

THE



NEWSLETTER

Issue XXV



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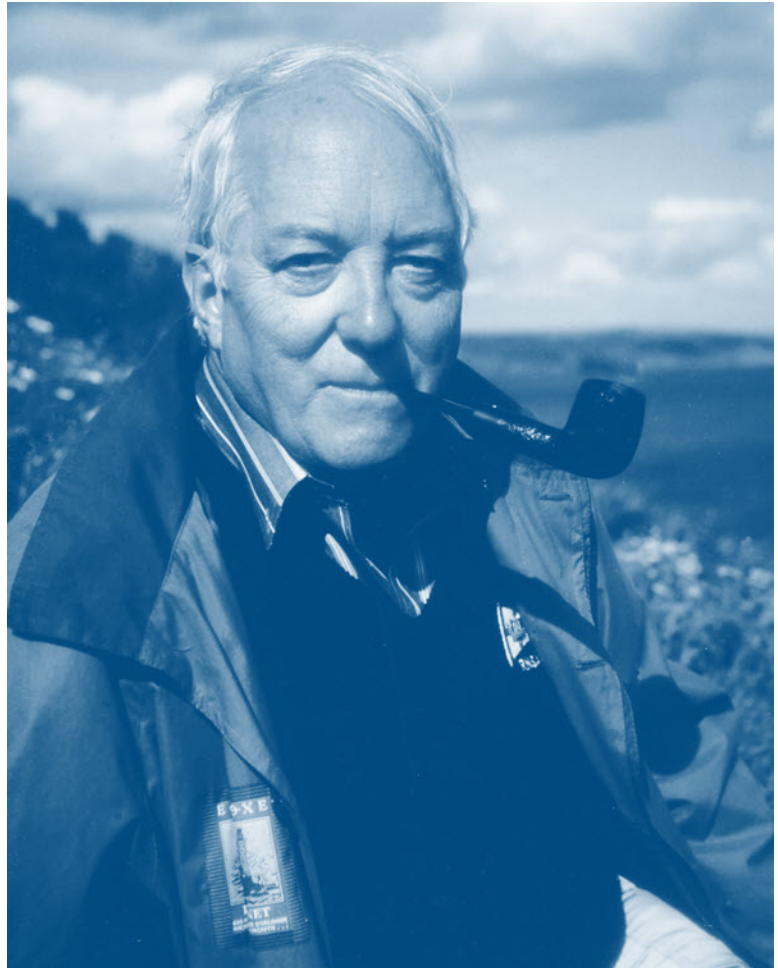
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Douglas Reeman / Alexander Kent
(Photo by Kimberley Reeman)

Part One

A Word from the Author

When I have completed a new book, and the manuscript is safely in the hands of the publisher, I am sometimes asked how it feels. Pride, satisfaction, anxiety: most authors must share it. For me, especially with the Bolitho series, there is always a sense of loss: the characters, their voices or dialects and their attitudes to their ship, to authority, to wit and to danger. And the ship herself, usually overcrowded, wardroom and messdecks crammed into one hull and separated only by discipline and the code of conduct. Light-hearted times, sharing an extra tot of grog, perhaps dancing the hornpipe, or mustered aft in grim silence to witness punishment, a shipmate being seized up to a grating and flogged with a cat o' nine tails. Cheering as an enemy strikes his colours, but kneeling by a close friend who has fallen in battle.

I have been part of their daily routine, a young midshipman scraping another ship's signal on a slate with a piece of chalk before recording it in the log for all time. A mundane message usually, but occasionally one to be remembered forever, like the famous "England Expects", which, like Nelson himself, has become immortal, and a part of the Navy's history.

And I have seen the newcomers, landsmen who have never before set foot in any ship. Using their strength and weight to heave on a bewildering mass of rigging to make or shorten sail, or turning the capstan to raise the anchor.

And I have shared their thoughts: respect for, or dislike of, their superiors, their loyalty when the drums roll and they forget their differences in the rush to clear for action. They are real to me, and personal. I would know them on any deck, or recognize them ashore, enjoying a spell of 'liberty'.

Only when the finished copy of the book is in my hands, long before it appears in bookshop or library, can I stand back. Until the next voyage, when I will once again sail with familiar friends. I hope you will join me.

Part Two

Winds of Change

When Captain Adam Bolitho receives orders to prepare his ship, the frigate *Onward*, for sea without delay, he feels both relief and concern. It is 1819, and like every serving officer he is well aware of the price of peace: harbours and dockyards around the country filled with ships of all rates and sizes, unmanned or already paid off and awaiting the final voyage to breakers' yards where their service will end forever. Some are well known, even famous, and the memories of their battles, like the Nile and Trafalgar, will outlive them.

The brutal old catchphrase, "God and the Navy we adore/ when danger threatens, but not before!" has never been more true.

