</b> Gibraltar, NMM PU7006</p>  <p><b>CLIP:</b> Video of Gibraltar shoreline</p>	<p><b>NARR:</b></p> <p>Booth brought charges against Benbow. On April 20, 1681 Benbow appeared before a court martial held in the Bay of <b>Gibraltar</b>. Admiral Herbert, now of the Bristol, presided. The evidence was well attested to and there was no avoiding a conviction, despite Herbert's sympathies. The Admiral did however devise a means of easing the punishment.</p>
<p><b>CLIP:</b> Benbow's Court martial</p>	<p><b>Herbert:</b></p> <p>"John Benbow, Master of the Nonsuch, upon examination hath been found only to have repeated those words after another. It is therefore ordered that for repeating these publicly 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."</p>
<p><b>CLIP:</b> Benbow apologizing on the Bristol.</p>	<p><b>Benbow:</b></p> <p>"Sir, I do ask your pardon. I did not intend to injure you by my words. I declare before this company that I meant no disrespect."</p> <p>Captain Booth appears unmoved.</p> <p><b>Booth:</b></p> <p>"You sir have an uncivil tongue, and a rougher manner about you. Take this as a lesson from your betters. I dare say you'll not go far in this navy. I pray I do not have to set eyes upon you again."</p> <p>At which point he turns abruptly and moves to the Great Cabin, where a noon meal had been set for the captains. Benbow, his throat acid with bile, moves to return to the Nonsuch.</p>

**PAINTING:** NMM BHC0890 English Merchant ship in a Mediterranean Harbour



**NARR:**

This was, no doubt, the most difficult thing Benbow ever had to do: he never forgot it. And no doubt he bore a lasting resentment to Booth's type of officer: snobbish, lordly, and overly cautious.

In November of 1681 the Nonsuch was ordered back to England where her entire company were paid off and disbanded. This was a low time for the Royal Navy, with very few ships employed in active duty.

After his public humiliation, and with little call for his services, Benbow decided he'd had enough of the Royal Navy.

Again he must have felt his path to restore the family's fortunes was blocked. The navy now offered little promise of the recognition and respect he yearned for.

Instead, with several of his former shipmates, he found employment commanding merchant ships trading with the Mediterranean. Records show he was master of the 80 ton London with four guns and eight men in 1683; the 90 ton Joseph with ten guns and eleven crew in 1684; the Malaga Frigate of 130 tons, fourteen guns and eighteen men in 1685. Eventually he purchased his own ship, the Benbow frigate. His old commander, Arthur Herbert is known to have financially assisted his protégés in such ventures.

This painting by Willem van de Velde, the Younger shows an English Merchant Ship in a Mediterranean Harbour. She is flying a St. George's flag and pendant. Another ship fires a salute.

**ENGRAVING:** NMM PAD2187 Deptford and Greenwich, pub. Alexander Hogg



**CLIP:**  
Video of Deptford, St. Nicholas Church

**NARR:**

During his early years in the Royal Navy Benbow married Martha who bore him several children. Those who survived to adulthood were Martha born in 1679, John in 1681, Katherine in 1687, and William in 1690. There were three sons named Richard, the survivor born in 1696.

The dates for Martha junior and John junior suggest Martha probably accompanied her husband on his naval station in the Mediterranean.

The family established themselves in Deptford during these years as he furthered his career as Master and owner of merchant ships.

**ENGRAVING:** Barbary pirates attacking an English ship: NMM PAG6895



**NARR:**

There are several accounts of Benbow fighting off pirate attacks in these years. It was noted that Benbow was the first to have introduced the practice of heaving his ship close to the enemy before pouring in the broadside; a practice he no doubt learnt from Captain Morgan and used in fighting off pirates in the Mediterranean.

One such attack upon Benbow's own ship, the Benbow Frigate in 1686 is quite notable.

This engraving shows an English ship attacked by Barbary pirates, circa 1669 – 1681.

**CLIP from film Benbow Mutiny: The Benbow Frigate and the Sallee Rover: 1686**

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - OCEAN - MERCHANT SHIP - DAY

The lone merchant ship rocks quietly, luff into the wind, almost motionless, appearing deserted.

A sallee rover mother ship coasts nearby, flying its red flag with crescent moon and stars. Cannons bristle from several port holes.

A low BELLOWING builds into a CACOPHONY OF SCREAMING BARBARY PIRATES.

Two galleys race INTO FRAME, and grapple the merchant ship from both sides.

Ferocious pirates swarm up the steep sides of the helpless prey; stream over the rails and into the centre of the ship with fangs bared.

The waist fills with the pirate horde who madly search for an enemy to devour.

No resistance. Confusion. They press towards the ladders and stairs at the bow and stern.

Suddenly all hell breaks loose.

Defenders leap up to man the hammock filled rails of the Quarterdeck and Forecastle;

Swivel guns disgorge shrapnel, slicing and dicing the teeming mass of howling pirates. Blood and guts everywhere.

Men slipping and sliding as they backup seeking refuge.

Muskets fire from the fore and main tops into the bleeding mass.

Steady and disciplined pistol fire erupts from the Quarterdeck and Forecastle. The swivel guns quickly reloaded, again unleash their fire and brimstone, scything through the beaten and trampled mass below.

The pirates attempt to save themselves by retreating back to the side rails.

Seamen wade in with axes and swords, led by a BURLY WARRIOR who SCREAMS piercing Saxon curses.

Some of the rogues escape to their galleys.

