



The  
*Richard Boulton*

Newsletter

Issue XX



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## *Contents*

### PART ONE

*In Search of a Story*

### PART TWO

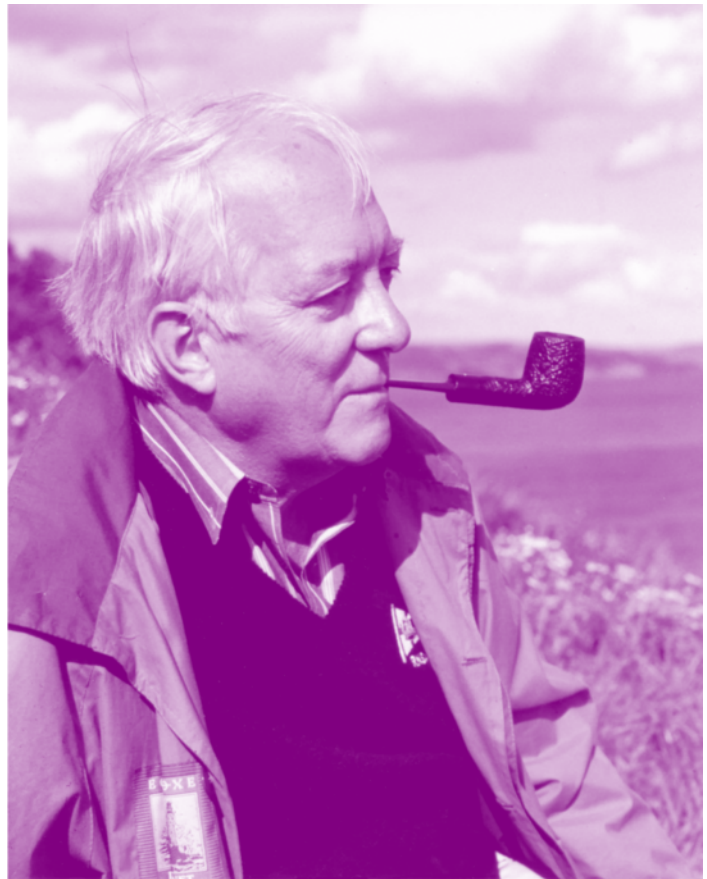
*The Way Ahead*  
by Kim Reeman

### PART THREE

*Chain of Command*

### PART FOUR

*'Sword of Honour'*



Douglas Reeman / Alexander Kent  
Photo by Kimberley Reeman

## Part One

### *The Most Coveted Gift*

It was what every keen and ambitious sea-officer held as his ideal, a command of his own. And for any young sea captain with the dash and courage to merit it, a frigate was the prime choice.

Often sailing along, to carry urgent despatches, or to harass enemy shipping: it was a far cry from being tied to the fleet's apron strings, or being forced to serve in the ponderous, overcrowded world of a ship of the line.

Some frigate captains became famous, others notorious, but they offered hope to a nation worn down by decades of war, to people who had probably never set eyes on a king's ship in their lives.

But on the eve of Waterloo, after all the suffering and disappointments, many officers nursed doubts about the future. Captain Adam Bolitho was one such officer. Without question he had proved himself one of the navy's best frigate captains. In command of *Unrivalled*, a new fifth-rate of 46 guns, he was to be envied, not pitied, some said. But those who knew him, truly knew him, understood what the death of his beloved uncle, Admiral Sir Richard Bolitho, had cost him.

And now, with the final victory in sight, and the human jackals closing in to prey on victors and vanquished alike, the aftermath of that war was already apparent.

Of the big ships, the first-rates and third-rates,

many would be paid-off and laid up. Forgotten. Ships with names which had inspired the men who served them in many a thundering line of battle would end their lives as hulks, and left to rot.

And frigates, 'the eyes of the fleet', how many would survive? The sea lanes and trade would still have to be protected; after so many years of war, even the most optimistic minds at Admiralty must perceive that there were new dangers, privateers and pirates, mercenaries who would sell their skills and broadsides to the highest bidder, no matter how base the cause.

Some territories seized from the old enemies in wartime would be handed back, so that the navy's role and abilities would be stretched to and beyond the limit.

The life of a frigate captain was of necessity a lonely one, despite the enforced proximity of his officers, and Adam Bolitho had known for a long time that the main enemies were time and distance, and lack of information. Fast action could thwart any attempt to invade or overthrow some far-flung territory. Careless or wrong strategy would certainly end in court-martial.

