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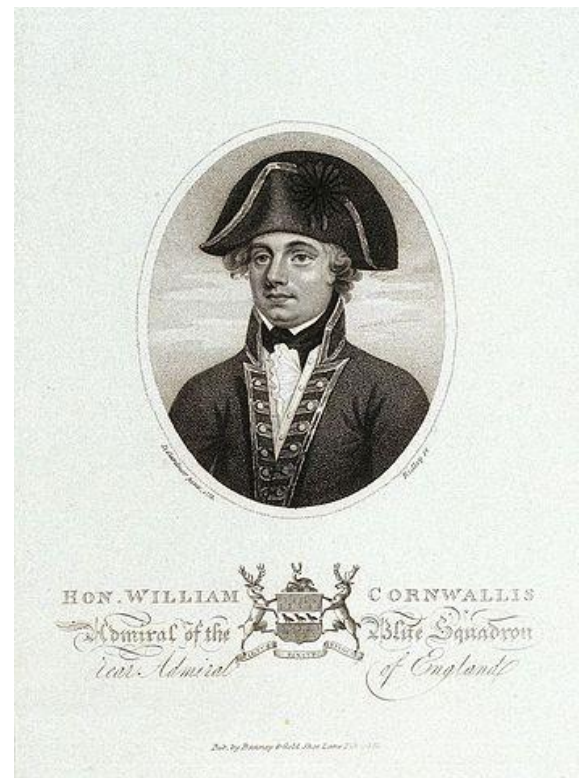
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ADMIRAL SIR WILLIAM CORNWALLIS - ASPECTS OF A LIFE

by Barry Jolly

Billy Blue, though almost forgotten now (because the French refused to fight him), the blockader of Brest, the hardy, skilful and ever watchful Admiral Cornwallis, would be known to us nearly as well as Nelson, if fame were not a lottery.ⁱ

*He was God's noblest work – a man upright,
By grovelling minds but little understood;
Benevolent as brave, most just, most true, most good!ⁱⁱ*



The names of so many of our renowned admirals roll off the tongue. Most owe their fame to their success in major fleet action: Hawke at Quiberon Bay, Howe on the Glorious First of June, Jervis at Cape St Vincent (from which he took his title), Cunningham at Matapan, and the most famous of all, Nelson with his emphatic and legendary victories at The Nile, Copenhagen and Trafalgar. Others are more famous for their reforms: Anson, justly celebrated also for his circumnavigation of the world, and the ever controversial Jackie Fisher.

There is one other name in the list, an admiral who never commanded in a fleet action and would never have accepted a role as a mere administrator, and yet whose name stands prominently amongst the famous, Sir William Cornwallis. To what, then, does he owe his reputation, and what are the qualities which characterise his standing?

The answer to these questions rests largely on his command of the Channel Fleet during the first years of the nineteenth century as it blockaded the French Atlantic ports, especially Brest. In doing so, he

prevented the armies of Napoleonic France from crossing the English Channel. As a service to the nation, it stands alongside Drake's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the Battle of Britain in 1940 in preventing invasion by a foreign power. The Blockade of Brest may not have the allure or the cachet of these other illustrious moments in the history of England, but its significance is just as great, and the hardship endured by the crews of the ships of the fleet was far more arduous. It was summed up in a concise tribute to Cornwallis many years ago:

Not less by his intrepid courage and fearlessness on many occasions than by his sleepless endurance, extraordinary vigilance, and masterful combinations during the great blockade, he rendered most signal service to his country.ⁱⁱⁱ

No-one has yet written a biography of Cornwallis, although George Cornwallis-West, whose grandmother was Cornwallis' god-daughter and beneficiary, did publish a book entitled *The Life and Letters of Admiral Cornwallis*^{iv} some ninety years ago. Although widely cited, it was based primarily on correspondence, much of it between Mrs M A T Whitby and her husband Captain John Whitby – for much of his career, Cornwallis' Flag Captain – and with Cornwallis himself. Although invaluable, it is a very limited picture of Cornwallis' career.

A substantial body of official correspondence from and to Cornwallis covering the blockade years of 1801 and 1803-5 has been published by the Navy Records Society.^v The latter includes an extended appreciation of Cornwallis. A more recent appreciation was published by Andrew Lambert in 2004.^{vi}

None of these presents a simple guide for the general reader encompassing the whole of Cornwallis' life and career. The purpose of this article is to review some aspects of that life and to explain what it was that made Cornwallis such an important figure to our nation.

The Family Cornwallis

William Cornwallis was born on 20th February 1744 into an aristocratic family with extensive connexions. His father was the first Earl Cornwallis, having been ennobled from service in the royal household. The Cornwallis family held extensive properties in Suffolk, and the

parliamentary borough of Eye, with about 200 voters in a population of 1734 in 1801, was reckoned to be in the control of the Cornwallis family.^{vii}

Other members of the family were significant figures. One of his father's brothers, Lieutenant General Edward Cornwallis was Governor of Nova Scotia and later of Gibraltar, whose twin was Bishop of Lichfield, translating to be Archbishop of Canterbury in 1768. William's brothers, significant in their own right, were to play important parts in his career.

