

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 TWO

The Channel War: 1695 - 1697

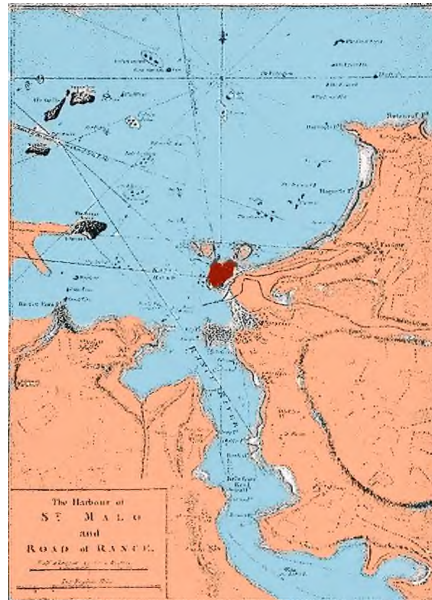
The Peace 1697 - 1701

Second Voyage to the West Indies 1701-2

Courts martial and Conclusion 1702

The Channel War: 1695 - 1697

ETCHING: St. Malo NMM PAD1495, by T. Jefferys



CLIP:
Video of St. Malo shoreline

Narr:

Benbow's growing fame created some jealousies within the service and the Admiralty as he eclipsed his superiors in popularity.

Benbow had a fairly public falling out with **Lord Berkeley**, Admiral of the Blue and commander of the Channel Fleet. Berkeley had specifically requested Benbow and had supported his request for pay as a Rear Admiral. Their target for the beginning of the summer **1695** was again to be **St. Malo**.

As commander of all of the frigates and bomb vessels participating in the attack, Benbow hoisted his own flame coloured broad pendant as an acting Rear Admiral on the Northumberland. He was joined on his ship by a new volunteer, his son John Benbow, aged 14.

The town was heavily bombarded but it was a hard fought engagement, the bomb vessels being under continuous attack from highly mobile oared vessels carrying musketeers and boarding parties.

Benbow's great physical courage was invaluable. It was his practice to have himself rowed from ship to ship, encouraging his crews and sharing their danger.

Berkeley recalled the ships about 7 that evening. The only noticeable damage to the town was two fires which the French brought under control.

Berkeley called a Council of War.

CLIP:Benbow - Berkeley confrontation

INT. BERKELEY'S SHIP - GREAT CABIN - EVENING

Berkeley:

Gentlemen, I dare say we have been warmly received. Please give us your reports. Captain Benbow: your assessment please.

Benbow:

My Lord, we have made a good beginning: the town has burned both in the East and in the middle. Several houses have been destroyed. The enemy has indeed given us a warm reception but we can do them much more damage.

Berkeley:

A bloody poor showing for twelve hours of bombing. Colonel Richards, please.

Colonel Richards:

My Lord, with all due respect to Captain Benbow, the town is extremely well defended: we are under continuous attack. We are caught in their cross-fire. Their gun boats and galleys have no fear: they come so near as to gall our line of bomb ships and even threaten to board us.

Berkeley:

Colonel, what is your estimate of our ordinance expended.

Colonel Richards:

We have sent over 900 bombs into the town, with little effect.

Benbow:

My Lord, we have just begun. The enemy is exhausted: let me go in again and I will set the whole town ablaze.

Berkeley:

At what cost, Captain. What damage have we incurred?

Benbow:

We have had to leave the Dreadful behind: we could not bring her off and have burnt her. The Carcase and the Thunder are much damaged. We have lost a dozen of our smaller boats.

Colonel Richards:

My Lord, if I might add: all of the bomb vessels have been badly shaken by the constant shock of their own mortars. Some of the mortars unserviceable.

Berkeley:

And what of the butcher's bill?

Benbow:

I cannot tell what men we have lost. But you cannot win battles without losses.

Berkeley:


I do not call this result winning. My reports show over 60 men and officers lost. No. We have done all we can do.

Benbow:

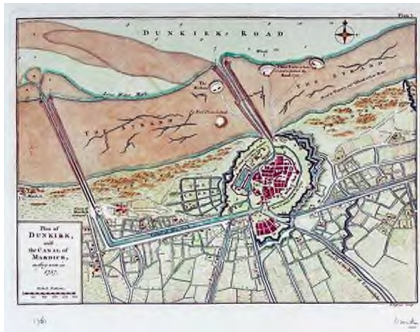
My Lord, this is no way to fight: the enemy will believe we have not the stomach for real battle. We must destroy the enemy's safe havens.

Berkeley:

Have a care Captain: we must do what I command. Was Camaret Bay not enough for you? We are adjourned. See to your orders.

<p>CLIP:</p> <p>Berkeley before the Lord Justices</p>	<p>NARR:</p> <p>Benbow was furious. He requested leave of the Lord Justices, the King's cabinet, to quit his ship. He claimed sickness but with implied criticism of Berkeley's faint heartedness. The Lord Justices called Berkeley to account for what was going on between himself and Benbow.</p> <p>Berkeley stated:</p> <p>"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."</p> <p>The Lord Justices sided with Benbow and the very next day acquainted him with their intentions to continue to employ him in alarming and annoying the French coast, and they promised to show him favour, which meant his own flag as soon as an Admiral's vacancy became available.</p> <p>.</p>
<p>ENGRAVING: Greenwich Hospital NMM PAD2179</p> 	<p>NARR:</p> <p>Benbow received one other recognition of the regard he was held in by the Lords: he was appointed one of the early commissioners of the new Greenwich hospital for wounded seamen. This hospital was the lasting memorial to the recently deceased Queen Mary. John Evelyn, owner of Sayes Court in Deptford, was also one of the commissioners, as was Sir Isaac Newton. Christopher Wren was the project's architect.</p>

ENGRAVING: Dunkirk NMM PAD1596



NARR:

On **April 26, 1696**, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty sent a memo to his Majesty, recommending that Captain Benbow, now Master Attendant at Deptford, be appointed **Rear-Admiral of the Blue**. So he received his flag rank and was given the command of the squadron before **Dunkirk**.

This caused no little jealousy as others were passed over. Berkeley was technically in command, but was ordered to patrol the western mouth of the Channel and the Bay of Biscay, leaving Benbow at Dunkirk and points East.

Here we see Dunkirk with its canals giving multiple accesses and escape routes through the extensive low water sand bank.

ENGRAVING: NMM PAD2676 Jean Bart



NARR:

Benbow's task was protecting English and Dutch trade and containing the French squadron under the famous Jean Bart, primarily by blockading his base, Dunkirk. A direct attack was considered impractical.

French warships and privateers operating out of **Dunkirk** had been extremely damaging to English trade during the course of the war.

Dutch and English merchants had petitioned the government to appoint Benbow to this task since he excelled in protecting their ships and annoying the enemy. He had a reputation for gaining intelligence of French Ports and shipping and forming schemes for disturbing French commerce.

ENGRAVING: NMM PAF4547 Jean Bart



ENGRAVING: Combat dans la mer du nord, Juin 1696, by Theodore Gudin, Library of Congress



NARR:

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.

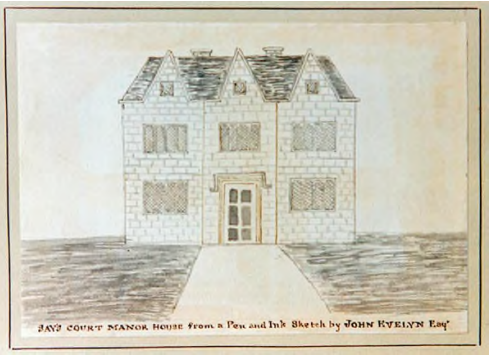


Bart intercepted the Dutch Baltic fleet on its way home, on June 8th. He successfully captured thirty merchant ships and five frigates before Benbow's squadron caught up and forced him to escape towards Denmark.

Throughout the summer Benbow pressed him closely and eventually intercepted his dash back to Dunkirk in September. But again English ships were no match for the speed of the French.

These Engravings are of Jean Bart battling the Dutch. The latter one is of the June 1696 battle between Bart and the Dutch convoy in the North Sea, just before Benbow appeared over the horizon and gave chase.