Waterfronts are thronged with sailors, many of whom have served in those forsaken ships and

fought those famous battles. Now they are unemployed, thrown on the beach. Even in the corridors and waiting-rooms of the Admiralty Adam has experienced the envy and hostility of those less fortunate, when he was given *Onward* to command.

Despite the differences and difficulties inherent in any new ship's company, they had worked well together and become a team, even under the strain of conditions in the Mediterranean and the bloody capture of *Nautilus*. So why the doubt and anxiety this time?

Adam is leaving his bride, Lowenna, the memory of their wedding still fresh and their untimely parting deeply regretted.

And what of his new orders, to carry sealed despatches to West Africa for the admiral at Freetown, on what is still known as 'the slave coast'? Although the evil trade has now been banned by all the major powers and naval patrols, mostly the Royal Navy's own, are actively trying to prevent it, it is estimated that over 120,000 slaves are still shipped out annually. The punishments for 'blackbirding', as it is called, are severe, but the rewards lucrative enough to tempt those daring or greedy enough to risk the death penalty. Many of the slavers are well equipped and heavily armed, and prove more than a match for the patrols, which are usually brigs and schooners.

So what is planned for *Onward* and her captain? Whatever it is, it will be a far cry from a frigate's more familiar role, acting as 'the eyes of the flagship' or keeping pace with the line of battle.

But then, the whole of the Navy is changing:

ships and weapons, even the very means to drive them. Old sailors still sneer at the rumours that sail will give way to steam-powered vessels which will never again be subject to the whim of wind or tide, never again run the risk of lying becalmed and motionless, at the mercy of shallows, or grounded, a helpless target for the enemy.

Who will be first? Who will triumph? The question is no longer *how*, but *when*.

Adam thinks of his own young midshipmen, and tries to picture their next horizon.

And my own?

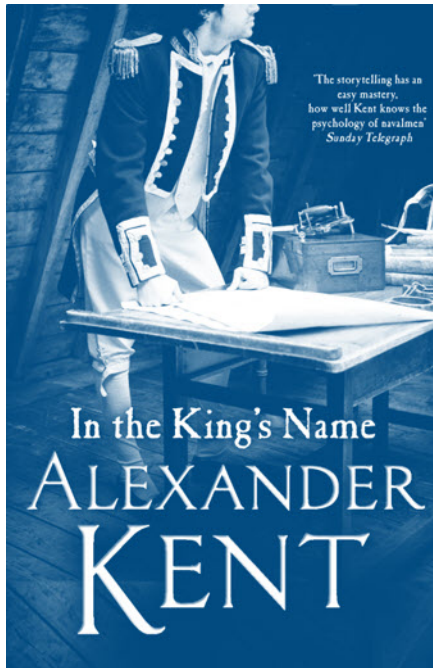
He is the captain. He alone must decide.

Part Three

In the King's Name

It is January 1819, and Captain Adam Bolitho, newly married, makes haste to ship out of Falmouth and leave his beautiful wife, Lowenna, once again. Bound for Freetown, on the old slave coast of Africa, H.M.S. *Onward* carries sealed orders in the strongbox below deck. But why all the secrecy and apparent urgency? And why *Onward*, so soon after the Mediterranean, and that bloody action with *Nautilus*?

Mission completed, yet Adam cannot and will not leave. On their way into port, the crew of the *Onward* spy the debris of an allied frigate, destroyed as if taken by surprise. There are bodies strewn among the shark-infested waters and no enemy in sight. A single word frozen on the lips of



the dead. *Mutiny*. The men begin to question who is friend and who is foe.

All is not well aboard the *Onward*; envy and hunger for power consume some of the crew, but they must band together and risk their lives, in the name of the King. A searing and gripping tale of trouble on the high seas, and of the weakness of the human spirit, *In the King's Name* heralds the return of our greatest living maritime writer and the legendary Adam Bolitho.

(In the King's Name is published in the United Kingdom by Century and in the United States by McBooks Press).

Part Four

“Always know their names”: Bolitho and leadership

One of the great pleasures of a writer's often solitary life is our contact with readers, by letter, e-mail or in person at book signings. People like to share their thoughts and feelings about the books, discuss their favourites and, with a candour that is often surprising and deeply moving, confide that reading the Bolitho series has inspired and influenced them, sometimes in life-changing ways. Douglas has often been called “the Royal Navy's best unpaid recruiting officer”, and a startling number of people have cited Kent or Reeman novels as the reason for their choice of a naval career. Others, in the armed forces and in civilian life, have learned valuable lessons in leadership and management techniques from Richard Bolitho and his nephew Adam. Neither would have regarded himself as a role model or a mentor, and would be slightly uncomfortable at the suggestion, and the man who created them even more so. But the values which have inspired generations of readers flow from the author himself, who laughingly calls them “OLQs” (officer-like qualities). And here, in essence, they are.