Career of William Cornwallis

Entry	Discharge	Event
27/5/1756		Student, Royal Naval Academy
1758		NEWARK
	March 1759	KINGSTON
March 1759	December 1760	DUNKIRK
December 1760	5/4/1761	NEPTUNE
6/4/1761		Seniority as Lieutenant
6/4/1761	1762	THUNDERER
12/7/1762		Seniority as Commander
Appointed but without serving		Captain WASP
14/10/1762	23/11/1764	Captain SWIFT
24/11/1764	29/5/1766	PRINCE EDWARD
20/4/1765		Seniority as Captain
3/9/1766	24/10/1768	Captain GUADELOUPE
17/1/1769	29/9/1773	Captain GUADELOUPE
26/9/1774	27/12/1776	Captain PALLAS
28/12/1776	7/12/1777	Captain ISIS
8/12/1777	25/12/1777	Captain BRISTOL
26/12/1777	15/5/1778	Captain CHATHAM
16/5/1778	25/7/1778	Captain MEDEA
26/7/1778	27/6/1781	Captain LION
28/6/1781	28/10/1782	Captain CANADA
22/1/1783	14/3/1783	Captain GANGES
13/3/1783	24/10/1787	Captain ROYAL CHARLOTTE Yacht
24/9/1787		*Colonel, Royal Marines
25/10/1787	8/12/1787	Captain ROBUST
10/11/1791	22/4/1793	Captain MINERVA
1/2/1793		Rear Admiral of the White
12/4/1794		Rear Admiral of the Red
4/7/1794		Vice Admiral of the Blue
1/6/1795		Vice Admiral of the Red
15/3/1796		*Rear Admiral of Great Britain
14/2/1799		Admiral of the Blue
23/4/1804		Admiral of the White
9/11/1805		Admiral of the Red
14/5/1814		*Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom
		MP 1768–1774, 1782-1807
2/1/1815		Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath
	5/7/1819	Died
		* Honorary appointments

Sources: George Cornwallis-West *The Life and Letters of Admiral Cornwallis*
Naval Biographical Database – Chris Donnithorne

His mother, Elizabeth, was from no less notable a family. She was the daughter of the second Viscount Townshend, twice Secretary of State for the Northern Department^{viii} and also ambassador to The Hague. He is best known, as a pioneer of the Agricultural Revolution, by his soubriquet of 'Turnip' Townshend for promoting the four crop rotation system on his estates. The son who succeeded as Viscount was Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk. One of his sons in turn, and thus a first cousin of William Cornwallis, was the Chancellor of the Exchequer who introduced various measures (known as the Townshend Acts), which imposed increased tariffs and greater control of tax collection on the colonies. It was these Acts which led directly to the Boston Tea Party and thence to the War of American Independence in which both William and his older brother Charles saw action. Elizabeth made extensive use of these family connexions to promote William's early career.^{ix}

Early Career

Cornwallis joined the navy in 1755, serving in rapid succession in *Newark* 80,¹ *Kingston* 60, *Dunkirk* 60, and *Neptune* 90, this last carrying the flag of Vice Admiral Charles Saunders. When Saunders transferred his flag to *Thunderer* 90, Cornwallis followed – a sure sign of favour – and was made Fourth Lieutenant.^x His first promotion had come at the early age of 17, four years before he was officially eligible.

These postings were not without incident: he was present at the Reduction of Louisberg in 1758, the Battle of Quiberon Bay in 1759, and the capture of the French 64 gun *Achille* in July 1761 when *Thunderer* suffered severe casualties.

More promotion followed: to Commander on 12th July 1762, firstly in *Wasp* 8 followed by *Swift* 14. His next move, on 24th November 1764, was to *Prince Edward* 44, being promoted to Post Captain on 20th April 1765. With the Seven Years War concluded fully two years previously, Cornwallis was still at sea and had achieved post rank at an early, albeit by no means unique, age. *Prince Edward* was by now surplus to requirements and was sold in 1766. Cornwallis, on the other hand was not. In the forty years from 1755 to 1795, he spent in total only two years

¹ The number 60 refers to the guns carried by the ship, a standard notation for vessels of that era.

on half pay. This is a truly remarkable record for a truly remarkable Admiral.

It is worth noting that Cornwallis-West attributed the promotion to Captain as having a political dimension, coming after Lord Rockingham became First Lord of the Treasury in July 1765, and this error has been followed elsewhere.^{xi} The dates do not fit, of course, nor, in the shifting sands of Whig political loyalties, does the continuity in office of Lord Egmont as First Lord of the Admiralty in spite of the change of government. Put quite simply, and in spite of his mother's attempts to advance his career, Cornwallis achieved this promotion purely on merit.

The first years of command were spent supporting operations on the fever ridden West Coast of Africa, escorting convoys of recalcitrant merchantmen, and writing strongly worded letters to the Admiralty. Fever, albeit in the West Indies, a coming together with a merchantman, and a clash with the Admiralty were all to feature later in a calamitous episode in 1795-6. For the time being, Cornwallis was learning his trade, and was about to enhance his reputation during the American War of Independence.

Of this service, the Commander-in-Chief of British land forces, General Sir William Howe, reported: 'The *Isis* Rendered very essential service against the forts and gallies, much to the personal honour of Captain Cornwallis and credit of the discipline of his ship.'^{xii} The action in the Delaware river lasted a month in all.

Troubled with his eyes, he was ordered home in *Chatham* which required refitting. Most of his crew asked to transfer to his next ship, not the last time that this occurred: the crew of *Minerva* did likewise after the lengthy sojourn in India some years later.^{xiii} The new ship was *Lion* in which Cornwallis' reputation as a ship's captain grew. At the battle of Grenada in 1779, *Lion* was in the thick of the fighting and was damaged severely. News travelled fast: Charles Middleton, the Comptroller of the Navy, visited William's brother James - later Bishop of Lichfield - with congratulations, as did Vice Admiral Barrington, second in command at the battle, visiting Lady Cornwallis. The Archbishop of Canterbury, William's uncle, wrote to say that, 'It is no small comfort to us to hear from every Quarter your courage and conduct throughout the transaction

so highly extolled, as to establish your character of a brave and able officer to all ranks and degrees of people.'^{xiv}

This bravery was in evidence again in March 1780 when his squadron of three ships – with respectively 64, 50 and 44 guns – met a French squadron of four ships of the line of 64 and 74 guns plus a frigate under La Motte Piquet. Cool heads and well directed fire kept the French ships at bay until more sail were sighted and the French squadron backed away. The situation was not as alarming as that of his famous Retreat, still in the future in 1795, but Cornwallis' reputation continued to grow.^{xv}