<p>CLIP: Benbow Expert</p>	<p>Benbow Expert:</p> <p>Benbow was active through the winter of 1696 and into 1697 protecting, particularly escorting merchant shipping from the Channel into the Atlantic, and meeting incoming convoys. He received 1000 guineas from the East India Company for these services. However, both the English and French were quite war weary and needed a respite.</p> <p>On September 10, 1697, the peace was signed at the Dutch town of Ryswick. The French King Louis recognized William's right to the English throne.</p>
	<p>Fred: It's a bit strange thinking that Benbow spent so much energy attacking these beautiful French towns along the Channel coast.</p> <p>Bob: Well, it is how Benbow earned his spurs.</p> <p>Fred: Indeed, he became an Admiral and a national hero for his ferocity in battle: he really was a British bull dog.</p> <p>Bob: He learned the lesson well that the Government favoured those who fought fearlessly, and punished the faint hearted.</p> <p>Fred: He was finally getting the respect and recognition that he coveted.</p> <p>Bob: But he made a few enemies along the way.</p> <p>Fred: There certainly was some jealousy of his popularity; and a good deal of irritation with his pushing himself forward both for pay and promotion.</p> <p>Bob: Well, it paid off: let's see how he enjoyed the years of the brief peace.</p>

The Peace 1697 – 1701

Visuals	Audio
<p>SKETCH: Sayes Court drawn by John Evelyn</p>  <p>ENGRAVING: Sayes Court in the 1800s</p>  <p>ENGRAVING: NMM H5342 Sayes Court</p>  <p>CLIP: Video of Deptford Sayes Court, St. Nicholas</p>	<p>NARR:</p> <p>Admiral Benbow was now one of the most distinguished citizens of Deptford, and so in the summer of 1696, he leased one of its grandest houses, Sayes Court, from the diarist Mr. John Evelyn. This large estate was famous for its gardens by the Thames, especially its famous holly hedge, which was 400 feet long and 9 feet high. Evelyn soon regretted his decision. He wrote on January 18, 1697:</p> <p>"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."</p> <p>In 1697, John Benbow and his wife Martha were in early middle age and raising a family of five children: Martha age 18, John age 16 who had recently joined the navy, Katherine age 10, William age 7, and one year old Richard, who was their third infant to bear this name. They had in fact lost several children, as was common for the times.</p> <p>The Benbows would have been the social elite of Deptford. Benbow had come a long way to restoring his family's fortunes.</p> <p>John Evelyn himself drew this sketch of his much loved home.</p>

ENGRAVING: NMM PAF3322 Peter the Great



PAINTING: NMM BHC0704 by Abraham Storck



NARR:

However, the peace of Sayes Court was disturbed in early 1698 with the arrival of Czar Peter of Russia. Peter came to study British shipbuilding and seamanship. Benbow's old friend Admiral David Mitchell was assigned to attend to the Czar during his stay in England. Benbow's home became a natural gathering place for nautical discussions. To Martha's dismay, Peter fell in love with her home and requested that it be sublet to him so that he might be close to the Deptford docks.

Unfortunately, the Russians made such a mess of the house, furnishings and gardens that both Benbow and Evelyn petitioned the Government for compensation. The Admiral indicated he most regretted the total loss of 'twenty fine paintings' and several Fine Draughts and other Designs relating to the Sea'.

This Painting by Abraham Storck shows Peter inspecting a mock battle put on by the Dutch during his visit.

CLIP:
Video of Milton Manor and church

It is also recorded in the Vestry records of Milton Church that in 1698 Peter visited Admiral Benbow at his summer home in Milton, near Oxford, on the Calton estate.

This visit was later commemorated by his daughter Catherine giving a family heirloom to the Milton Church, which was silver Alms dish bearing the Admiral's coat of Arms.

PICTURE: St. Mary's Church, Shrewsbury



CLIP:

Video of Shrewsbury, St. Mary's Church

NARR:

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. Benbow must have been quite delighted to be so honoured by the leaders of the town where he had been raised in poverty.

PAINTING: Shrewsbury Portrait of Admiral Benbow



NARR:

He must not have been a frequent visitor to Shrewsbury, 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 a national hero, sported a full bottom wig and was noted for his scarlet coat and other finery. Benbow sat for a portrait which he gave to his sister. This portrait was later donated to the city of Shrewsbury.

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.

CLIP:

Benbow expert:

Benbow Expert:

The French Ambassador had written to Louis XIV in May of 1698, reporting that the King of England was very far from being master here: he was generally hated by all the great men and the whole of the nobility.

The war had not been popular with many of the English who resented the high taxes needed to pay the war debt. The new Tory government drastically cut back on military expenditures: the navy was reduced to 10,000 men and 57 ships were decommissioned. Many officers found themselves on shore with half pay.

As one of the few heroes' of the last war, Benbow was kept employed. However, in 1698 he was given the somewhat unsavoury task of Commander in Chief of a squadron for the West Indies. No doubt he was chosen for his familiarity with the Caribbean. Nevertheless, there were few who would relish an appointment to the disease-ridden Caribbean where death claimed a third to a half of all Europeans sent there.

MAP: West Indies



NARR:

The official reason for this expedition was the suppression of piracy; however, he was to gather intelligence of Spanish sympathies in the area, and to ensure that the Spanish Treasure ships did not fall into French hands. Until 1697 two great 'plate fleets' had sailed regularly to bring back their cargoes of plate and bullion.

With the likelihood of renewed war over the Spanish Succession question, the treasure fleets became intermittent, and of great interest to both the French and English.

In addition, the small and scattered English colonies were desperate for protection.

CLIP: Video of Barbados, Port Royal shorelines

PAINTING: NMM BHC1841 Port Royal, Jamaica



NARR:

Benbow appreciated the difficulty of operating a squadron of ships so far from home waters, and worked hard to improve conditions for his ships and men, pestering the Admiralty for better food, better water-storage, and a hospital ship with a qualified physician. He recommended a good supply of rum and brandy since beer spoils quickly in the heat.

Benbow set out in November 1698; prudently well after the hurricane and sickly season.

His ships included his flagship the Gloucester, two other fourth rates and a number of transports for an infantry regiment under Colonel Francis Collingwood intended for Nevis.

They reached Barbados by mid January 1699 on their way to Port Royal Jamaica.

Map: Darien, New Caledonia
Wikipedia



NARR:

Benbow found himself involved in a minor international incident. A few months before his arrival, a Scottish enterprise of five ships and 1200 colonists had established a settlement in the Darien peninsula where Central America joins South America. The Spanish naturally objected to this incursion and seized a number of English merchantmen in retaliation.

This old map shows the 1699 Scottish colony which they called new Caledonia on the Gulf of Darien.

CLIP: Video of Darien shoreline



<p>Engraving: Cartagena 1765 copper engraving</p>  <p>CLIP: Video of Cartagena shoreline</p>	<p>NARR:</p> <p>In February Benbow sailed with a number of Jamaican merchants to redress this. He headed for the Spanish Main, and soon sighted the high land of Santa Marta, which is a singular navigational aid for its upper parts are the highest along the coast and constantly covered with snow. He sailed west to-wards the major Spanish Port of Cartagena, making careful records of the coast, shoals, reefs, sandbars, etc. He blocked the entrance and obtained the release of the English ships. He repeated this at Porto Bello</p> <p>He next endeavoured to clean the area of pirates, and in particular to pursue Captain William Kidd.</p>
<p>PAINTING: 1701, artist unknown William Kidd (Seafarers)</p> 	<p>NARR:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>This painting by an unknown artist was based on a court room sketch.</p>

ILLUSTRATION: Captain Kidd, artist Howard Pyle



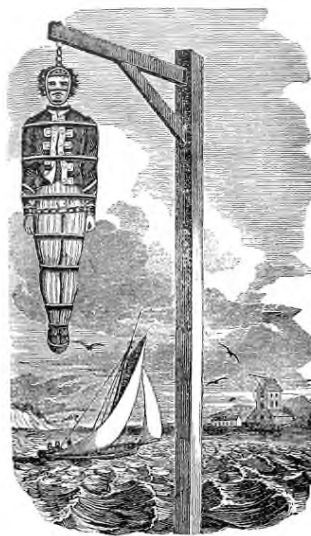
NARR:

On May 15 Benbow sailed in the Saudadoes Prize, with the Falmouth and Lynn, in search of Kidd, who was reported in the area. He caught up with some of the pirates at the Danish colony of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands where Kidd had unloaded some of his effects. As Benbow's instructions did not allow for open hostilities with a foreign power, he was forced to depart empty handed near the end of October.