The attacked SHIP FIRES ITS CANONS directly into the fleeing galleys, sending them quickly to the bottom. The mother ship flees from withering broadsides.

It is over as suddenly as it began. The deck is left a morass of writhing bodies.

The Crew begins to shift the enemy wounded and bodies to the side to heave them overboard.

The burly warrior, CAPTAIN JOHN BENBOW, stops them with a SHOUT.

BENBOW

Avast there.  
I'll have their heads. Yes, their heads  
put them in a pork barrel. Feed what's  
left to the fishes.

The men look puzzled, then go to work with a vengeance. We see them raise their weapons: axes and swords.

CLOSE on the transom to show the name of the ship "BENBOW"

INT. CADIZ - CUSTOM HOUSE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "1684: CADIZ, SPAIN, CUSTOM HOUSE"

Captain Benbow, man on a mission, stands before several customs' MAGISTRATES, accompanied by a husky black sailor carrying a sack over his shoulder.

MAGISTRATE

We do apologize, Captain Benbow: we value  
your trade. But we can permit no exceptions.  
Please, show us the contents of your sack

BENBOW

As I told your officials, these are but salt  
provisions for my own use.

MAGISTRATE

Senor, por favor

BENBOW

Very well, since you insist...in truth, if you like  
these, they are at your service...Caesar - open the  
sack on the table.

Caesar, the sailor, empties the sack of heads upon the Magistrate's table: heads role out, some bounce to the floor, to the amazement of the stunned Spanish authorities.

Shock gives way to lusty laughter and cheers and cries of "Piratas!".

**Engraving:** Pirate Heads from Brave Men in Action



**Scrimshaw by Dennis Holland: Pirate Heads based on Engraving:** Pirate Heads from Britain's Sea Kings and William Van de Velde the Younger painting of Barbary two decker in action circa 1680.



**NARR:**

The Spaniards were very impressed that this Englishman had managed to behead a full thirteen of the dreaded Barbary pirates, the villains who were strangling Spanish trade. They treated him and his men to a great fiesta and paid him royally for each of the severed heads.

Some accounts aver that Benbow made a journey to the Spanish court, where he was received with great testimonies of respect. And that the Spanish King wrote a letter of commendation to the English King James II, who, in turn, is said to have offered Benbow a ship in the Royal Navy.

There is no corroboration of Benbow being offered such a commission in 1687. Indeed, other events were overtaking King James. This Royal crisis coincided with Benbow's return to the Navy in 1688.

**A Call to Arms: Benbow rejoins the Navy: 1688 - 1690**

Visuals	Audio
<p><b>PAINTING:</b> James II, NMM BHC2798</p> 	<p><b>NARR:</b></p> <p>A rather dramatic political event occurred in 1688 which prompted Benbow's return to the Royal Navy. King James II had inherited the crown of England in 1685 when his brother Charles II died. James was openly a Roman Catholic and antagonized his subjects by trying to force toleration of his religion. The majority of the English were fearful of Catholicism and preferred the stability of the Anglican state church. Benbow's old commander, Arthur Herbert, fell from grace due to his opposition.</p>
<p><b>PAINTING:</b> William III, NMM BHC3095</p> 	<p><b>NARR:</b></p> <p>On July 10, 1688 James' opponents invited the Protestant Prince William of Orange from Holland to come to England in force to restore their religion. One of the prominent Englishmen who encouraged William to invade England was Benbow's patron, Arthur Herbert. Another was Edward Russell, also a naval commander out of work and out of favour.</p> <p>William was a grandson of the English king Charles I, and had married his cousin Mary, the Protestant daughter of James II. Together they believed they had a credible basis for a claim to the English throne.</p>

**PAINTING:** Hellevoetsluys NMM BHC0325



**NARR:**

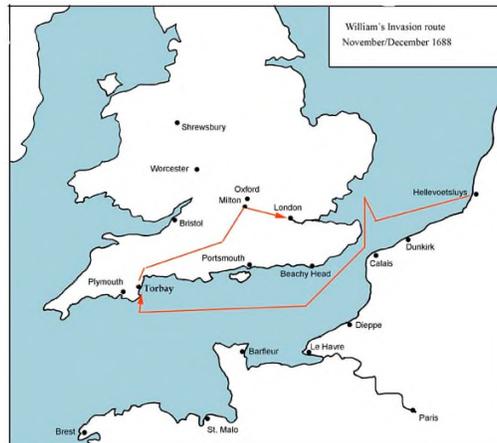
William made Herbert Vice-Admiral of Rotterdam, and placed him in charge of his invasion fleet. There is a tradition that Benbow, as one of Herbert's protégés, was one of the pilots for the invasion. Records have been lost or destroyed but there are several sources indicating William's ship Den Briel contained the best of the English pilots that Herbert and Russell brought with them. In the Fall of 1688 William gathered his armada of 50 warships and 225 transports at the Dutch port of Hellevoetsluys.

They were crammed with 15,000 infantry and thousands of horses, twenty-one artillery pieces, military stores, fodder, food, a mobile smithy and a printing press.

After a false start on October 19, William finally had a favourable wind and set sail on November 1.

This painting illustrates the harbour of Hellevoetsluys crowded with William's invasion fleet.

**MAP:** William's Route to London



**NARR:**

His armada, guided by a score of English pilots, initially sailed north west, apparently heading for a landing at Harwich or Yorkshire; but with a change in the wind they were forced to sail west up the Channel to the south west coast of England.