More plaudits followed after the Battle of St Kitts in January 1782. Cornwallis, now in command of *Canada* 74, played an important role, holding off the 90 gun French flagship, *Ville de Paris*, when a gap occurred in the British line. Tributes flowed at home, eagerly reported as ever by James Cornwallis, now a Bishop, and by his mother. The French admiral, de Grasse, reported that the 'little red-sided ship the *Canada* did him more harm than all the rest that he had contended.'^{xvi}

The encounter with de Grasse was an indecisive prelude to one of the most important battles of the eighteenth century, Rodney's victory at The Saintes on 12th April 1782. In the preceding ninety years, fifteen battles had been fought against the French with a strict adherence to maintaining a line of battle in accordance with earlier instructions codified into Permanent Fighting Instructions in 1744. In none of these encounters was a single ship taken by either side.^{xvii} At The Saintes, and, given Rodney's propensity to follow the rules, probably by accident, the French line was broken and a general *melée* ensued. Five French ships were taken, three of them by British ships which had been among the first to break the line.^{xviii}

One of these British ships, almost inevitably, was *Canada*, commanded by Cornwallis. Rodney was created a Baron, but was criticised roundly by many including two of his subordinates, Hood and Cornwallis, for failing to destroy the French fleet. The latter circulated 46 lines of savage verse, including the following:

Our chief, he lay quiet, with good ships around him –
Some willing to move, but the devil confound him!
He made no signal to chase, nor would let others go –

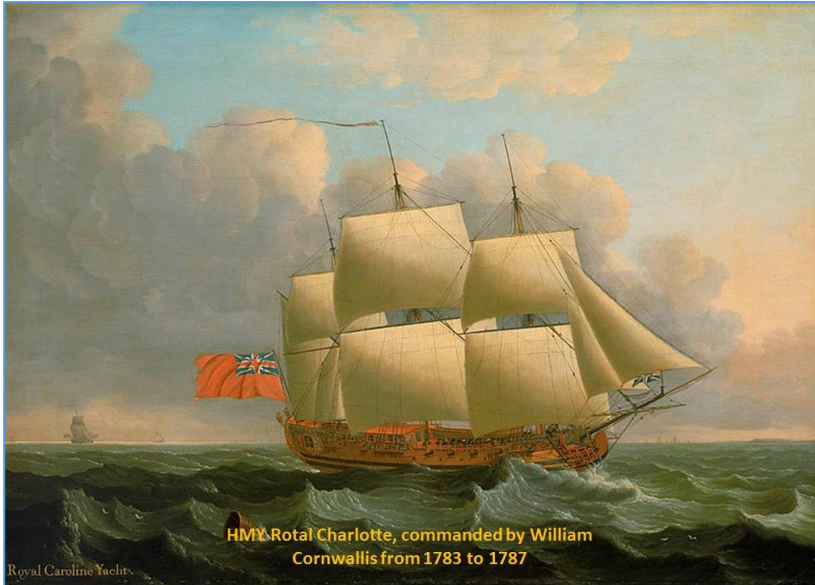
Those who were willing to follow the foe.^{xix}

He wrote later that Rodney 'must at the time have seen what I thought of His Conduct on the 12th of April last' and 'was exactly of my opinion at to y^e management of our fleet on that day,' but had the generosity of spirit not to make his views public.^{xx}

When Cornwallis' god-daughter Mrs West described him - also in verse - as 'the foremost in the fight!',^{xxi} there was no question of hyperbole. Another who sang his praises was Nelson. In 1781, Cornwallis had taken Nelson back to England in *Lion* when Nelson was at death's door. He attributed his recovery to Cornwallis whom he greatly admired. Writing many years later, he said:

I never, never shall forget that to you I probably owe my life, and I feel that I imbibed from you certain sentiments which have greatly assisted me in my naval career - that we could always beat a Frenchman if we fought him long enough; that the difficulty of getting at them was oftentimes more people's own fancy than from the difficulty of the undertaking; that people did not know what they could do until they tried; and that it was always to err on the right side to fight.^{xxii}

Approaching the age of 40, Cornwallis had emerged as a brave, resourceful, patriotic, loyal and skilful naval officer in all ranks from Midshipman to Lieutenant to Commander to Captain to Commodore. He was respected by his superiors, well-liked by his crews, and close to being worshipped by Nelson. On returning home after *The Saintes*, he was given command of *Ganges* 74 before being appointed to the Royal Yacht *Royal Charlotte*, where he remained for the next four years. In the meantime, on 24th September 1787, he was appointed to the sinecure of Colonel of Marines, and later was appointed Rear Admiral of England and then Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom. These sinecures were rewards for distinguished service and very valuable. As Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom, for example, he received 20s per day plus 16s per month for 16 servants^{xxiii}



India

The breaking of the French line at The Saintes was a forerunner to Nelson's tactics at Trafalgar, but as a victory it came too late to save a British army of 8,000 men under Earl Cornwallis

(William's brother) from capitulating at Yorktown. The Earl retained the confidence of the British government and of George III, and he went on to give distinguished service to his country.

First among these later appointments was that of Governor General in India, first mooted some four years previously.^{xxiv} Technically, the role was modest, but the Governor-General had to contend with the activities of the East India Company, which controlled the residencies of Bengal, Calcutta and Madras, and the numerous Indian states as well as French interests in the region. Earl Cornwallis achieved major reforms in administration – and in the reduction of corruption which he considered to be rife – and in military campaigns against both the French and Tipu Sultan, an Indian potentate.