- “Always know their names. Sometimes it is all they possess.” A lesson the author and

the young Bolitho learned early in their naval careers.

- Respect. “Remove your hat in the mess. It is the men’s home.” The respect of others does not come automatically: it has to be earned.
- Loyalty goes both ways.
- Humour, where appropriate, is a great ice-breaker.
- Show your humanity. Compassion and empathy are not weakness but strength. Praise when appropriate, and mediate wisely in disputes. Hear all sides of the story. Allow others to present their views, and don’t be afraid to ask for their opinions.
- Look beneath the surface and recognize an individual’s hidden qualities. Captain James Tyacke is so much more than a disfigured face.
- Know when your people are right and stand up for them. Recognize bullying and mistreatment and deal with it promptly.
- Honesty. Be up front. Acknowledge your mistakes or those of your people, and act accordingly. Learn how to apologize.
- Never take out anger or resentment on others who can’t answer back.

- Recognize the inevitability of conflict sometimes, but don’t sacrifice unnecessarily. Winning is not everything. Know when it’s over.
- Honour is not an excuse for self-seeking tyranny. With courage and truth, it is part of a code of ethics by which to live. Practice it and respect it in others.
- Recognize and accept the loneliness of command. The ultimate responsibility is yours.

Part Five

The Bolitho Saga

The first Richard Bolitho adventure by Alexander Kent, *To Glory We Steer*, was published in 1968, and has been in print ever since, along with each new title.

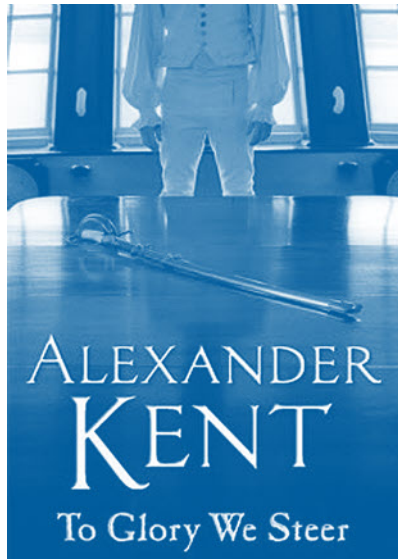
Following is a list of the Bolitho novels in the order in which they were published. For more details, visit the Douglas Reeman/Alexander Kent website at www.douglasreeman.com.

To Glory We Steer (1968)

Form Line of Battle (1969)

Enemy in Sight! (1970)

The Flag Captain (1971)



Sloop of War (1972)

Command a King's Ship (1973)

Signal - Close Action! (1974)

Richard Bolitho, Midshipman (1975)

Passage to Mutiny (1976)

In Gallant Company (1977)

The Inshore Squadron (1977)

Midshipman Bolitho and the Avenger (1978)

Stand Into Danger (1980)

A Tradition of Victory (1981)

Success to the Brave (1983)

Colours Aloft! (1986)

Honour This Day (1987)

With All Despatch (1988)

The Only Victor (1990)

Beyond the Reef (1992)

The Darkening Sea (1993)

For My Country's Freedom (1995)

Cross of St George (1996)

Sword of Honour (1998)

Second to None (1999)

Relentless Pursuit (2001)

Man of War (2003)

Band of Brothers (2005)

Heart of Oak (2007)

In the King's Name (2011)

Part Five

Son of a gun!

Surely one of the more unusual projects undertaken by Christopher Hall, “The Gentleman Joiner”, was the restoration of our cherished 24-pounder cannon, a gift to Douglas many years ago, and used on the set of the mini-series *I Remember Nelson*.

Having withstood the ravages of time and weather for more than thirty years, it gradually and not very gracefully fell victim to the sailor’s enemy: rot. With enthusiasm and skill, the Gentleman Joiner rose to the challenge. “Now this should settle any scores with the neighbours,” he exclaimed upon completing the project.

Follow the journey to full restoration with Christopher Hall, ship’s carpenter extraordinaire,



Master craftsmen Christopher Hall and Tony Whiteman secure the barrel for a little gun-running down the highway to Christopher’s workshop in rural Surrey. It would have been fun to see the expressions on the faces of other drivers, or Christopher’s response had he been pulled over by the local constabulary. (Photo by Kimberley Reeman)

on the official Douglas Reeman/Alexander Kent website (www.douglasreeman.com).

**The Bolitho novels are available online from
the following book dealers ...**

United Kingdom

Hatchards in London (www.hatchards.co.uk)
The Book Depository in the UK (www.bookdepository.co.uk)
Amazon UK (www.amazon.co.uk)

United States

McBooks Press in the US (www.mcbooks.com)
Amazon (www.amazon.com)
Barnes & Noble (www.barnesandnoble.com)