The Easterly wind which drove them up Channel kept the English fleet trapped in the Thames estuary. William landed at Brixham in Torbay November 5, 1688, and began his march towards London.

**PAINTING:** William III Landing at Torbay NMM BHC0326



**NARR:**

By the 9<sup>th</sup> of December his advance battalions had reached Exeter. As he made his way through the countryside, defections to William mounted in the navy, army and governing class.

This painting shows William's landing at Brixham in Torbay.

**PICTURE:** Milton Manor near Abingdon



**NARR:**

On December 11 he rested his troops in Abingdon near Oxford and was with the Calton family at Milton Manor when news was brought of James II's flight to France, allowing William to journey to London unopposed and accept the throne for himself and his wife Mary.

Benbow later developed close ties to Milton, owning the Milton Dower house, and there is a local tradition that he first came to Milton in William's entourage. His daughter, Katherine, later married the Lord of Milton Manor, Paul Calton.

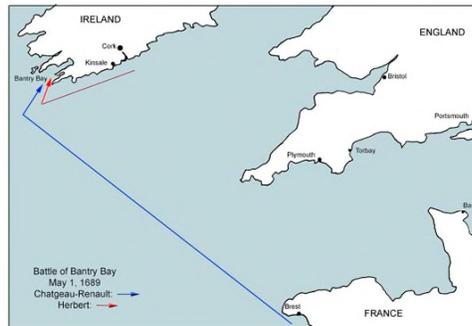
**CLIP:**  
Video of Milton Manor

**Etching:** James landing at Kinsale, Mansell Collection from Life and Times of James II, by Peter Earle



See also NMM PAI4928

**MAP:** Route to Bantry Bay



**NARR:**

One of William's first acts as King was to make Herbert First Lord of the Admiralty and Commander-in-Chief of the fleet in the Channel.

The first major naval action occurred in May 1689 at Bantry Bay. A French fleet had landed James and 5,000 troops at Kinsale on the Southern Irish coast.

Here we see the Irish welcoming James at Kinsale.

**NARR:**

For most of April, Herbert with a fleet of 19 warships searched for the French on the Irish coast and around Brest, the major French Atlantic port. His flagship, the Elizabeth, was captured by David Mitchell, an old friend from the time that Benbow was on the Tangier station.

PAINTING: Chateau-Renaud, Musees de France

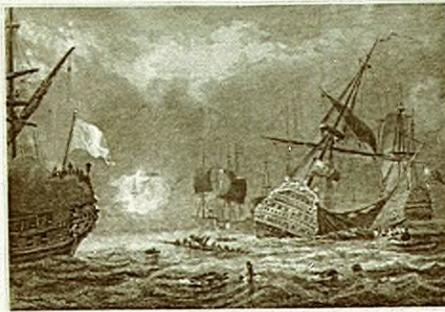
**NARR:**



On April 30, 1689, Herbert finally found a French supply fleet of 24 war ships, four fire ships and a number of transports at **Bantry Bay** near the southern tip of Ireland, under the Comte de Chateau Renaud.

**Engraving** Outhevaite, Jean Jacques, Bataille Navale De Bantry, Gagnee Par Chateau-Regnaud (1689)

**NMM:** [PAD5155](#)



**NARR:**

Early on **May 1, 1689**, the English entered the bay against the wind which was blowing directly out of the bay. The English had difficulty getting their ships to form a decent battle line with the wind blowing towards them; whereas the French, with the wind at their backs, were able to achieve a very orderly line.

**PAINTING:** Bantry Bay NMM BHC0329



**NARR:**

At the end of six hours the English drifted out of range. The outnumbered English ships had been badly mauled, with over 300 casualties. Herbert described his ships as so disabled in masts and rigging that they were in no condition to follow the French.

Herbert limped back to the Scilly Isles and was back in Portsmouth by May 8<sup>th</sup>. The French did not press home their advantage but withdrew to Brest.

As a reward for confronting the French William made Herbert Earl of Torrington.

**PAINTING:** Spithead, Portsmouth NMM BHC1005



**NARR:**

**War with France was declared May 11** and both countries rushed to build up their fleets. The English had a tremendous reserve of merchant seamen, and even hired some armed merchant vessels to flesh out their fleet.

Paperwork caught up with the realities of the rapidly expanding navies: the first surviving record of Benbow back in the navy is on **June 1, 1689 which shows him commissioned as third lieutenant of Herbert's flagship, the Elizabeth**, under Captain David Mitchell, at Portsmouth. This was a significant shift in status for Benbow: from the warrant officer standing of a Master to the more prestigious rank of Lieutenant, a commissioned King's officer and a gentleman.

This major promotion supports the tradition that he joined William's naval forces at the time of the invasion and was probably rewarded with this new rank for his services at Bantry Bay. His entry on the books of the Elizabeth includes a reference to a previous ship's pay ticket, indicating he came from another ship.

This painting by Peter Monamy shows the fleet coming to anchor at Spithead, just off Portsmouth.

**PRINT: Chatham dockyard, NMM PAH9712**



**NARR:**

One of Herbert's most pressing problems after the fiasco of Bantry Bay was the refitting of his ships to make them ready for sea again. Subsequent assignment of Benbow to the dockyards of Chatham and Deptford suggest that he may well have been given the task as one of Herbert's staff officers to organize this refit of the fleet.

Here we see Chatham dockyard at the mouth of the Medway river. Daniel Defoe described it in 1724 as the chief arsenal of the Royal Navy of Great Britain.