And now he feels more than ever alone. Names, faces, casual remarks bring it all back. The one man who had treated him like a son is no more.

Adam Bolitho is brave, impetuous, some would say reckless, attractive to women although the great love he once knew has been denied him.

But he is, above all, a frigate captain. The only way is ahead, towards the next challenge, where courage is not always enough.

## Part Two

### *Out of the Shadows*

by Kim Reeman

**D**ouglas, many years have passed since the writing of *Enemy in Sight!* It was 1970. In that book, a young midshipman arrives on board *Hyperion*. Both *Hyperion* and that fourteen-year-old, Adam Pascoe, as he was then, have come to mean far more to Richard Bolitho, and to you, than either of you could ever believed. How did Adam come to be?

I liked him from the moment he appeared. There was no grand design, no sense of ‘oh, one day he will take over.’ He just appeared, like Richard Bolitho, and when he stepped on board with the letter from Lewis Roxby that was the first thing I knew about him. I remember that letter from Roxby wasn’t much help; I remember Bolitho looking at him, and knowing that Roxby would have checked up on the boy to make sure he was who he was supposed to be, but just looking at him, you would know he was a Bolitho.

And all the time, in the background, Adam has been drifting in and out of the series, pursuing his own career . . .

Even becoming Bolitho’s flag lieutenant on one occasion. And none of it was planned.

So there was no conscious thought of Adam one day continuing the series.

No, he was just there. As I said to the American

I was writing to today, I didn’t ‘kill off Bolitho’, any more than I made him appear. Richard Bolitho was just there, and in fact he arrived quite late in his career in *To Glory We Steer*.

*You and the reader and Adam, is there a sense of recovering from Bolitho’s death? Are you putting Bolitho behind you?*

There was a sense of inevitability, but it was a shock nevertheless when it happened. I was just rereading the scene in *Sword of Honour* and I was deeply moved . . . I thought I wouldn’t be, after all this time. The date of his death was no secret, it was written on the bookmarks from the beginning. I will not put him behind me, any more than Adam. And it’s not only Adam now, there are other people, Bethune, Keen, who served him as midshipmen; they all gained from it and from him and it will be interesting to see what course their lives take. But it had to be. It was inevitable. It was fate, just as Adam’s life, which became so unexpectedly interwoven with his uncle’s, has become intertwined with mine.

## Part Three

### *The Fleet in Being*

**A**s an island race, we have always had an affinity with the sea, so it is hardly surprising that down over the centuries we have become familiar, if that is the word, with the ships and

sailors of our maritime past. Perhaps because of literature, as well as the paintings of contemporary artists, we have a sense of belonging, particularly in that zenith of sail, the nineteenth-century.

Man's most beautiful creation, some one described the fighting ship of the period. A sight to remember, under full or plain sail, standing out from the land and reaching for another horizon. One wag wrote, 'Best seen at a distance, and not to dally until the press gangs roam the streets.'

The fleet was divided into sections, squadrons and flotillas, with another lesser-known armada of smaller craft designed to keep open lines of communication and supply to any corner of the globe.

The great ships of the line we probably know best. Built to withstand the heaviest punishment at close quarters, sometimes with gun muzzles all but overlapping those of the enemy, to stand in line until the fight was over, and the enemy's flag was hauled down.

The biggest were the *first-rates*, three deckers which mounted one hundred guns and sometimes more, and *second-rates*, also three-deckers which carried no less than eighty guns. The constant concern of every captain was the need to obtain supplies, food and drink, powder and shot and the most vital commodity of all, *men*. Hundreds of men were required to serve those great ships, to learn the mysteries of sail and gun drill and the miles of rigging, and when necessary to fight. Men were always in short supply; death and injury were commonplace without a shot ever having been

fired. Falls from aloft were frequent: inexperienced landsmen, volunteers or those snatched up by the press gangs, unused to working high above the decks, perhaps in a screaming gale during their first days at sea.

And in the heat of battle, waiting for hours to draw near to the enemy, and then the murderous bedlam of cannon fire and slashing steel. Descriptions of such horrific engagements are never exaggeration. Men fought for their ship and for one another, and many would die rather than endure the knife or saw of the surgeon and his mates in the aftermath of a sea-fight.

The *third-rate*, more popularly known as a seventy-four, was usually the most common in any line of battle. Two decked but mounting no less than seventy guns, they were faster and better to handle than their heavier sisters.