A small naval force was prepared to support his operations, and the importance of family came strongly to the fore. It was announced in October that the flagship, *Crown*, was to be commanded by Captain James Cornwallis, a fourth cousin twice removed,^{xxv} with suggestions that William would be appointed Commodore.^{xxvi} The rest of the squadron - *Phoenix* 36, *Perseverance* 36, *Atalanta* 14 - was announced later in the month, and speculation finally stilled on 15th November when it was confirmed that William had received his commission.^{xxvii}

The appointments illustrate the importance in the eighteenth century of selecting reliable subordinates, a reliability often based on direct personal knowledge and hence family connexions. Equally, personal favours could

be requested, including one from James Cornwallis, Bishop of Lichfield, for a place in *Crown* for the son of a Staffordshire vicar, John Whitby. Whitby's story, and his relationship with William Cornwallis, has been recounted in these pages before,^{xxviii} the point to be made here being the interaction between so many members of the Cornwallis family.

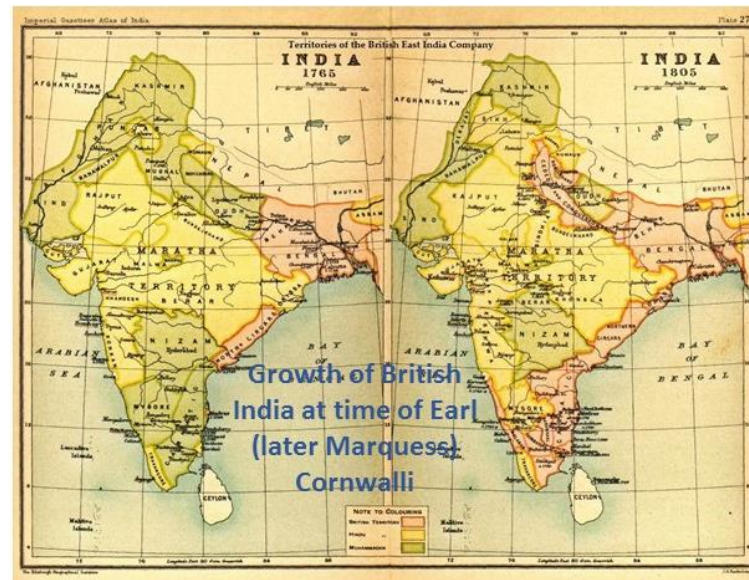
After the rigours of the various wars across the Atlantic Ocean, this naval squadron was engaged in largely peaceful pursuits. Considerable time was spent surveying, especially in the region of the Andaman Islands,

Prize money was always welcome, and several prizes were taken by either the squadron or by East India Company ships. All were reported with relish in the Indian newspapers. They included *Le Citoyen* (reported

17th July 1793), a privateer, *Concorde*, (reported 3rd August), several rice ships and the prize brig *Nestor* captured from the French off Vizagapatam (reported 10th August). Whitby made a number of requests to lead a cutting out party to capture a ship and a snow,² and Cornwallis gave the order for this on the 11th; the ship had sailed, but Whitby brought back the snow. On 17th August, Cornwallis was reported continuing to intercept the small boats bringing provisions to Pondicherry. Another prize, *Bien Ami*, was refitted in the same month.

Much of this activity took place after the declaration of war by the French government in January 1793. In July and August 1793, *Minerva* was involved in the siege of Pondicherry, together with three ships of the East India Company, the armed ships *Royal Charlotte*, *Warley* and *Triton*. The siege was ended after three days of bombardment by *Minerva*'s guns supporting land forces ashore. Cornwallis also helped capture Chandernagore, seizing all French ships within reach.^{xxix}

William Cornwallis shared with his brother the Earl a strong dislike of corruption. Two particular practices were claims for rotting food



² A small brig-like vessel with supplementary trisail mast.

supposedly thrown overboard and commission received for ordering (often inflated levels) of supplies. Cornwallis-West quotes several letters on the subject from Cornwallis, penned in typically forthright terms, and another from Sir Charles Middleton, Comptroller of the Navy Victualling Board who retired with his efforts at controlling corruption incomplete.^{xxx} Some amelioration of corruption was doubtless achieved, but the practice of catering officers receiving commission from suppliers survived until a public scandal in 1972.^{xxxii}

Cornwallis returned home in 1794, leaving Bombay for the last time on 12th January, his brother having departed the previous year. The return home was swift, reaching England on 24th April 1794.^{xxxiii} In the meantime, Cornwallis had been promoted to Rear Admiral on 1st February 1793.^{xxxiii}

He had also made a will in October 1793, naming John Whitby as his principal beneficiary.^{xxxiv} Cornwallis had taken extraordinary steps to promote Whitby's career – Lieutenant at 16, Post Captain at 18 – but he did much to advance the careers of others too. Amongst them was Thomas le Marchant Gosselin who, served almost all of his career with Cornwallis until the latter retired, and Francis Austen, brother of the novelist Jane, was another. Neither rose as rapidly as Whitby, but both became Admirals. Others who served under Cornwallis in India included Richard King who became a Vice Admiral, John Wentworth Holland who achieved flag rank and Edward Pelham Brenton who was made Post Captain although not until 1808.^{xxxv} Cornwallis, the life-long bachelor lacking legitimate children of his own, doted on Whitby and, in rather unusual circumstances, was later to do likewise with Whitby's wife and daughter.

Home Waters

Only one month after returning from India, Cornwallis raised his flag in *Excellent* 74 with a squadron of 12 ships of the line with orders to escort the East India fleet safely out to sea. Then on 5th August 1794, on promotion to Vice-Admiral, in *Caesar* of 80 guns with a squadron with orders to harass enemy shipping. Uncomfortable in the latter ship, he prevailed on the Admiralty to transfer him to *Royal Sovereign* of 100 guns, one of the most powerful ships in the fleet. He did so in time to quell a mutiny in *Culloden* in December 1794 by the simple expedient of placing

a three-decker either side of the smaller vessel. Just the threat from these massive ships was sufficient.^{xxxvi}

On 7th June of that year, Cornwallis' squadron of five ships of the line and three lesser vessels attacked a French convoy from Bordeaux. This comprised three ships of the line, eight frigates and three lesser vessels, escorting ships laden with wine and, as it turned out, cannon and naval and ordnance stores. At least eight merchant ships, mostly brigs, were taken as prizes.