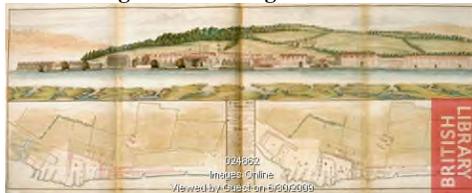
**NARR:**

Benbow was rapidly promoted by Herbert, not to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant or even 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant, but to Captain: on September 20, 1689: Captain of the third rate ship York; October 29, 1689: Captain of the third rate Bonaventure; and on November 12 Captain of the 104 gun Britannia, the newest of the First Rates.

This rapid movement from ship to ship supports the view that Benbow was tasked with assessing their readiness for sea and getting these ships up to an acceptable state and then moving on. Herbert was quite concerned regarding the ability of the dockyards to fit, rig, and restock the required ships for the 1690 season.

**INK SURVEY:**

**Chatham dockyard 1698, Br. Library 024862 images on line Kings 43 ff7v-8**



The Britannia, moored at Chatham dockyard, and built to be the pride of the English Navy, was so badly designed that she could barely carry any sail. She had never been to sea and needed considerable fitting out to make her ready. This was Benbow's urgent task and to accomplish this Herbert appointed him Master Attendant of the Chatham dockyard. The Master Attendant was the professional seaman in charge of keeping the fleet fit for sea with supplies and repairs. It was over a year till the Britannia was ready for sea, in March 1691.

These Surveys of Deptford and Chatham dockyards were made for the King and show improvements between 1688 and 1698.

**Deptford dockyard 1698, Br. Library, Deptford plans and drawings ff 65v-66**



**PAINTING:** Eddystone Lighthouse NMM BHC1796



**CLIP:**  
Video of Trinity House in London

**NARR:**

Chatham was the only dockyard with docks capable of servicing the large First Rates. Benbow requested a move to the Deptford dockyard and was transferred there in March 1690. Deptford was designed to support the smaller more efficient third and fourth rates.

He may well have preferred to be in Deptford Dockyard as a result of his experience with the unwieldy and poorly designed Britannia. He clearly favoured the smaller faster, more sea worthy third rate ships which he was used to from his Mediterranean days. He may have sensed that the future of the Navy was in faster more manoeuvrable ships and Deptford was at the centre of the development of these smaller vessels or frigates. Or he may just have appreciated the 50% higher salary paid to Deptford officers.

He continued to hold the office of Master Attendant for the next six years, until he reached flag rank; although at the same time he was frequently employed at sea during the fighting season.

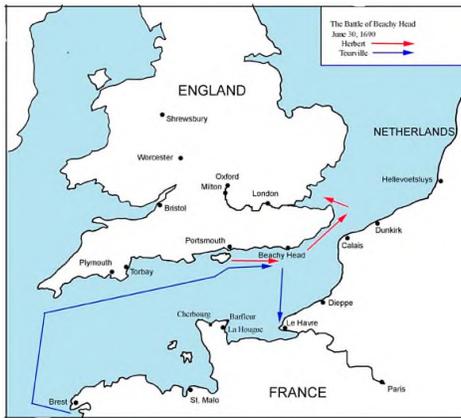
In the same month, March 1690, Benbow also received his Master's Certificate from Trinity House. Trinity House was the professional organization responsible for navigation, which included lighthouses, buoys, etc. It set exams for Masters in the Royal Navy. Benbow was licensed to take charge as Master of naval ships of the First Rate, from the Thames westward and southward to and within the Mediterranean. Herbert was at the time the Master of Trinity House and no doubt wanted Benbow to have the necessary certificate to be Master of his First Rate flagship and fleet navigator.

Painted by Isaac Sailmaker is the Eddystone Lighthouse near Plymouth circa 1708. This was the first successful offshore-rock lighthouse and is an excellent example of the work of Trinity House.

**The Channel War (War of the English Succession) 2 Major Battles: 1690 - 1692**

Visuals	Audio
<p><b>PAINTING:</b> Royal Sovereign NMM BHC3614</p> 	<p><b>NARR:</b></p> <p>Captain Benbow was Master of the Fleet in one of the most significant naval actions of this war. In May of 1690 he was again at sea, Master of <b>Admiral Herbert's</b> flagship, the <b>Royal Sovereign</b>. It was not unusual for a Captain to be the Master of the flagship. In this capacity Benbow was responsible for navigating the fleet, seeing that it got into position for battle and managed to keep its line in response to the wind, current and tide. He would be one of the main staff officers advising Herbert as the battle unfolded.</p>
<p><b>ENGRAVING:</b> NMM PAD2672 Comte deTourville, by Antoine Trouvain</p>  <p><i>Monsieur Le Comte de Tourville Vice Amiral et Marechal de France</i></p>	<p><b>NARR:</b></p> <p>The French under <b>Admiral Comte de Tourville</b> left Brest on June 13 with a fleet of 76 warships in three squadrons, plus frigates, store ships and 18 fire ships. Fire ships were smaller ships designed to be set ablaze and crash into the enemy. The French fleet cruised up Channel, and on June 23 were off the Isle of Wight when they sighted allied ships.</p>

**Map:** The Battle of Beachy Head, 1690



**CLIP:**  
Video of Beachy Head shoreline

**NARR:**

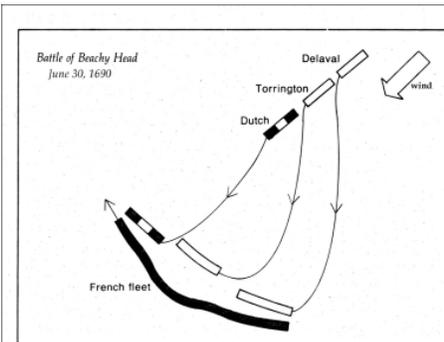
Herbert's fleet numbered only 34 English and 21 Dutch ships. Seeing himself so outnumbered, he let his fleet drift Eastward up the Channel on the flood, hoping for reinforcements.