Shortly after, orders arrived for Benbow to return home, ranging along the coast from Florida to Newfoundland, to free those parts of pirates.

This illustration appeared in Howard Pyle's 1921 Book of Pirates.

ILLUSTRATION: NMM Captain Kidd




NARR:

Kidd had fled north and was finally captured when he put into New York for supplies, and sent to England where he was tried.

Benbow arrived back in England in the summer of 1700 with nine captured pirates.

Kidd is shown here suspended on a gibbet on the lower reaches of the Thames.

Benbow's patrols were thus successful in clearing the Caribbean waters of pirates.

<p>CLIP: Benbow Expert</p>	<p>Benbow Expert:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Technically he was not allowed to press men without the governor's permission. The needs of his ships, however, were paramount. So he pressed men wherever he could, often just outside the port. The governor of Jamaica complained bitterly about Benbow's high handedness.</p>
<p>Benbow Coat of Arms:</p> 	<p>NARR:</p> <p>Regardless of Benbow's quarrel with the colonial authorities, the English government was pleased with his expedition. His son in law, Paul Calton, reported that in recognition for his services Benbow was granted an augmentation of Arms by King William.</p> <p>He describes this as the addition of three arrows to the three bent bows he already bore. We know that the College of Arms records the Benbow coat of arms as two bent bows, back to back. No arrows are mentioned in the official description.</p> <p>However, the Benbow family traditionally preferred a coat of arms with two bows between two bundles of arrows (three in each). It would appear that the Admiral wished the official record to reflect this preferred rendition of the Benbow Arms. Calton confused the number of bows. Unfortunately, no approval has been found of the addition of the arrows or confirmation of Admiral Benbow's right to use the arms.</p> <p>Benbow was not the only one who was anxious to have a coat of arms confirmed. His old colleague David Mitchell had risen like Benbow from a master's mate to Admiral. He took for himself his wife's coat of arms and was later accused of bearing arms with no right. This was a sensitive issue in Benbow's day as a coat of arms indicated one's worthiness and place in society as part of the gentry or lesser nobility.</p>

ENGRAVING: Kensington Palace by Jan Kip



CLIP:
Video of Kensington Palace

NARR:

Benbow was appointed to the Nore command in the Downs at the mouth of the Thames, and on April 14, 1701 was promoted to Rear-Admiral of the Red. In May he and the Lords of the Admiralty met with the King and his cabinet at **Kensington palace**. Benbow was offered and accepted command of the West Indian squadron for a second time.

It is reported that others had declined this undesirable station and that the King had quipped: "'Well then, I find we must spare our beaus and send honest Benbow.'" To which Benbow 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.

Clearly, the 'beaus' or those Admirals with higher status and better political connections were excused this undesirable posting. We can still wonder at Benbow's willingness to chance fortune yet again in this perilous place of death and disease. It's quite possible that the King promised him his coat of arms confirmed and likely a knighthood as well.

PAINTING: NMM BCH2546 Admiral John Benbow, by Sir Godfrey Kneller




Narr:

On June 30, 1701 Benbow was promoted to Vice-Admiral of the Blue.

As another mark of favour, the crown had the court painter, Sir Godfrey Kneller, do a portrait of Admiral Benbow, as part of a series of the leading admirals of the day.

It vividly captures Benbow's character as a fighter. He is wearing a short brown full-bottomed wig, white neck scarf, a breast plate and a brown coat. He holds a sword in his right hand and his left hand rests on a cannon. His flagship, flying blue at the fore, is in the right background.

There is nothing of the rough tar in his appearance. But he clearly wishes to be portrayed as a fighter and a warrior.

<p>CLIP: Benbow Expert:</p>	<p>Benbow Expert:</p> <p>In preparation for the West Indies, and again mindful of the high incidence of sickness and death in voyages to the West Indies, Benbow advocated for the inclusion of the Physician of the Blue Squadron. In addition, his squadron was to test two new medicines to cure fevers and scurvy. The surgeons and captains of the various ships were to observe very carefully the effect and operation of the said medicines. This was the first naval therapeutic trial on record.</p> <p>Benbow requested that a hospital ship accompany his squadron to the West Indies and he discussed the question of opening a permanent hospital in Jamaica, and subsequently established one at New Greenwich just west of Kingston.</p>
<p>PAINTING: Richard Kirkby</p> 	<p>Narr:</p> <p>If it was suspected that the West Indies was the destination of a squadron in a harbour, 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. Not surprising then, the officers who accepted positions in Benbow's West Indian squadron were desperate: most had been without a ship and on half pay for several years.</p> <p>These included Richard Kirkby (the Ruby and Defiance), Cooper Wade (the Greenwich), and John Constable (the Windsor). These three are introduced in the following scene:</p> <p>This painting is provided by a current member of the Kirkby family and is believed to be of Colonel Richard Kirkby.</p>

CLIP from film The Benbow Mutiny:

INT. CAPTAINS' TABLE IN THE TAVERN - DAY

Nearby, the aristocratic COLONEL RICHARD KIRKBY, forty-five, also a veteran of His Majesty's Navy, dresses in his pristine green serge coat, and neat white cravat, and holds court to a group of tipsy naval officers.

Among them, listening avidly is the foppish CAPTAIN COOPER WADE in a somewhat tattered light blue coat, with ruffled shirt cuffs showing, and the more sedate but anxious CAPTAIN JOHNCONSTABLE attired in an indecisive charcoal grey coat.

KIRKBY

(a toast)

To the Spanish Main - where a man
may make his fortune!

WADE

(gaily)

I thought you'd made your fortune
there already, Kirkby.

KIRKBY

And lost it faster - three years
on half-pay don't pay the bills, you know!
The others LAUGH.

CONSTABLE

We're fighting the French again, are we?
Vincent joins the table.

WADE

(gleefully)

Plucking their trade, more like

VINCENT

Not if Benbow has his way. A sudden
silence. Vincent affects surprise.

VINCENT

I thought you'd heard. Benbow's made
Commander in Chief of the Caribbean.

KIRKBY

The Devil you say!

VINCENT

The Devil I do.

WADE

I say, bloody hell.

The others shift uneasily, all bonhomie gone. The entire room has fallen silent as the news spreads. All tables watch them. Vincent drinks nonchalantly.

CONSTABLE

Why Benbow? He's only just back from the Indies. Damn, he's a real warmonger.

VINCENT

Never mind, perhaps there'll be no war.
(significantly)
And no prizes either.

KIRKBY

You're a miserable sod, Samuel.

VINCENT

We both know: survival is what matters in the Indies. Not half of us will return whether there's war or not.

CONSTABLE

Foreign posting's damn bad luck.

KIRKBY

Cheer up, we survived the Indies in 90 and we'll do it again. We were well taught.

VINCENT

Aye, taught to avoid the French.

KIRKBY

And they us

VINCENT

I don't trust the buggers.

KIRKBY

The Indies are not the Channel:
The French don't want to fight any more than we do.

VINCENT

You don't know Benbow

KIRKBY

He loves to play the hero.
(beat)
But hero's don't survive the Indies.

<p>CLIP: Benbow Expert:</p>	<p>Benbow Expert:</p> <p>Richard Kirkby came with considerable baggage. Despite having well connected relatives, and a colonelship of Marines in addition to his captaincy, Kirkby's career was a history of frustration. His temperament and personality caused him much grief. He developed a reputation for hot headedness, cruelty, and dishonesty. More importantly, he ran afoul of Lord Russell while in the Mediterranean for backwardness in attacking the enemy.</p> <p>As a result he was decommissioned in 1697 and saw scores of his juniors pass him by before he finally was reinstated for Benbow's West Indian squadron. Benbow made a point of not granting him Second in Command status, despite his being the most senior captain.</p>
<p>CLIP: Present day pub: London</p>	<p>Fred: So it was a 'motley crew' that set out with Benbow on his return to the West Indies.</p> <p>Bob: It does seem that they had to scrape the barrel. It does Benbow credit that he went back so willingly.</p> <p>Fred: Well, there has to be some truth to his son-in-law's coat of arms story. And it was common to reward military leaders with a knighthood for valued contributions. It's a bit surprising that Benbow had not yet received this honour.</p> <p>Bob: He did make enemies along the way, and many of the 'beaus' must have been irritated with his popularity.</p> <p>Fred: I suppose it was especially hard on his family, he had just been back a year and they knew the Indies was rife with illness.</p> <p>Bob: Well, let's join him on the Bredah as he heads towards his final battle.</p> <p>Fred: And watch out for enemies within.</p>

Second Voyage to the West Indies: 1701 - 2

PAINTING: NMM BHC0899



CLIP:

Ships in storm from film

NARR:

Benbow's squadron for the West Indies sailed in September 1701. The most powerful were two third rates: his flag ship the Bredah with 70 guns, and the Defiance with 64. There were several fourth rates averaging 50 guns each and some smaller vessels. William Whetstone was to be his Second in Command, but his ship was unfit to sail in time. He would follow later.