A week later he ran into a vastly superior French fleet off Belle-Isle on 16th June, an event which was to establish his reputation beyond the confines of the Navy. Against a French fleet of no fewer than twelve French ships of the line and eighteen smaller vessels, Cornwallis organised a brilliant withdrawal. At the height of the action, and in a classic *ruse de guerre*, Cornwallis detached one of his frigates, *Phaeton* (Captain Robert Stopford), which then sent signals to non-existent support over the horizon, and the French accordingly withdrew.^{xxxvii}

A medal was struck – although not until 1849 – to celebrate the event. The Citation in the Navy List of 1849 stated, 'Brilliant repulse of a fleet four times superior in force.'^{xxxviii} In 1825 Brenton wrote that Cornwallis's Retreat is 'justly considered one of the finest displays of united courage and coolness to be found in our naval history.'^{xxxix}

Cornwallis himself reported the event with typical modesty and generosity towards those under him:

I shall ever feel the impression which the good conduct of the captains, officers, seamen, marines, and soldiers in the squadron, has made on my mind; and it was the greatest pleasure I ever received to see the spirit manifested by the men, who, instead of being cast down at seeing 30 sail of the enemy's ships attacking our little squadron, were in the highest spirits imaginable. I do not mean the Royal-Sovereign alone : the same spirit was shown in all the ships as they came near me; and although, circumstanced as we were, we had no great reason to complain of the conduct of the enemy, yet our men could not help repeatedly expressing their contempt of them. Could common prudence have allowed me to let

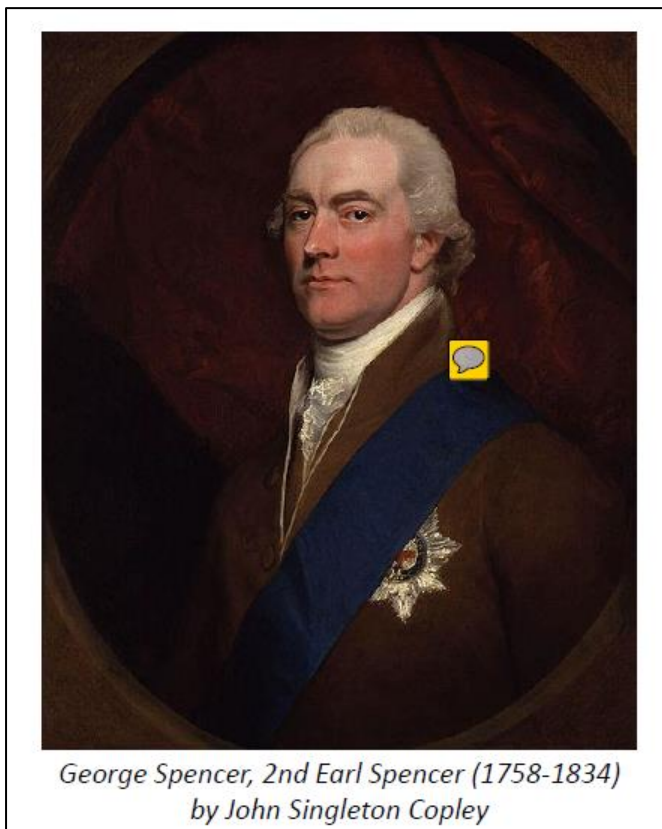
loose their valour, I hardly know what might not have been accomplished by such men.^{x1}

The Naval Protest and a Court-martial^{xli}

Before setting out again from England, Cornwallis was drawn into an inter-service argument which was to have damaging effects.^{xliii} Following an episode when an army officer felt hard done by on a naval vessel, the Duke of York issued orders for a forthcoming expedition to the West Indies that army officers on board naval ships would, in effect, not be subject to naval discipline. To the navy this was unthinkable, and a group of admirals met to discuss the matter and to make representations to Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, as did a similar group of post captains. Spencer played their protests with a straight bat, thereby giving them the impression that he was not acting forcibly enough on behalf of the navy, but nonetheless he did make strong, albeit unsuccessful, representations to the Duke of York.

With recent reverses in Toulon (under Hood) and in the Netherlands under the Duke of York himself, a rather junior admiral, Hugh Christian, in command of the naval element of the task force, and interference in naval appointments by the officer in charge of the army units, Major-General Abercrombie, the situation was politically charged. Abercrombie did decline to put the Duke's orders into effect, but naval *amour propre* was not satisfied. On 5th November, Cornwallis entered the argument, writing to Spencer that he could not continue to serve if the Duke's regulations remained in force.

The task force sailed at last on 16th November 1795, but was twice turned back by storms. Spencer then decided to put Cornwallis in command of the naval element, a red rag to a naval bull. Almost inevitably, Cornwallis



sought clarification on the issue from Spencer on 2nd February 1796, and raised difficulties a few days later on the 8th of the month about ships, captains and supplies, as well as indicating an aversion to the Leeward Islands. On receipt of clarification on the 25th, he asked to be relieved of the command. When, finally, Spencer told Cornwallis that the orders had not been put into effect by Abercrombie and that no other army officer had been issued with them,

the latter at last agreed to sail. Even then, he raised more difficulties, this time over pay for the crews, and delayed sailing by a further three days, finally leaving St. Helens (off Spithead) on 29th February.