His fleet was divided into three squadrons: the Dutch or White squadron in the Van or front of the battle line, the rear or Blue squadron under Sir Ralph Delavalle, and the Red or centre commanded by himself. The two fleets moved slowly up Channel.

Herbert had wanted to avoid a battle which he could easily lose for fear that James II, with his army gathering at Brest for an invasion of England, would be able to cross the channel without opposition were the fleet to be lost. He argued strongly to ensure the maintenance of the "fleet in being"

Unfortunately Herbert's rival, Russell, back in London, was able to persuade the Queen to order Herbert to attack. So at dawn on June 30, on the ebb tide, and with the wind from north-north-east, Herbert reluctantly bore down towards the French.

**DRAWING:** Battle of Beachy Head Approach  
From *Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail* by Brian Tunstall, Ed. Nicholas Tracy



**NARR:**

The Dutch van, under Evertsen pressed home the attack with their 21 ships against the French van of 26. There were great gaps between the allied squadrons, with their line stretched in order to cover the French line and prevent a doubling up by the French on allied ships at either end.

This drawing from *Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail* shows the English as they approached the French line.

**PAINTING:** Vue du Combat de Beachy Head  
NMM PAF4537, PW4537



**NARR:**

The French van or leading ships managed to double on the Dutch and place them between two fires. Delevalle in the rear took his greatly outnumbered blue squadron to within musket shot (300 yards) of the French rear. But Herbert's Red squadron was for the most part ineffectual and out of range in the centre.

This painting by Nicolas Ozanne shows the French dominating the battle.

**ENGRAVING:** Beachy Head NMM PAD5160



**NARR:**

At five in the afternoon, after an engagement of eight hours, the English surprised the enemy when they anchored with all sails set as the ebb tide began to make. The French were caught unaware and drifted out of range with the tide. Later in the evening, when the flood of the tide set in, Herbert resumed his retreat towards the Thames estuary.

The Dutch had been badly mauled. The allies lost up to 14 ships, mostly Dutch, Tourville lost no ships at all.

Benbow, as Master of the Fleet, deserves credit for the coordinated surprise anchoring of the fleet and for successfully navigating the fleet in its retreat. There was almost no wind, and the fleet slowly retreated up channel by skilfully 'working the tides'.

This engraving of a Gudin painting is another French illustration of the battle: the English did not memorialize it.

**CLIP:**  
“Benbow expert”

**Benbow Expert:**

The King and Queen blamed Herbert for the losses, sent him to the Tower, and ordered a Royal Commission. A telling witness was Captain John Benbow, who hotly defended his mentor’s courage and integrity. In his deposition taken in July, he testified as master of the fleet at Beachy Head: he argued that Herbert had brought the Sovereign to within one half gun shot of the enemy for over an hour.

Herbert argued at his court martial in December that the Dutch had gone into action too soon. And that by retreating he had maintained the ‘fleet in being’, thus preserving the realm by preventing a subsequent French landing. Like Benbow, 20 of the 27 officers on the court martial had been mentored by Herbert. Not surprisingly, Herbert was acquitted. But he was still in disgrace, dismissed from all his offices and never employed at sea again.

So Benbow lost his strongest patron.

**PAINTING:** Edward Russell, NMM BHC2993



**NARR:**

The English realised victory at sea was a matter of numbers, and in October 1690 the English Parliament voted over half a million pounds for building 27 new warships.

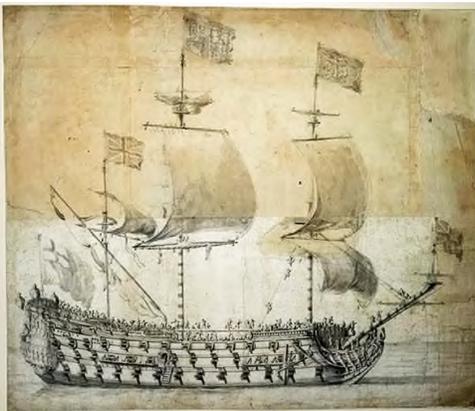
**Edward Russell, later Earl of Orford,** was appointed sole commander of the fleet.

Benbow returned to the Deptford dockyard and his task of outfitting the growing fleet. His position as one of the Navy’s senior professional seamen remained secure.

During the uneventful fighting season of 1691 Benbow joined Russell on the Britannia as one of his staff officers with the position of Second Captain.

This painting is of Russell pointing at the 1692 naval action of Barfleur and La Hougue.