The squadron was hit by a formidable storm just south of the Scilly Isles. Some ships had to turn back while others were severely damaged losing top masts and splitting sails. Only ten ships of the line proceeded with Benbow to the West Indies.

ENGRAVING: NMM PAF4578 Galleon under attack



CLIP:
Video of Barbados, Jamaica shoreline

NARR:

His orders were to take notice of the Spanish Flota or treasure ships, and to seize them if he were strong enough.

After leaving Kirkby in the Ruby to protect Barbados, the squadron proceeded to Jamaica, reaching Port Royal on December 5, 1701. Benbow learned that there was much expectation of war, and the Spanish were holding their treasure ships in the protected harbour of Vera Cruse on the Mexican coast.

This engraving shows a Spanish Galleon under attack by an English ship.

PAINTING: George Walton NMM BHC3076



NARR:

Very quickly Benbow's officers and men succumbed to scurvy, fever, and dysentery. He erected a hospital near Kingston, but unfortunately it was close to a mosquito-infested swamp. Many men died. Benbow's first lieutenant, Thomas Hudson, was promoted to Captain, and took over the Pendennis in March 1702. Henry Martin of the Defiance died in February.

Kirkby in the Ruby, rejoined the squadron, and as the next most senior captain, demanded the Defiance which was the second most powerful ship in the squadron.

In his place George Walton was promoted to the Ruby from a smaller Bomb vessel. Both of these moves would bear serious consequences in the approaching mutiny.

ENGRAVING: Josiah Burchett NMM
PAD2765



NARR:

In addition to his move to the Defiance, Kirkby argued that he should be treated as second in command, and given responsibilities over some of the other ships. Benbow despised Kirkby as a half hearted warrior and never accorded him this honour. Instead, Benbow sent captains with lesser seniority out on independent commands in search of intelligence and prizes.

Kirkby complained bitterly to his confidant Secretary of the Navy Josiah Burchett that yet again he was being passed over.

CLIP: from film Benbow Mutiny

Benbow peruses a map with Captains Fogg and Kirkby.

KIRKBY

(with easy confidence)

I'm sorry for the death of Admiral Martin,
good man, heaven knows.

(beat)

I'll take up the post of rear-admiral.

BENBOW

No, you will not. Captain William Whetstone
has seniority.

KIRKBY

Whetstone's not here. I have seniority
on the Captains' List.

BENBOW

(reading map)

I will wait for Whetstone.

KIRKBY

The Devil you will! With war in the channel
Whetstone won't even arrive!

I'll not be passed over again.

No response

KIRKBY

I've served my King and Country more years than you.
Both have done well by me.

BENBOW

Not so well as they should have done at Pantelleria.

Veins stand out in Kirkby's forehead.

KIRKBY

(hisses)

You go too far! I was denied my due but by God
I'll not have it again! I'm senior captain
on this station and you've no grounds to deny me.

BENBOW

Return when you're in a more equable mood, Colonel.

KIRKBY

Secretary Burchett shall hear of this!

<p>CLIP: Benbow expert</p> <p>CLIP: Courts martial scenes from film with voice over.</p>	<p>Benbow Expert:</p> <p>Tempers flared among the officers as they waited out the long months of sickness, inactivity and isolation. Admiral Benbow was faced with frequent conflicts. Numerous courts martial resulted .</p> <p>In one instance Captain Philip Dawes was dismissed the service for not executing the Governor's orders prior to Benbow's arrival.</p> <p>In another, Lieutenant Partinton of the Defiance was severely reprimanded and transferred to the Greenwich for physically abusing six seamen.</p> <p>The Master of the Windsor was reprimanded for disputing the orders of the First Lieutenant, who had wanted to use a good sail as a smoke diverter. The lieutenant was demoted and transferred to the Bredah as second Lieutenant. Benbow had recently elevated the Master of the Bredah to be his First Lieutenant.</p> <p>The Captain of the Carcass Bomb ketch was fined all his wages and had his career ended for beating his Boatswain, causing the loss of one eye.</p> <p>Some of Benbow's commissioned officers may have resented his sense of justice as applied on behalf of seamen and warrant officers. They may have felt that he should have shown more deference to their own traditional privileged status.</p> <p>This discipline of the officer class and Benbow's known bluntness led some Historians to conclude that the Admiral treated his officers too harshly, and that this caused them to conspire against him.</p>
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PAINTING: Chateau-Renaud, Musee de France



ENGRAVING: Sea engagement, English and French: NMM PAF4614



PAINTING: William Whetstone, NMM BHC3088



NARR:

At this time the French had a combined fleet of 40 ships of the line in the Caribbean under the Count de Chateau-Renaud. Their task was to bring the Spanish treasure ships safely home to Spain and to protect French and Spanish interests and trade.

Nevertheless the Dutch reported that the English Admiral with a small squadron alarmed and insulted the French settlements in Hispaniola, took a great number of French prizes, and effectively protected the British commerce despite the superiority of the French.

Benbow had to contend with the loss of 500 men by death and desertion by the Spring of 1702. His efforts to fill their spaces by pressing or forced recruitment in the colony were met with stiff resistance from the Governor. The antagonism had grown such that even fresh provisions for the sick were hard to come by.

Fortunately in May his rear-admiral, William Whetstone, brought reinforcements and supplies. Finally Benbow had a second in command that he could rely on.

In this painting by Michael Dahl we see Whetstone similarly attired to Admiral Benbow in his court portrait.

PAINTING: Queen Anne, NMM BHC2515



NARR:

King William died that Spring and Queen Anne succeeded him. Benbow wrote in May that he had not had his health since coming to the West Indies and requested permission to come home.

Events overtook this request: word reached Benbow in July that Queen Anne had declared war upon the French.

This painting by Michael Dahl is of Queen Anne.

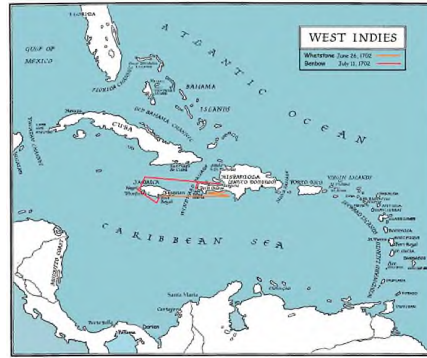
PAINTING: Admiral Du Casse, Musee de France



NARR:

At the end of June Benbow received intelligence that a small French squadron under the old buccaneer, Admiral Jean Du Casse, was expected at Port Louis, on the south western coast of French Hispaniola. Du Casse was conveying a new governor and troops to Cartagena on the Spanish Main.

MAP: West Indies, July 1702



CLIP:

From film: showing ship run aground by Benbow,

CLIP: Hispaniola shoreline near Port Louis, Leogane.

NARR:

Benbow immediately dispatched Whetstone with his squadron to search for Du Casse on the south coast of Hispaniola.

Benbow took his squadron to the north coast of French Hispaniola to cover the capital Leogane. Here they destroyed a French man of war by driving it onto shore, burned two merchant ships and took several prizes.

ENGRAVING: Santa Domingo, Univ. of Maine



MAP: Sta Domingo NMM P/33(102)



CLIP: Video of Santa Domingo shoreline, old town.

NARR:

On August 10th they learned that the French squadron had been spotted near Santa Domingo, the capital of the Spanish side of Hispaniola.

These engravings show Santa Domingo at that time.