All was not plain sailing. Cornwallis, like Christian before him, ran into foul weather, during which *Royal Sovereign* was involved in a collision with one of the transports and required major repairs. Unable to identify a suitable shipyard within reasonable reach, he returned home, thereby incurring the wrath of his superiors, especially the exasperated Spencer. Returning to Spithead on 14th March, he duly received two letters from Spencer, one admonishing him for not continuing with his passage and instructing him to proceed forthwith in the frigate *Astrea*, the other nominating him for the valuable sinecure of Rear Admiral of Great Britain!

The order to sail in a frigate was to avoid yet more loss of time, but he refused to do so.^{xliii} Such a refusal was by no means unusual in officers of flag rank, but Nelson was a notable exception when, later, he made his

last voyage from England, and Abercrombie had made his passage to the West Indies in a frigate. There was, and remains, a general view that in this instance Cornwallis would not sail without Whitby, and Whitby could not go because, as Captain of *Royal Sovereign*, he was obliged to supervise repairs in the dockyard. Charles Cornwallis, now a Marquess, was of this opinion; in August 1804, he wrote to his old friend (and former ADC) Ross about a later incident in the following terms:

The first grand *faux pas* that he made in '96, and this second mistake, which might have proved fatal for the future repose and comfort of his life, have both been occasioned by his attachment to Whitby, and his earnest desire to have him as Captain of his ship. What trifles direct the fortune of men whom nature has qualified to be great!^{xliv}

There is a possibility, explored previously in these pages, that Cornwallis was protecting the relatively inexperienced 22 year old John Whitby who still needed his guiding hand.^{xlv} For the Admiralty, however, Cornwallis' refusal to sail was the last straw.

The Admiralty now faced the problem of how to deal with a recalcitrant admiral in Portsmouth who was needed urgently at sea. Indecision led to confused and conflicting communications, and was followed by a decision to court-martial Cornwallis.

At the ensuing hearing, Cornwallis chose the future Lord Chancellor the Hon. Thomas Erskine to represent him. Ironically, it was Erskine he had defeated for the Portsmouth seat at the election of 1784.^{xlvi} Erskine stole the show, tearing the Admiralty's case to shreds.^{xlvii} On the other hand, Cornwallis' case, that he refused to go to sea in a frigate because of his health, was paper thin. If the court were to find him guilty given the way in which the case developed, it would have been a travesty of justice; but, if he were acquitted, some very dangerous signals would have been sent to the navy at large that an admiral could disobey orders at will.

It has been suggested that no court-martial would have found Cornwallis guilty at that moment, so soon after his role in the spat with the army, and it is true that four of the nine members of the court had been involved in the Naval Protest. However, Lord Howe, the chairman of the court, made his views known in advance, and they were not views sympathetic to the defendant.^{xlviii}

The result, almost inevitably, was a fudge. The court found that misconduct was imputable to Cornwallis in not moving his flag to another ship, but that he was acquitted of any disobedience of orders.^{xlix} The contradictions in the verdict were seized upon in an open letter to Lord Hood published in the *Morning Post*,¹ and members of both houses of parliament used the case to lambast the government.

Whilst the crew of *Royal Sovereign* cheered the result, Lord Spencer wrote somewhat disingenuously to Lord Cornwallis, who had written to Spencer in March 1796 in an attempt to avert a court-martial,^{li} to say that he was relieved by the outcome, a gesture that later events soon belied.^{lii} The letter was unnecessary in the sense that Lord Cornwallis was as frustrated as anyone that his brother had not returned to his station as expeditiously as possible,^{liii} but he – as Master General of the Ordnance – and Spencer were Cabinet colleagues as well as friends, and a letter was no doubt called for. Lord Spencer was to remain in office as First Lord of the Admiralty for the next five years, and during that time Admiral Cornwallis, ordered to strike his flag in 1796^{liv} and one of the most respected admirals in the navy, remained unemployed.

Politics

One of the more remarkable aspects of Cornwallis' life was his political career. Unlike today when the practice is forbidden by law, it was not unusual in the eighteenth century for naval officers to be elected to parliament. Indeed, of the thirty officers of flag rank in 1761, no fewer than twenty were members of the Commons at one time or another during their careers. Another was a Scottish peer whose son – 7th Earl of Northesk – was third in command at Trafalgar at a time when he also sat in the House of Lords.^{lv} The opportunity for mischief making is obvious; less so, the manner in which naval Members of Parliament became involved in making recommendations for promotion in order to curry favour with their constituents.^{lvi}

Even more army officers served in the Commons – sixty-four were elected in 1761 – but with less electoral effect because army patronage was retained by the Crown.^{lvii} Among them briefly was William Cornwallis' older brother Charles, who succeeded to the Cornwallis Earldom in 1762.

The family seat was Eye, a pocket borough which had been controlled by the Cornwallis family since the Restoration in 1660. Early shared control soon gave way to the ability to return both members. Indeed, from the election of 1685 through to the Great Reform Act of 1832, there were only two contested elections. The small number of electors, never more than 200, and the local families of influence were the recipients of lavish hospitality, not only at election time. In 1761, the first Earl was able to nominate two of his sons. One was Charles, the future second Earl, the other was Henry, also an army officer. He was under age when elected, but died before being able to take up his seat.^{lviii}

It is unclear whether Charles – MP from January 1760 to December 1762 – took up his seat either as he fought in a number of battles during the Seven Years War in 1759 (Minden), 1761 (Villinghausen) and 1762 (Wilhelmsthal).^{lix} From his elevation to the Lords in 1762, he assumed total control of the constituency. In his absences abroad, that control was exercised through his brother James, the Bishop of Lichfield.

William Cornwallis, the youngest of the four brothers, was thus born into a family of significant political influence and tradition. It was a tradition he was unable to resist, being elected for Eye in 1768 at the age of twenty-four. At the time he was in command of *Guadeloupe 28*, and active in Newfoundland in 1769 and Jamaica the year after. There was little time for politics, but he did vote on two occasions.