The *fourth-rate* was by that time virtually obsolete, although a few remained in lesser roles. Mounting sixty guns or so, they were neither strong nor powerful enough to withstand the battering of action at close quarters.

Frigates were the only other rated vessels. The *fifth-rate* carried twenty-eight to thirty-eight guns, and in the later stages of development even more, like Adam Bolitho's *Unrivalled*, which carries forty-six guns, including eight thirty-two pounder carronades. The 'smashers' were blindly inaccurate at any sort of range, but murderous and devastating at close quarters.

The *sixth-rate* was the smallest frigate, of twenty to twenty-six guns. They were known as post

ships, being the smallest to be commanded by a post captain.

The countless other vessels, the fleet within a fleet, were no less important in their various roles, often as diverse as the men who commanded them: sloops of war, like miniature frigates, bomb vessels, brigs and brigantines, schooners, some square-rigged, others not, and some fitted with long sweeps so that they could be worked clear of shallows when operating inshore. They were commanded by Commanders, an awkward and temporary rank, often held by lieutenants who had for one reason or another been passed over for promotion, and who would be reduced to that rank again if the commission ended or they were discharged on half-pay. Some were commanded by older officers, warrant-rank, acting masters and the like, where experience and seamanship counted above all else. The famous topsail cutter, known for her agility and the ease with which she could come up into the eye of almost any wind, was a popular first command, particularly in the navy's constant fight against smugglers and local pirates.

To the flag captain of some admiral's ship such busy riff-raff might seem unimportant. Just as those who saw him walking his quarterdeck, a man without a care in the world, might never dream that he was fretting about the next rendezvous for provisions, or the sickness which had laid low half his able-bodied seamen.

From him, to the youthful lieutenant with his first command, from the battle-scarred veteran to the terrified wretch dragged aboard by the press

gang, the ship, *their* ship, was all that mattered in the end.

## Part Four

### *Jack Had A Word For It*

*Some naval slang of the period:*

<b>Spithead Nightingales</b>	Boatwain's calls, pipes
<b>A check, or checkered shirt at the gangway</b>	Getting a flogging
<b>Bullock</b>	Marine
<b>Yaw sighted</b>	Having a squint
<b>Floating Bethel</b>	A ship used for public worship
<b>Leg Bail</b>	A deserter is said to have given leg bail
<b>Moonstruck</b>	Half-witted
<b>Mull</b>	To Mismanage
<b>Quilting</b>	A Beating
<b>Three sheets to the wind</b>	Drunk
<b>Tom Pepper</b>	A liar
<b>Kiss the Gunner's Daughter</b>	Punishment, a caning for boys or midshipman
<b>Jack Ketch</b>	Public hangman
<b>Half-timbered Jack</b>	One-legged sailor
<b>Crimp</b>	Boarding-house runner for the press gangs

<b>Rummagers</b>	Excise officers
<b>Grocery captain</b>	Captain of an East Indiaman
<b>Lickspittle</b>	Toady
<b>Grog</b>	Rum mixed with water, one part rum to three or five of water
<b>Slush Monkey</b>	Cook's assistant
<b>Quill driver</b>	The captain's clerk
<b>Lubberly</b>	Unseamanlike
<b>Purser's daps</b>	Small candles
<b>Dead marine</b>	Empty bottle
<b>Gingerbread</b>	Carved decoration on a ship, hence 'gilt on the gingerbread'
<b>Rough-knot</b>	A simple sailor
<b>Hawbuck</b>	Country bumpkin
<b>Blowings</b>	Prostitute (also doxy or paramour)
<b>Slipped his cable</b>	Died

## Part Five

### *The Team*

by *Kim Reeman*

**Y**ou have read the book. Perhaps you saw the advertisements, perhaps the display in your bookshop. Maybe you borrowed your copy from

the library. Perhaps this newsletter alerts you to the publication of a new Bolitho novel. This is the story behind the story: the publishing and production process which has brought you *Second to None*.

I asked Lynne Drew, Douglas's publisher at William Heinemann, the hardcover imprint at Random House UK, for her viewpoint from the arrival of the manuscript to its release in hardcover.

'We hear from you or Douglas that the book is on its way . . . I then copy the book here for Oliver and the pair of us read it immediately with much excitement!