MAP: West Indies, August 1702

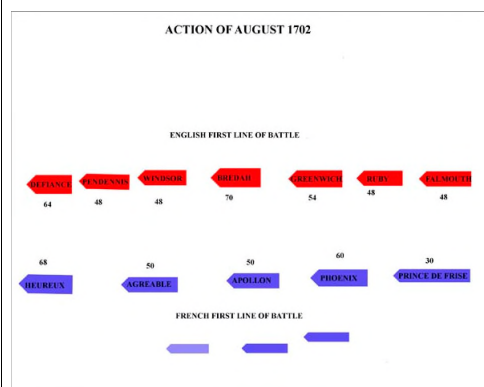


CLIP: from film two squadrons converging.

CLIP:

Benbow expert:

CHART: First line of battle



NARR:

Benbow turned southward for Santa Marta on the Spanish Main in hopes of intercepting Du Casse before he reached Cartagena.

Du Casse had heard of Benbow's activities taking prizes around Leogane, and of Whetstone's patrols around Port Louis. So he too made directly for Santa Marta, hoping to avoid direct confrontation with the English squadrons.

As the sun rose on August 19th the lookouts of the respective squadrons sighted each other. The two squadrons were converging, the English from the West, the French from the East, with an easterly wind.

Benbow Expert

The English squadron was composed of 7 ships of the line in the following battle order:

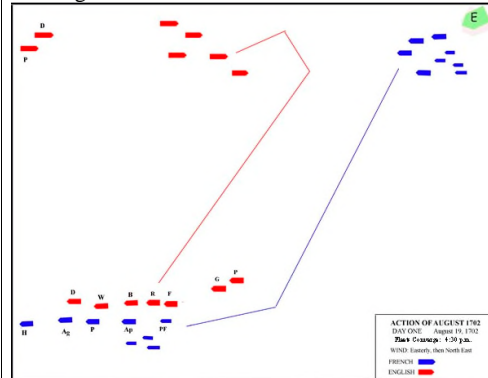
The Defiance (64 guns) Richard Kirkby
The Pendennis (48 guns) Thomas Hudson.
The Windsor (60 guns) John Constable
The Bredah, (70 guns) Flag ship, Captain Christopher Fogg,
The Greenwich (54 guns) Cooper Wade.
The Ruby (48 guns) George Walton
The Falmouth (48 guns) Samuel Vincent

The French were made up of 4 ships of the line and one smaller Dutch built flute or frigate and three transports.

The Heureux (68 guns) Admiral Du Casse
The Agreable (50 guns)
The Apollon(50 guns)
The Phoenix (60 guns)
The Prince de Frise (30 guns)

The English outnumbered the French 7 ships of the line to 4; and outgunned them 392 guns to 258. The trap was sprung.

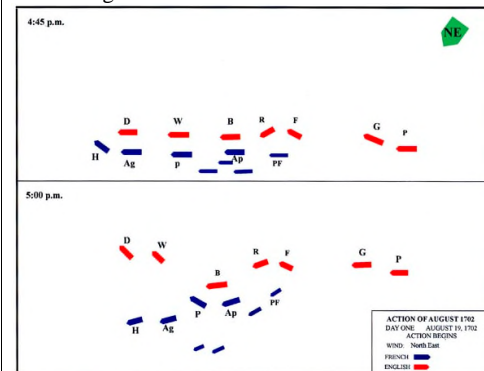
CHART: Day One, Wednesday August 19, fleets converge



CLIP: From film

Aerial shot of two squadrons in battle lines approaching engagement.

CHART: Day One: Wednesday August 19, Action begins



ENGRAVING: NMM PAD7513 Sea Engagement between English and French



NARR:

Benbow gave the signal for the chase. But what should have been a text book head on confrontation quickly deteriorated. The Pendennis and the Defiance were four miles to the rear. The rest had difficulty forming their line as they tacked north easterly against the wind. The French easily evaded Benbow by heading on a south-westerly course and were soon passing his disorganized ships. By 2 o'clock the French in full flight were 4 miles to leeward and Benbow's line was just getting underway for the chase.

As the day waned the two lines had converged in line-ahead battle formation: in the rear the Falmouth had got up with the enemy's stern most ship, although the Greenwich and Pendennis were further astern or behind. And the Defiance was still far short of their van or head. At 4:30 the crash of cannon fire thundered across the waves. The Falmouth, not waiting for the Admiral's order, fired its broadside on the Prince of Frise which was covering the troop ships to leeward or down wind. The Action had begun.

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 fourth, the Apollon, let loose her broadside at the Bredah.

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.

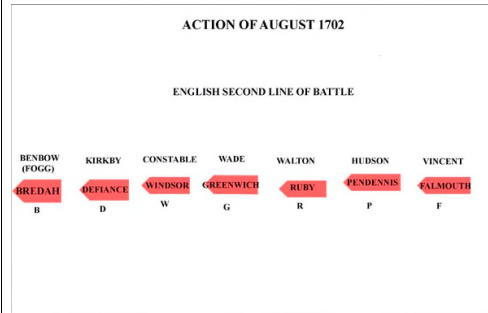
To the rear the Falmouth and Ruby kept up their barrage against the Prince de Frise and Le Marin. The Greenwich and the Pendennis were astern of them with their shot not reaching. The Bredah persevered with the two French warships till darkness fell, around six.

CLIP:

Benbow Expert:

CHART:

English second line of battle

**Benbow Expert**

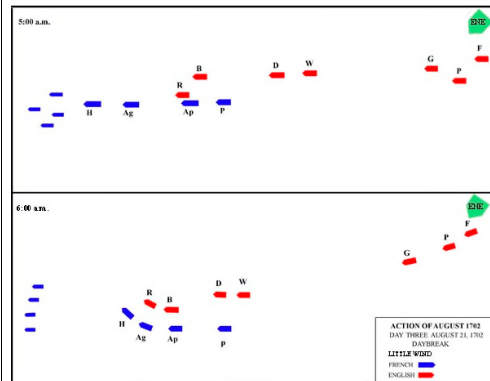
The Bredah suffered 15 men killed and several wounded in this exchange. The First Lieutenant of the Defiance was killed, which no doubt weighed heavily on Kirkby's decision to luff out of the line.

Benbow decided to give the errant captains an opportunity to redeem themselves. He believed 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.

The pursuit continued through the night with very little wind. Only the Bredah and the Ruby kept up with the French. The others were three to five miles astern. Still the French fled.

Throughout the second day there were small winds and much calm. The ships barely made two knots. The Bredah and the Ruby fired their chase guns and Benbow again sent his boat to order Kirkby to make more sail. The Admiral even fired two canon shots at the Windsor to keep her in line. It was 10 at night before all of his ships had caught up.

CHART: Day three, Friday August 21, daybreak



ENGRAVING: NMM PAD5291 Sea Engagement English and French



CLIP: from film
Aerial Shot of British line, Falmouth towing Ruby

NARR:

The Third Day: Friday August 21, little wind.

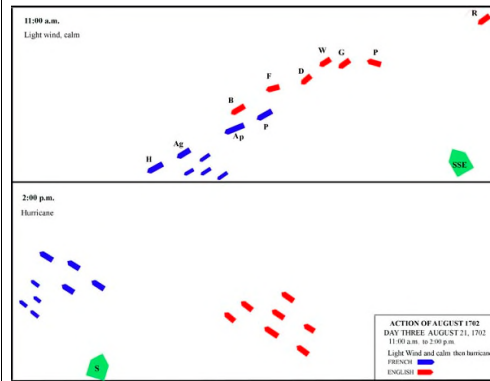
Again at daybreak the Ruby and Bredah found themselves up with the French with the rest of their ships some miles astern. They exchanged heated broadsides for two hours with the Ruby suffering greatly.

The Defiance and the Windsor eventually got abreast the rearmost French ship, the Phoenix, but did not fire upon her. Benbow twice called to and signalled the Defiance to fire but to no avail, despite her boatswain acknowledging the signal.

This was a clear desertion of his Admiral by Kirkby and a move from passive shirking of his duty to an active mutiny. He was in effect leaving Benbow a prey to the enemy.

At 7:30 a.m. Benbow broke off to tow the much shattered Ruby out of gunshot. He sent his second lieutenant with verbal orders to every commander to keep within one half a cable's length of one another, upon their peril, the Ruby excepted.

CHART: Day three, Friday August 21, 11:00 a.m.