The first of these was against the government on a motion by John Wilkes. Wilkes was a maverick anti-establishment politician who campaigned for freedom of information and individual liberty. In the context of the eighteenth century, he took his campaign to extreme lengths. In just one episode, he was convicted of ‘obscene and impious libel’ in relation to a letter sent by Viscount Weymouth, the Secretary of State for the Northern Department, about forceful control of riots in London. A transcription error by a House of Commons clerk resulted in ‘impious’ being replaced by ‘blasphemous’, and Wilkes petitioned to have this removed. The offending article was declared an infamous and seditious libel^{lx} on a government motion, but Cornwallis voted against.^{lxi}

The reasons for opposition appear to have been a general concern about the growing power of the executive (which Wilkes stood so strongly

against)^{lxii} and the government's increasingly forceful approach to the problem of governing the American colonies. In this he may well have followed his brother, Charles, an adherent of the previous Prime Minister Lord Rockingham. The Rockingham Whigs were certainly opposed, but as much out of pique at losing office as out of principle.^{lxiii}

There are apparent contradictions and irony in all this, as the two Cornwallis brothers were both resolute officers and both fought against the American rebels. At the same time, both were fair minded, an attitude which showed in these matters and throughout their careers.

William resigned his seat in March 1774, very willingly according to his successor the Marquess of Carmarthen.^{lxiv} Carmarthen moved on at the next general election later in the year, having supported the government's stance on America. William pursued his naval career but returned as member for Eye again eight years later in April 1782. He was then persuaded by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Howe, to stand for the dockyard seat of Portsmouth in 1784.

The election was the first general election contested by William Pitt the Younger as Prime Minister, having struggled since appointment the previous year to command a majority in the House of Commons. The members for Portsmouth, elected with the support of an earlier administration, were by no means to be relied upon, and the Corporation was in some disarray. Reliable supporters were imperative, and William Cornwallis' decision to stand placed him firmly in the Pittite camp.

He remained as the Member for Portsmouth, having commanded the royal yacht, *Royal Charlotte*, from 1783 to 1787, and then sailed for India in *Crown* in October 1788. He did not return home until 29th April 1794. With little opportunity to attend Parliament, Cornwallis expressed doubts about his suitability as a candidate for Portsmouth at the next election in June 1790. In the event, the government candidate was defeated, but Cornwallis was offered the family seat of Eye again which he was relieved to accept. Both he and the Earl were still in India, but this was not a bar to election. The Earl allowed him complete latitude: there 'need be no restraint upon you on point of attendance or any other consideration'.

He was returned again in 1796, 1802 and 1806, being opposed only in 1802 when he nonetheless had an overwhelming share of the vote. The brief

cessation of hostilities enabled him to attend the vote, and his brother wrote that:

The admiral got very drunk ... and the next day insisted upon my steward's taking £500 towards defraying the expenses. Without having given a vote in the House of Commons for many years past, and perhaps never intending to give one again, no youth of one and twenty was ever more pleased at coming into Parliament. What unaccountable creatures we are.

Records show that he was thought to be opposed to repeal of the Test Act in Scotland in 1791, which is very much in line with his known views on religion. In 1798, he voted for Pitt's assessed taxes, a form of progressive income tax.^{lxv}

In 1807, he retired from Parliament. Over a period of some thirty nine years, he had been a Member for thirty one, being on active service for much of the time and without, so far as is known, ever having spoken in the House. Nonetheless, he held strong views on religion and on firm but fair government, and remained a supporter of William Pitt throughout. It was only when Pitt resigned in 1801 that Cornwallis returned to sea, five years after his court martial. When the rigours of the blockade allied to Cornwallis' concern about manoeuvres to have him replaced as Commander-in-Chief caused tempers to fray, Captain John Whitby complained to his wife that Cornwallis had accused him of belonging to 'the opposite party'.^{lxvi} There can be no doubt which party that was: Cornwallis and Charles James Fox, joint leader of the government and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stood at opposite ends of the political spectrum.

Blockade

It is ironic that it was the resignation of William Pitt in 1801 that took Cornwallis back to sea. More directly, Spencer was replaced as First Lord of the Admiralty by Earl St Vincent, and Cornwallis was appointed to the crucial command of the Channel Fleet with the primary purpose of maintaining a close blockade on Brest and other French ports. Initially, the appointment was brief as negotiations for a peace treaty were under way in France. Once again the careers of the Cornwallis brothers collided, with the Marquess being the chief negotiator for the British government.

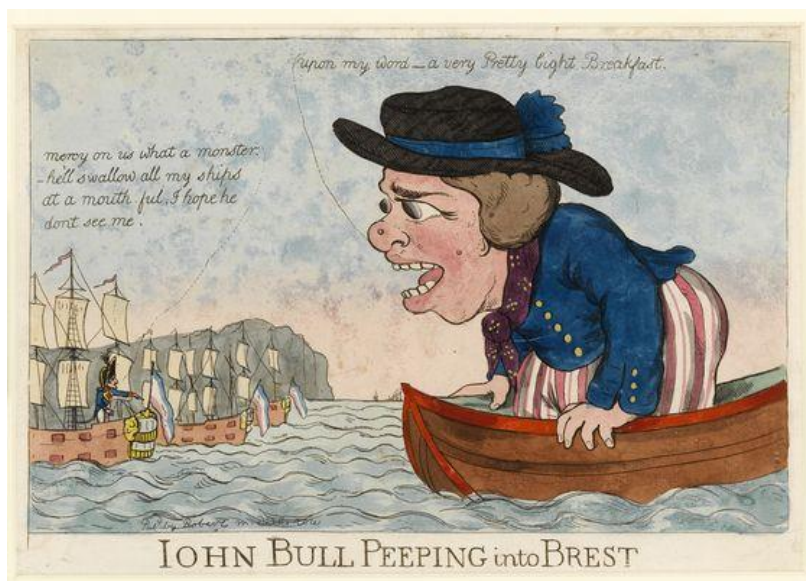
On the resumption of hostilities in 1803, Cornwallis was re-appointed to the Channel Fleet. Leaving his baggage for collection by *Acasta* 36 at Lymington before dashing off by road without a moment's delay, he had arrived in Torbay only four days after his commission left the Admiralty.^{lxvii}

Mention has already been made in the opening paragraphs of this article of the two major appreciations of Cornwallis' conduct of the blockade of Brest, and it is not intended to attempt to emulate these. Nonetheless, the importance of Cornwallis' role in the war at sea does need to be reiterated. It bears repeating that that the blockade of Brest was one of three occasions since the Norman Conquest when England has been saved from foreign armies massed across the English Channel. That alone is sufficient for Cornwallis' name to be immortalised.