DRAWING: Britannia, NMM PAJ2557, PT2557



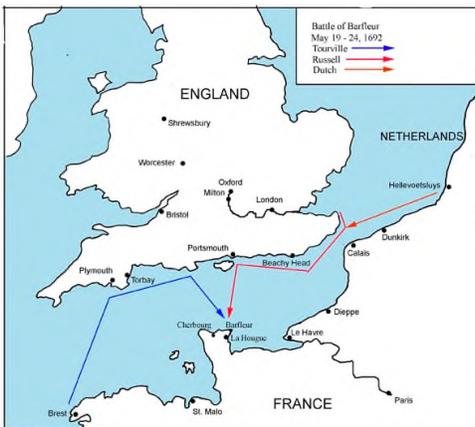
**NARR:**

In the **Spring and Summer of 1692** Benbow, was again on board Russell's flagship the **Britannia**, now as Master of the combined Anglo Dutch Fleet comprised of 82 ships of the line. His old friend David Mitchell was Captain of the Fleet.

Benbow simultaneously continued his role as Master Attendant at Deptford dockyard as well; so moved back and forth between the fleet and the dockyard.

This drawing by Willem van de Velde the Elder shows the 100 gun Britannia at this time.

**MAP:** Battle of Barfleur, May 19 – 24, 1692



**NARR:**

On May 19 the French under the Comte de **Tourville** approached Russell's fleet with only forty-five ships of the line near **Cape Barfleur** on the Normandy coast. In the hazy weather he did not realize the size of the allied fleet and so rushed to engage hoping for another Beachy Head.

**CLIP:**  
Video of Barfleur shoreline

**CLIP:** Ships fighting from film.

**NARR:**

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 under Rooke was a good deal astern or behind and three miles to leeward or down wind. It would take some time for them to join the battle by sailing as best they could against the wind.

**DRAWING:** Barfleure – stages of the battle from “The Defeat of James Stuart’s Armada 1692” by Philip Aubrey.

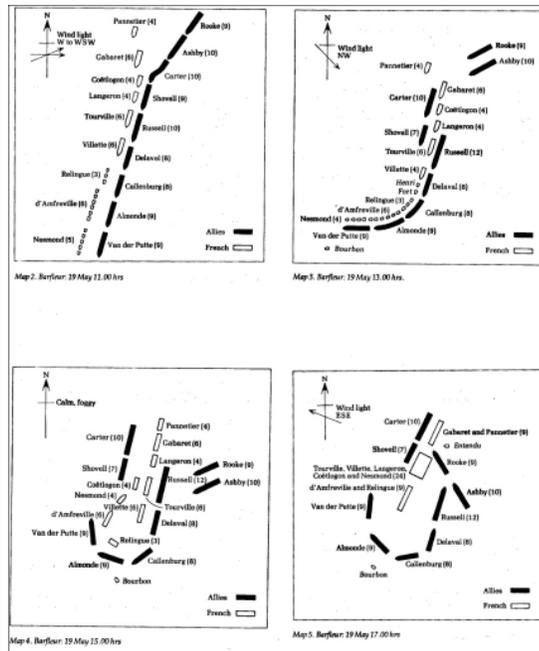
**NARR:**

It is unknown if Benbow was on board the Britannia during the battle, or back at Deptford. Several historians place him at Barfleure. If with the fleet at that time, he would have been in the thick of things as the Britannia was closely engaged by Tourville in the Soleil Royal.

Finally a wind change permitted the rear of the red or centre squadron under Shovell to break through the French line. The Dutch at the head of the line doubled the French van, trapping it with fire on both sides.

Shortly after, the whole of the blue squadron under Rooke broke the French rear. In late afternoon, fog stalled the battle and the French fled in disorder.

In this drawing by Philip Aubrey we see the stages of the battle as the outnumbered French are encircled by the Dutch and English.



**SCRIMSHAW:** based on painting by Ludolf Backhuysen



**PAINTING:** Barfleur NMM BHC0332

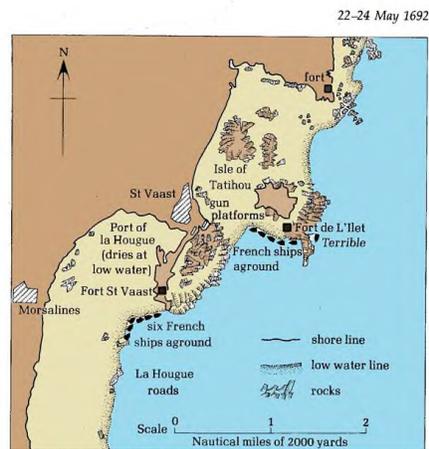


**NARR:**

This unique illustration of the Battle of Barfleur is Scrimshaw on Mammoth Ivory, by Chris Lehwalder, after a painting by Backhuysen. It shows the Soleil Royal surrounded by Dutch and English including the Britannia on its right.

Here we see the Britannia, this time on the left, again engaging the Soleil Royal on the right, in this painting by Richard Paton.

**DRAWING:** La Hougue from Philip Aubrey



**NARR:**

Three French ships, including the Soleil Royal, were burnt at Cherbourg by Delaval.

Several French ships escaped further westward past Cap de la Hague and through the treacherous waters of the Alderney Race. The English feared to follow without a competent pilot.

Russell in the Britannia had followed the enemy ships fleeing to the East. These took refuge in the bay of La Hougue where James' invasion army was awaiting transport. James' flag flew over the fort of St. Vaast signalling his presence.

**CLIP:**

Video of La Hougue shoreline

**PAINTING:** La Hogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington



**NARR:**

Russell blockaded the bay and on May 23 and 24 sent in two hundred boats and fire ships under the command of Rooke . It is quite possible that Captain Benbow accompanied Rooke, since he was quickly acquiring a reputation for piloting in Channel waters.