PAINTING: English Ships in a Storm
NMM BCH0993

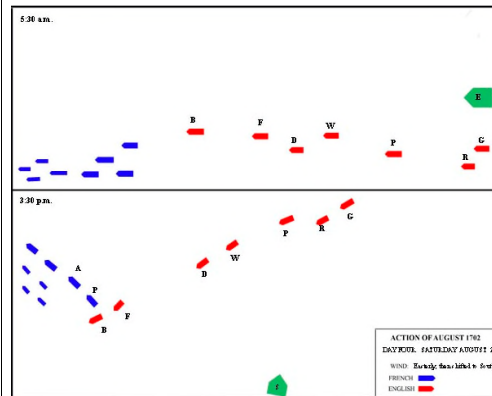


CLIP: From film
Ships in storm

NARR:

At 11:00 a.m. Benbow re-engaged the two rearmost French ships. All of his ships, save the Ruby and the Greenwich were within range of the enemy rear. They offered some assisted 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 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. The French managed to tow out of range.

About two a severe squall came out of the south, blowing hard with rain. The wind quickly increased to hurricane force. As they were driven WNW the stern most of the French lost her fore topsail as it split asunder. The Defiance likewise had her foresail torn from its yard. At three the chase resumed and continued through the night.

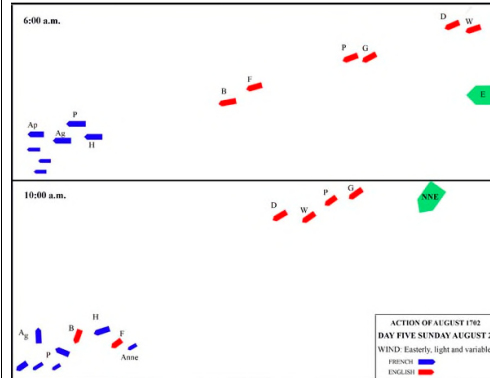
CHART: Day Four: drifting on different tacks**ENGRAVING:** Sea Engagement English and French NMM PAF4600**NARR:**

The Fourth Day: Saturday August 22. Little wind. Easterly, then shifted to the South West about 3:00 p.m.

The Bredah was one and one-half miles from the French; the rest of the squadron was spread out with the Greenwich and the disabled Ruby nine miles astern. The Defiance inexplicably shortened sail to slow its progress. At seeing this Captain Vincent of the Falmouth, broke the line and by-passed the laggard Defiance and Windsor, drew alongside Bredah, and requested permission to assist the Admiral, since nobody else would. Admiral Benbow enthusiastically accepted.

About three thirty the Falmouth and the Bredah fetched within gunshot of the stern most of the enemy, the Agreeable and the Phoenix. The enemy ships exchanged strong fire as they drifted by on contrary tacks or directions. Most of the English ships managed a broadside or two with the distant enemy.

CHART: Day Five: Sunday August 23. The French rescue the Heureux but lose the Anne.



ENGRAVING: Sea engagement, English and French: NMM PAD7546



CLIP: from film, Falmouth in action with Heureux

NARR:

In the night Du Casse ordered the slow sailing Dutch ship to flee for Cartagena. He also resolved to have the flagship, the Heureux, his most powerful ship, take up the rear of his line since the English seemed intent on preying on his stern most vessels. The injured Agreeable led in the Van.

The Fifth Day, Sunday August 23, 1702. Wind from the East. Enemy in sight. Defiance and Windsor four miles astern. About 10 the Bredah engaged the Heureux at the rear of the French line.

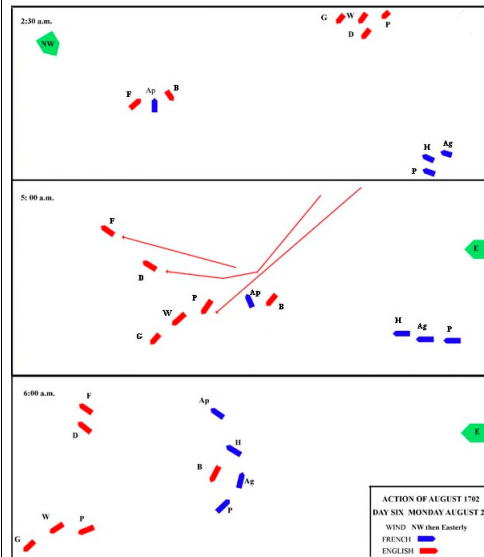
Some accounts indicate that Benbow personally led boarding attacks, suffering a large face wound and another to his arm.

Agreeable and Phoenix rallied to their admiral leaving a smaller ship unprotected. The Bredah and Falmouth took the Anne galley from the French.

The wind died in the afternoon, with the Defiance and the rest 3 to 4 miles astern. Benbow collected eight barrels of powder from each of his ships and ordered the Ruby to return to Port Royal with the Anne.

Despite a freshening gale in the evening which brought the line together, Kirkby's detachment managed to fall back in the night.

CHART: Day six, Monday August 24, the Admiral left as a sacrifice to the French.



ENGRAVING: Admiral Benbow courageously commanding his Men to fight, NMM PAD5181



CLIP: From film, "Admiral is down"

NARR:

The Sixth Day, Monday August 24, 1702. Little wind. The ships drifted in the currents. About 2:30 a.m. the wind shifted to NbW and in the starlight the Bredah and Falmouth came close to the Apollon. The rest of the English ships were four miles astern. After exchanging heated broadsides the Bredah grappled the Apollon.

At 3:00 a.m. the Admiral's right leg was shattered to pieces by a chain-shot, and he was carried down to the orlop.

As soon as his leg was bound he ordered his carpenter to fashion a cradle for his leg and was brought to the quarterdeck, and there, propped up, and in great pain, he resumed the direction of the battle.

This contemporary engraving shows Benbow courageously commanding his men to fight.

ENGRAVING: “The Gallant Benbow defeats the French Squadron”, from The British Trident



ENGRAVING: “Benbow continued to direct the fight” from Outposts of Empire.



CLIP: from film: Bredah besieged by 3 French vessels.

NARR:

The two English ships kept up their onslaught upon the Apollon turning her into a wreck. Then about 5:00 a.m. the wind came easterly, allowing the other English ships to bear down to the battle. The Falmouth, herself badly disabled, towed out of range to the north to knot her rigging.

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. Kirkby ignored the signal for the line, put his helm aweather, wore ship, and bore away to the northwest before the wind.

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. Benbow even fired two guns at his own ships to remind them of their duty, but to no avail.

The French, seeing the Bredah unsupported, bore down upon her. They gave her all the fire they had, raking her fore and aft above an hour. At seven of the clock that morning the Bredah finally and reluctantly edged away, giving up her prize.

These two engravings are from anthologies: the first titled “The gallant Benbow defeating the French Squadron” is from The British Trident, while the second, titled “Benbow continued to direct the fight” is from Outposts of Empire.

PAINTING: The Last Fight of Old Benbow, by A.D. McCormick. Royal Academy Illustrated 1934.



DOCUMENT: Mutinous declaration by Captains

A consultation held on board the Bredah the 24th August 1702 off of Cartagena on the Main Continent of America, it is the opinion of us, who's names are undermentioned, Viz.

- 1st - Of the great want of men, in Number; Quality and the Mechanics of those they have.*
- 2^d - The General want of Ammunition of most Sorts.*
- 3^d - Each Ship's Mast, Yards, Sails, Rigging and Guns being all in a great measure disabled.*
- 4th - The Wind, is so small and variable, that the Ships cannot be Governed by any Strength each Ship has.*
- 5th - Having experienced the Enemies force in Six days Battle following. The Squadron consisting of Three Men of War and a Frigate, under the Command of M^{or} de laun, their Equipage consisting in Gunns from Sixty to Eighty, having a great Number of Seamen and Soldiers on board for the Service of Spain.*

For which reasons abovementioned Wee think it not safe to Engage the Enemy at this time, but to keep them Company this night and observe their motions, and if a fair opportunity shall happen (of Wind and Weather) once more to trye our Strength with them.

Richard Kirkby
John Pentecost
John Hogg
Cooper
John Hudson

NARR:

Captain Kirkby of the Defiance came on board the Bredah and urged Benbow to give up the chase. The other captains were summoned and all signed a paper that was drafted by Kirkby. In it he stated that they were undermanned and exhausted; they were short of ammunition; 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; and finally they had seen how much stronger was the enemy in the six days battle.