'Once I've spoken to Douglas about it, my assistant Thomas puts together the prelim pages and gives the manuscript to the typesetters, who follow Kent or Reeman series style for layout and topography. When the page proofs come in, we send a set to you and Douglas, and you proof-read them (not all authors do!). We also send them to a fresh eye – and outside proof-reader who will correct any setting errors or inconsistencies.

'While we wait for the proofs, we're usually working on the jacket: Douglas and I will have chatted and then he will talk to Geoffrey Huband, as will our art director Dennis Barker. Douglas's input is invaluable because he carries all the visual details in his head, while we let Dennis worry about where to put the type and whether we'd like a different balance of elements.

'You always supply us with a good blurb, which is set to match the rest of the jacket, and once the

painting has come in from Geoffrey and been approved by the team we put the whole jacket together and send it off to be proofed. The reps are then given jacket proofs for their subscriptions of the book, and publicity use them too. We can check too that everything has printed properly and that there are no last-minute changes needed before they print the final jackets for the finished books

‘At the same time, I am presenting the book to the team here, and discussing promotional and publicity plans. Our sales and marketing team will also be presenting it to head office teams in six-monthly overviews, and arranging promotions in the shops. And as we approach publication, Katie Gunning in publicity will be talking to shops such as Hatchards about an event, and to the media about features on the book. We usually receive bound books about four weeks before publication, and the warehouse starts to release the orders from about a week before publication. Then it appears in shops and hopefully in the bestseller lists too!’

From his office on the other side of the editorial department, Oliver Johnson, Lynne’s colleague and opposite number at Arrow, Douglas’s paperback imprint at Random House UK, and also a published author himself, adds his comments.

‘I feel compared to your role and Lynne’s, mine is a very modest supporting one (but one I’ve been delighted to do ever since the late sixties when I first bought a Kent and was hooked!). Once we have Geoffrey Huband’s jacket image it is a relatively easy task to ask the art department to

deduce it to A-format size and redesign the lettering so it conforms to the look of the rest of the backlist. I will generally take your jacket blurb and condense it slightly so that it fits. I’ll also keep an eye out for any good quotes we could use. We generally offset the book from the Heinemann edition so that what you will get will be a reduced facsimile of their edition. If the design is a bit crowded or tight, we will reset the book and then of course we would get a proof-reader to read through the text against the original hardback edition to check that no typographical errors have crept in.

‘Apart from that, my role is one of advocacy, not difficult given that I’m a fan! I will discuss the new book when it comes up at Arrow marketing meetings and we go through the PR and advertising strategy. I’ll sign off the finished jacket proof and field many a customer’s enquiry on where the non-Arrow Kents can be found (luckily an ever-diminishing problem now the rights are reverting back from Pan).’

It is also worth mentioning the teams of sales reps who are, to every bookshop, not only the representatives of the publisher but the author’s representatives as well. Their dedication and enthusiasm is deeply appreciated. And Geoffrey Huband, whose art and immense talent render the author’s visions tangible.

Writing is a lonely job, one of the most solitary in the world, but when the last word is written, the last correction made, the last page typed, it is



rewarding to know that this dedicated team of professionals is waiting to carry on the process. We are privileged to work with them.

## Part Six

### *Second to None*

*Peace or war, the requirements for this squadron remained unchanged. To protect, to show the flag, and to fight if necessary, to maintain that mastery of the sea which had been won with so much blood.*

On the eve of Waterloo, a sense of finality and cautious hope pervade a nation wearied by decades of war. But peace will present its own challenges to Adam Bolitho, captain of His Majesty's Ship *Unrivalled*, as many of his contemporaries face the prospect of discharge.

The life of a frigate captain is always lonely, but for Adam, mourning the death of his uncle Admiral Richard Bolitho, that solitude acquires a deeper poignancy. He is, more than ever, alone, at the dawning of a new age for the Royal Navy, where the only constants are the sea and those enemies, often masked in the guise of friendship, who conspire to destroy him.

## Part Seven

### *Reeman/Kent Website*

If you have access to the Internet, you may wish to visit the Kent/Reeman website designed, in



consultation with us, by George and Amy Jepson of Tall Ships Communications in Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA. The website, in sumptuous colour, features jacket proofs, blurbs and exclusive photographs from the author's private collection, and includes all back issues of *The Bolitho Newsletter* in PDF format, for which we have received many requests.

You may visit the new Douglas Reeman / Alexander Kent website at:

[www.douglasreeman.com](http://www.douglasreeman.com).