The English had to brave the cannonade from the forts, musket fire from the beach and ships boats 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 painting by Benjamin West shows the close hand-to-hand fighting.

**CLIP:**  
Benbow Expert

**Benbow Expert:**

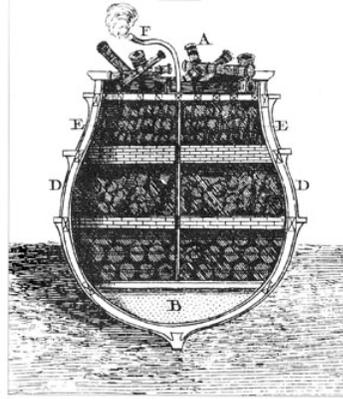
The Battle of Barfleur was not considered a complete success. Russell was thought to have engaged the enemy in a half-hearted manner; thus allowing too many of the French to escape. He was removed from the command and replaced by a triumvirate of Admirals: Delavalle, Killigrew, and Shovell.

At the end of the Summer, Benbow was rewarded by a special Admiralty order which directed he be paid both as Master of Deptford Dockyard and as Master of the Fleet.

It is possible that he may have been in Deptford during the battle, ensuring the fleet was resupplied. As well as some of his letters dealing with Deptford Dockyard business near the time of the battle, we can place him in Deptford just two weeks before Barfleur was fought. On May 4, 1692 Benbow was elected unanimously an Elder brother on the board of Trinity House, like his mentor Herbert was before him. The Elder Brothers were the governing Board of Trinity House. They were the most senior professional seamen of the land. Benbow had been fast tracked to this esteemed position just three months after he had been elected a Junior Brother. The Junior and Senior brothers held their annual elections in Deptford in May, so Benbow would have attended for the celebrations.

## The Channel War

**CLIP:** Video of St. Malo shoreline,  
**Machine Vessel or 'Infernal' Vesuvius**  
**From Marine, Diderot/D'Alembert**



**PAINTING:** Thomas Phillips, John Benbow, Sir  
Ralph Delavalle, NMM BHC2547



**PAINTING:** Russell, Benbow, Delavalle  
Government Art Collection 6436



## **NARR:**

The French response to the major loss of Barfleure and La Hougue was to develop a new and highly successful naval strategy of waging war against English and Dutch merchant shipping.

The Channel ports along the French coast spawned hosts of wolf packs of privateers or as the French called them: corsairs.

The English answer was to attack the corsair bases. Benbow's dash and enterprise in these operations made him into a national hero, especially with the mercantile community

Because of the difficulty of causing any real damage to these fortified ports, from the sea, the English revived a 16<sup>th</sup> century Dutch invention: a ship full of explosives, called an 'Infernal machine'. This was a converted fire ship, loaded with several tons of powder in casks, over which was placed a load of bombs, old cannon and scrap-iron.

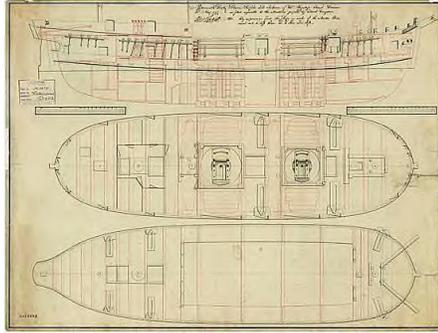
One of Benbow's earliest expeditions utilizing these new 'machines' occurred in the fall of **1693**. He was ordered to accompany the fleet's military engineer, **Captain Thomas Phillips**, in an attack on **St. Malo**

This triple portrait shows Engineer Phillips holding a plan of fortifications, Benbow in the centre with a quadrant, and their admiral, Sir Ralph Delavalle, Admiral of the Blue. The placing of Benbow in the centre suggests that he had probably commissioned the work. The painting thus shows how he wished to be portrayed: as the essential element between the technical armourer and the naval hierarchy; and as the one who could deliver the goods.

He also could be reaching out to Delavalle as a patron, now that he has lost Herbert and Russell was out of favour.

Interestingly, after the death of Phillips, the painting was copied, and a reinstated Admiral Russell took Phillips place on the left.

**DRAWING:** Bomb vessel : NMM J0394



**Chart:** Plan of the attack in 1693 on St. Malo: National Archives MPF 1/178



**NARR :**

In the 1693 attack on St. Malo Commodore Benbow led a squadron of 12 warships, four bomb vessels, and ten brigantines. Bomb vessels were of recent French invention and used two mortars which were short fat cannons that fired exploding and incendiary shells. The English began using them in the late 1680s. The attack began on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The bomb vessels threw about seventy bombs a day into the town. On the 19<sup>th</sup> Benbow and Captain Phillips took in the Vesuvius, one of the new 'infernal machines', a converted fire ship of 300 tons, and full of explosives.

Unfortunately it grounded on a rock within pistol shot of its destination (forty metres) and prematurely exploded there. Nine of her crew were killed or injured. 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. Benbow captured an out-lying fort taking 80 prisoners and 60 cannon, burnt 30 privateers, many merchant ships and transport vessels and set the town on fire in many places. It was reported that the great cathedral at St. Malo was laid in ashes. Captain Phillips was one of those mortally wounded and died shortly after on Benbow's ship.

This 1693 French chart of St. Malo harbour shows the positions of the attacking ships including the Admiral, the ships of the line, the frigates, the bombs, and the machine.

**CLIP:**

Benbow stands before the court martial.