Benbow answered each excuse and pointing out that only the Bredah had suffered in loss of men and damage: 60 men killed compared to no more than 8 in the rest of the squadron. He added that the wind was fresh and they had at that very moment the best opportunity to engage the enemy with their whole line abreast the enemy.

But the captains persisted. They only amended their paper to recommend that they not engage the French at this time, but keep company with them through the night, and if wind and weather improved, try their strength once again.

This finally convinced Benbow that they had no mind to fight, and were indeed cowards or had a design against him. He immediately put in writing his answer to the Captains' paper, and then ordered his squadron back to Jamaica. There he imprisoned the captains pending courts martial.

Courts martial and Conclusion 1702

CLIP:

From film: Opening scene of courts martial.

COLLAGE: Court martial of Kirkby, by William Benbow

**Narr:**

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, with the Solicitor General of Jamaica acting as Judge advocate or prosecutor. The trials were required to determine the guilt or innocence of Benbow's captains on the main charge of mutiny, and the related charges of breach of orders, neglect of duty, and cowardice.

Perhaps of equal importance for us is an understanding of the causes of the Captains' questionable behaviour.

Captain Hudson died before he could be brought to trial. He chose a self-imposed death to avoid the shame of the impending trial.

This collage is composed from works by McCormick and Skelton, with other contemporary figures. It shows Kirkby standing before a table of the court martial judges made up of the President, William Whetstone in the middle with George Walton to the left. The Judge Advocate and his clerk are at the far end questioning a witness seated in the foreground. Benbow is in the background keeping a keen eye on proceedings.

COLLAGE: Kirkby after A.D. McCormick



CLIP:

From film: President of court martial reads sentence.

NARR:

The first trial set the tone. The Defiance Gunner was convicted of concealing 43 barrels of powder. The prosecution successfully discredited the Captains' contention that they were short of powder.

The same day Colonel Kirkby's trial was held. Of 28 witnesses, only 4 were in any way supportive of Kirkby. The third lieutenant of the Defiance, under pressure, changed his testimony and admitting that the Defiance did not keep the battle line. The Master, under cross examination, also was forced to change his testimony: he admitted to altering his journal to suit Kirkby.

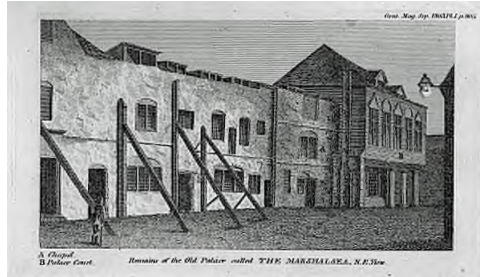
The Surgeon, Carpenter and Boatswain of the Defiance gave damning evidence of Kirkby's reticence to fight. The Boatswain testified that as well as commanding his men not to fire upon the enemy, Kirkby demonstrated his own cowardice by ducking behind the mizzen mast and falling down upon the deck.

Kirkby's defence for not firing at the enemy was that they did not fire at him, because they had a respect for him. He also argued that the Admiral was remiss in not immediately replacing his Captains if he was dissatisfied with them. And he faulted the Admiral for continually attacking the rear most enemy ships, and so impeding the rest of his line from coming abreast of the French.

The court concluded that Col. Kirkby had endeavoured to poison the rest of the Captains. He was found guilty of breach of orders for not keeping his line of battle, guilty of cowardice for withdrawing from the battle, guilty of neglect of duty for not pursuing the enemy or assisting his friends, and guilty of mutinous actions for drafting and signing a paper that hindered her Majesty's fleet then engaged.

He was sentenced to be shot, with the caveat that the sentence would not be carried out until confirmed by her majesty.

ENGRAVING: Marshalsea Prison, London



NARR:

The court martial of Captain Constable of the Windsor followed that of Kirkby. The charges were the same with the exception that Constable was not charged with cowardice. 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.

Both the 1st Lieutenant and the Purser of the Windsor testified to Constable's backwardness in pressing the fight.

The court found that Constable through drunkenness and ignorance was guilty of breach of orders and neglect of duty, and of mutiny for signing the paper which was a hindrance and disservice of her Majesty's fleet then engaged.

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.

He was returned to England in April 1703 and imprisoned in the Marshalsea in London. He had influential friends and received a Royal Pardon in June 1703.

This engraving shows the Marshalsea Prison.

ENGRAVING: Cooper Wade from Skelton



NARR:

Following Constable's trial, which concluded on the 10th of October, 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 drunk during the greatest part of the engagement and made disparaging remarks about the Admiral.

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.

PAINTING: Execution on board ship
NMM BHC0380



PICTURE: Charles Church, Plymouth



NARR:

Kirkby and Wade were returned to England on April 13, 1703 on board the Bristol. They had hopes that their friends and relations would successfully persuade the Queen to pardon them. They were thus surprised when they reached Plymouth and were told that the Queen had signed a warrant for their execution. To be carried out immediately.

They were shot on the forecastle of the Bristol at 6:00 p.m. on April 16 and buried in Plymouth. Kirkby died with some dignity; Wade did not.

Their final resting place is just before the altar of Charles' Church, Plymouth. To-day, only the bombed out shell remains as a war memorial.

This painting shows a similar execution of Admiral John Byng in 1757 for neglect of duty and not doing his utmost to take, sink, burn and destroy the enemy ships.

This picture is of Charles Church, Plymouth, as it is to-day.

PAINTING: Christopher Fogg and Samuel Vincent, by McCormick (Last Fight of Old Benbow)



CLIP:
From film: captains signing paper.

NARR:

Lastly the court tried Captains Samuel Vincent and Christopher Fogg for signing Kirkby's paper.

They testified that they signed because they believed that given the backwardness of the other Captains, if they engaged the French any more either the Bredah or Falmouth or both of them would have been sunk or taken by the French.

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.

CLIP:

Josiah Burchett: causes of the mutiny.

**JOSIAH BURCHETT**

Josiah Burchett, Secretary of the Admiralty to Queen Anne and King George; at your service:

Gentlemen, ladies, you will note that I have written in some detail of this incident between Vice-Admiral Benbow and the French, in my Complete History of the Most Remarkable Transactions at Sea, recently published in 1720.

Now, in my history, I forbore 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 thus 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 Parts of the World he had had long Experience, yet when he found his Captains so very remiss in the Performance of their Duty, I think he ought, in point of Discretion, to have summoned them, at the first sign of trouble, 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.

And I might add I have correspondence from Colonel Kirkby: he himself makes this very point and adds that the Vice Admiral erred in taking the lead upon himself and then continually attacking the rear ships of the enemy line, and so prevented Colonel Kirkby from approaching the enemy ships.

Colonel Kirkby also alleges a malice and partiality on the part of the Vice-Admiral. Now I have known both of these men for many years: they are both quite blunt in their speech. Neither would suffer any imposition by another. I dare say there may well have been some antagonism betwixt them. And this may be the true and original cause of those vigorous proceedings against Colonel Kirkby in the West Indies.

<p>CLIP: John Campbell, historian.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">JOHN CAMPBELL</p> <p>Dr. John Campbell, historian: see my recently published “Lives of the British Admirals”, 1742.</p> <p>First, let me begin by saying, yes, 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 Secretary Burchett’s celebrated work. 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.</p> <p>But let me tell you what I have discovered. 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.</p> <p>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</p> <p>In particular he had cashiered two of his captains, and reprimanded those other officers who did not know their seamanship as well as the warrant officers. And he would not tolerate abuse of the men. But let me be clear: this was no lower class tar verses the gentlemen officers: Benbow had as much right to being treated a gentleman as any of them. I have from his son-in-law and daughter that he was descended from an ancient and honourable family.</p> <p>No, the point of contention was just that Benbow insisted that his officers behave well, as Englishmen should.</p>
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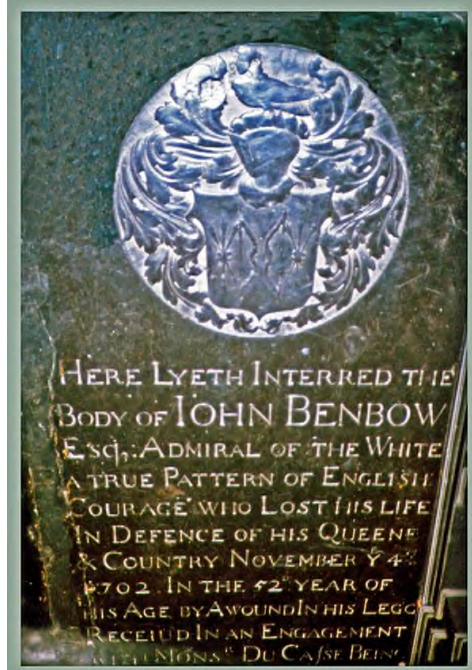
<p>CLIP: Ruth Bourne, historian</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">RUTH BOURNE</p> <p>Ruth Bourne, historian and writer: please see my recently published work: Queen Anne's Navy in the West Indies, 1939.</p> <p>I would like to correct a mistaken notion: some historians have held that the Captains' conspiracy was a result of Benbow's rough language and brisk treatment.</p> <p>This is nonsense. The real cause was Kirkby's personal sense of having been wronged by all and sundry, particularly those naval authorities who thwarted his career. Kirkby was one of those West India captains, who, Benbow had remarked, were considered finished professionally. After William's war Kirkby had been left unemployed and with several years' back pay due him, while twenty juniors were advanced over his head.</p> <p>Even in the West Indies with Benbow, Kirkby continued to complain that juniors were advanced over him, and enjoyed the plum assignments of seeking out prizes while he cooled his heels in harbour.</p> <p>His own health was impaired by his long stay in the West Indies. Moroseness, illness, jealousy, envy and perhaps a deliberate plot to accomplish the capture, or at least the defeat, of Benbow, explain Kirkby's treachery in the engagement against Du Casse.</p> <p>And don't forget, Kirkby was not alone: Benbow was more feared than loved in the Islands, for he had dealt a little briskly with the people there, particularly alienating the Islanders by indiscriminate pressing of both merchant sailors and landsmen to replenish his crew.</p> <p>Given the quality of the officers and men who were sent to the West Indies, and the harsh conditions that they faced, there were not many among them who would put their lives at further risk for Benbow. They particularly did not relish being put in harms way by his aggressive style of fighting.</p>
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<p>CLIP: BENBOW EXPERT, professor, United States Naval War College.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BENBOW EXPERT (PROFESSOR)</p> <p>The debate over the 'mutiny' of Benbow's captains in the action off Cape Santa Marta has been previously seen as either a cowardly desertion by the captains or, alternatively, as a reaction caused by Benbow's lack of proper leadership.</p> <p>For a deeper understanding of these events, one needs to put them in context: i.e. the effect that a running six-day battle had on all involved.</p> <p>The conditions of the battle also need to be taken into consideration: light and variable winds, diminishing ammunition, battle-damaged ships, a French squadron bent on carrying out its mission and not being led astray to fight a battle, English ship captains with serious professional doubts about obtaining a decisive victory, the established practice by which captains advised an admiral, and an admiral bent on having his way and proving his case.</p> <p>To this I would add that battle tactics and ship signals were just beginning to be developed. The art of an Admiral coordinating a fleet of independent ships was in its infancy.</p> <p>Orders had to be shouted from ship to ship or sent by smaller boats.</p> <p>In light winds it could be very difficult to form ships into the prescribed battle line, and to maintain this over several days.</p> <p>This primitive state of ship to ship communication and battle tactics created an ideal environment for captains to passively resist an Admiral who did not have their full support.</p>
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<p>CLIP: BENBOW EXPERT: HISTORIAN</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BENBOW EXPERT (HISTORIAN)</p> <p>If viewed as a product of his time, the true importance of the debacle of Benbow's last fight is that it throws into sharp relief both how far the Royal Navy had come and how far it had to go.</p> <p>He was fighting on the far side of the world, but without the tools needed to do so successfully. The infrastructure that would allow fleet commanders to gain the loyalty of their subordinates was simply not in place.</p> <p>The navy had yet to learn that reward was a more potent motivation than punishment and that punishment itself never had a place in an uncertain and corrupt legal system.</p> <p>Nor was there a tradition to build upon of sustained victory, or a concept of professional camaraderie.</p> <p>The notion of duty in the face of the enemy, apparently so strong in Benbow, was simply not shared in the way that it was later in the century.</p> <p>Not only did Benbow have no experience of fleet command, but his fleet had no desire to be commanded.</p> <p>His ships were weak and he faced a highly skilled enemy.</p> <p>Difficult and quarrelsome he may have been, but Benbow was undoubtedly brave and dedicated to his duty and as such he deserved better.</p> <p>Therein lies the broad appeal of the Benbow story. It is not one of the navy, or of the complexities of command, signalling, flags and expectation, but of simple human justice.</p> <p>That is where the mass appeal of his story lies: that is why it was publicized as never before; and that is why Benbow became the first true English naval hero.</p>
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<p>CLIP: Benbow expert: William A. Benbow</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WILLIAM A. BENBOW</p> <p>Over the centuries historians have found many underlying causes to explain the conspiracy of Benbow's captains and the failure of his Last Fight.</p> <p>There were political reasons: two sovereigns claiming authority over England; religious: a protestant country very suspicious of catholic leanings; social: tension between the gentleman officers and the professional tars.</p> <p>Still, I believe the answer lies in more basic human emotions.</p> <p>Revenge for Kirkby: against any authority that thwarted his designs for advancement based on his own feelings of having been passed over unfairly.</p> <p>Anger for some: at the Admiral's strict discipline which resulted in at least two captains being cashiered leading up to the mutiny, and a disregard for the opinions and advice of his captains.</p> <p>Greed for the rest: the attractiveness of easily captured enemy merchant ships or prizes. Thomas Hudson in the Pendennis had already brought in several prizes: the others wanted their share.</p> <p>And Cowardice or self-preservation for them all.</p> <p>This was a common problem in the infancy of the English navy. It had been particularly bad in the Dutch wars and was equally so in these early encounters with the French. It was extremely dangerous to be a naval officer in those days: casualties were highest amongst those who walked the Quarterdeck. There was no protection from enemy shot. It is little wonder that many captains kept their ships at a distance. And not surprising that Kirkby had reached an understanding of "respect" with the French in the Caribbean.</p> <p>The real mystery is that George Walton and Samuel Vincent braved the hail of enemy fire to support Benbow. These are the heroes.</p> <p>And against the background of the injustice of his captains who hung back, it is not surprising that Benbow's behaviour became legendary. Particularly the image of him with his leg shattered, continuing to conduct the battle from his cradle on the Quarter Deck.</p>
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Admiral Benbow memorial marker, St. Thomas Church, Kingston, Jamaica



"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 MONS^r DU CASSE BEING
MUCH LAMENTED."

NARR:

Admiral Benbow died of his wounds November 4, 1702, less than a month after the courts martial of his captains. He was buried in the parish Church, Kingston, Jamaica. While news of his death was making its way back to England, he received a promotion to Vice Admiral of the White.

After his death, the navy did not initially memorialize him. The demoralizing incident of the mutiny of his captains was best forgotten.

But he had developed and demonstrated a method of fighting with a vengeance that became a true pattern of English courage. The cowardly captains were the perfect foil, in stark contrast to Benbow fighting the ship from his cradle.

So his legend grew. The common sailor, cheered such courage and saw him as one of their own, a tarpaulin. These sailors sung his praises wherever they gathered. Drinking establishments were named after him, all over the country. Men called his name going into battle; prize fighters invoked his name as they entered the ring.

Finally, when naval heroes were badly needed, 100 years later, in Nelson's day, the naval authorities capitalized on his fame: they named ships of war after him; encouraged his inclusion in anthologies of naval heroes; and hung his portrait in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich.

Memorials there now are: a stone tablet over his grave in Jamaica with the Benbow coat of arms. A sculpture in St. Mary's church Shrewsbury. And one of a dozen busts of famous admirals on the Naval College in Greenwich.

Admiral Benbow Memorial, St. Mary's Church, Shrewsbury



**Admiral Benbow memorial
Pepys Building, Naval College, Greenwich**



NARR:

The Saint Mary's memorial reads:

"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"

He never achieved the noble stature that he craved in his lifetime, no great victory in battle, no knighthood, and no confirmation of the right to bear a coat of arms. Yet he achieved legendary stature in the hearts of common sailors, and eventually he took his place in the pantheon of heroic British Admirals.

"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."