**CLIP:**

Tourville receives his sword from the Judge President.

**NARR:**

Benbow was dissatisfied with the result and court martialled Captain Henry Tourville of the Mortar bomb vessel for not going in close enough.

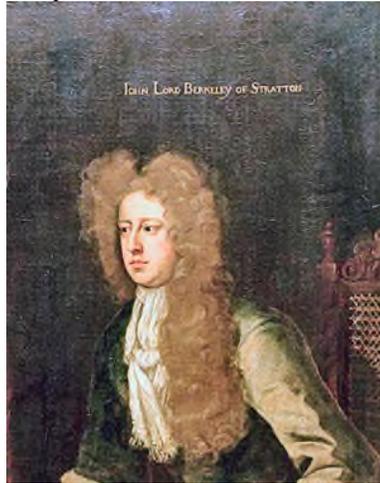
**BENBOW:**

I depose that the said Captain Henry Tourville was (together with other of the bomb vessels) ordered in upon service before St. Malo on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

**NARR :**

He was however unable to procure a conviction. Benbow clearly had high expectations of those he commanded and was impatient with unsatisfactory efforts and results.

**PAINTING:** John Lord Berkeley of Stratton,  
Wikipedia



**ETCHING:** Plan of attack on Camaret Bay, NMM  
PAG7019



**CLIP:**  
Video of Camaret Bay and Brest shoreline

**NARR:**

However, Benbow's next major action was not a success: the attack on the major French port of Brest was a complete fiasco. In **June 1694**, he reported to the flagship of **Admiral John Lord Berkeley**, who had been appointed by Russell to command the Channel fleet.

Their target was **Camaret Bay** near the mouth of the Bay of Brest. Berkeley led a large squadron of thirty-six English and Dutch ships of the line, five frigates and thirteen fire ships, as well as forty assorted transports. The fleet included 10,000 troops.

Berkeley sent in a squadron of nine men of war to cover the landing of troops. One of the captains in this squadron was John Constable, who would later participate in the Benbow Mutiny. With his expertise in coastal probing Benbow probably accompanied this squadron into the bay.

Unfortunately the attack faced fierce French fire from forts and shore batteries. The English were forced to withdraw. Only about one hundred troops escaped out of several hundred who landed. In the three hours that the covering squadron was trapped in the bay over a hundred seamen were killed.

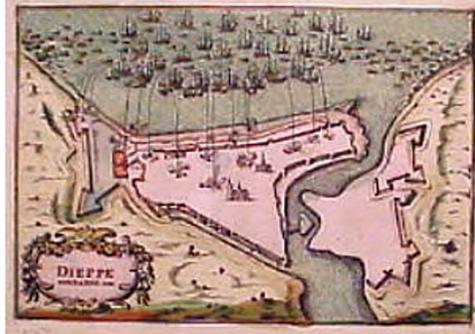
It was later alleged that John Churchill, subsequently, Duke of Marlborough, had warned the French. Many Englishmen were hedging their bets by maintaining correspondence with the exiled King James in France in case he succeeded in retaking his crown.

This Etching shows the plan for the attack on Camaret Bay. Brest is in the lower left quadrant.

**ENGRAVING: Bombardment of Dieppe 1694**



**ENGRAVING: Bombarding of Dieppe 1694**



**ENGRAVING: Bombarding Dieppe  
NMM PAH7635**



**CLIP: Video of Dieppe shoreline**

**NARR:**

Over the next couple of years while serving under Admiral Berkeley, Benbow led the attacks on most of the Channel ports.

In July 1694 they successfully bombarded Dieppe . About eleven hundred bombs and incendiary carcasses were fired on the town which was set on fire in several spots. The Nicholas machine vessel was exploded against the town pier. When the squadron departed most of the town was in flames and was largely destroyed.

This antique engraving is taken from a 1701 German book and shows the explosion of the Nicholas against the town wall.

Another view of the mortar bombardment of Dieppe is shown in this 1735 engraving.

Colonel Richards succeeded Phillips as the fleet advisor on mortars and bombs.

This vivid night scene credits Colonel Richards, with the development of these bomb vessels. A Dutch engineer and inventor, Willem Meester, was also instrumental in promoting the 'Machine' vessels like the Nicholas.

**ENGRAVING:** Havre de Grace NMM PAF4616



**NARR:**

Throughout **1694** Captain Benbow commanded the in-shore squadron of bomb vessels and machines against the French channel ports including **Le Havre, La Hogue, Cherbourg, Dunkirk and Calais.**

This engraving is of a later bombardment of Le Havre.

**CLIP:** Present Day, Portsmouth Pub

**BENBOW COMMENTATORS**

**Fred:**

Benbow's come a long way from a waterman on the Thames.

**Bob:**

He certainly has: he holds the rank of post Captain, he's been Master of the Channel Fleet in one and possibly two major battles, he's Master Attendant at Deptford Dockyard in charge of repairing and outfitting the fleet, he's an Elder Brother at Trinity House.

**Fred:**

And he's been put in charge of leading the inshore squadron that bombards the channel ports, pioneering the use of mortar vessels and infernal machines.

**Bob:**

And he's learned an important lesson: in both major battles he's seen the senior Admiral sacked for not pressing the fight forcefully enough.

**Fred:**

He should do well then with his own style of ferocious fighting. He may even take some heads.

**Bob:**

He's already shown his impatience with anyone not pressing the fight wholeheartedly. It will be interesting to see what effect his bull dog approach has on both friends and enemies.