The conditions in which he operated also need to be noted, as well as other implications. In particular, the fleet had to endure the worst of winter storms, with consequent damage to spars and rigging, and atrocious conditions for officers and crews alike. The winters of 1804-5 and 1805-6 were both unusually severe. Ships frequently had to leave their stations and shelter in Cawsand Bay – on the Cornish side of Plymouth Sound – at Torbay, or even in French waters which remained safe until the weather relented. On other occasions, the fleet was dispersed well into the Atlantic Ocean.

Maintaining a fleet at sea throughout the year was a not inconsiderable feat. A recent extended study of victualling has identified the scale of the problems of supply, with a weekly food ration per man of 7 lb Biscuit, 7 gall Beer, 4 lb Beef, 2 lb Pork, 2 pint Pease, 3 pint Oatmeal, 6 oz Butter, and 12 oz Cheese.^{lxviii} Before The Nile, Nelson was provisioned for six months, 'except bread and wine of which they have as much as they can store and their water kept up from day to day.'^{lxix} In July 1805, as the Trafalgar campaign started to take shape and *en route* to join Cornwallis, he provisioned in Gibraltar for four months service with the Channel Fleet before sailing to Tétuan in Morocco to take bullocks on board.^{lxx} The quantities involved, problems of supply, and conditions on board ship – both of storage and for the crews – presented demanding logistical challenges.

Strategic operations were also complex. Cornwallis had to perform two conflicting roles. The more obvious was the need to keep the French fleet at Brest in harbour, but there was also a need to safeguard merchant shipping and to prevent any other French fleet from attempting a landing in Ireland as had happened in 1796. Whereas St Vincent, Cornwallis predecessor in command of the Channel Fleet and now First Lord of the Admiralty, had operated a very close blockade on Brest, Cornwallis divided his resources. The main fleet sailed in a more traditional manner 'twixt Scillies and Ushant, whilst inshore vessels maintained a watch on activities in harbour. In this, Cornwallis was assisted by local spies and frequent reports from his watching inshore vessels.



By and large, the French fleet, denuded of its officer class by the Revolution, was not in a state to put to sea against seasoned British ships. Ganteaume did do so from Brest just once, meeting Cornwallis off Camaret on 22nd August 1805, with

some 13,000 troops for an invasion of Ireland.^{lxxi} Cornwallis with just 17 ships of the line to 21 French, did not hesitate to attack but Ganteaume was unwilling to engage in a full-scale battle when more was at stake and took his fleet under the shelter of shore batteries which made it impossible for Cornwallis to follow. The losses on either side were small, but Cornwallis suffered a slight wound.

The situation of the French navy was problematic. The prevailing south westerly winds kept the main fleet in Brest for long periods because of the difficulties of rounding the Goulet in the approaches. To enter the Channel, therefore, it required easterly or north easterly winds to leave port before these changed 180 degrees to sail along the north Brittany and Normandy coastline. Only a feint, such as that undertaken by Villeneuve to the West Indies before Trafalgar, could achieve the desired objective. The Channel Fleet had to be on its guard for such an eventuality.

Movements from other ports, including Rochfort and Ferrol, were less easy to control, but much was done to limit the damage from any egress. In particular, smaller vessels carrying troops for the projected invasion of England, were harassed, and several taken.^{lxxii}

Although the strain took its toll, with even Cornwallis and Whitby losing faith in each other temporarily in the later months of 1805,^{lxxiii} Cornwallis proved himself equal to the task on which his subsequent reputation rests.

Newlands

Whist still out of favour when Spencer was at the Admiralty, Cornwallis leased an estate in Milford, Hampshire - Newlands - from Sir John D'Oyly, whose finances were beginning to come under strain, and purchased the estate outright two years later. In this he may have been following an old friend, Admiral Robert Man who had moved to Pennington House in the parish of Milford in 1789. Man had served under Cornwallis in *Guadeloupe* from 1768 to 1769. Milford was to be Cornwallis' home until his death nineteen years later.

Captain John Whitby, who had served under Cornwallis for much of his career, stayed at Newlands immediately after his wedding in 1802, and Cornwallis developed an attachment to the young Mrs Whitby, treating her like a daughter in the same way he had always treated Whitby as a son. The story has been told in these pages before,^{lxxiv} but further research enables two particular points to emerge.

The first concerns a fire at Newlands reported by George Cornwallis-West, the grandson of Mrs West, who was herself the Whitby's daughter and Cornwallis' god-daughter.^{lxxv} Given the family relationships, the only way in which George could have been aware of the fire is through a now lost memoir of Cornwallis by Mrs West who would have learnt of it herself on Cornwallis' knee. There are strong suggestions of embellishment at each stage of the telling.

Cornwallis-West stated, under a page heading of 1799, that Cornwallis moved to Newlands 'then a small farm', 'in the summer of this year'. However, the lease on Newlands (from Sir John D'Oyly) is dated 5th September 1800.^{lxxvi} Cornwallis-West also made reference to Rear Admiral Berkeley and the Acts of Union with Ireland, and these confirm the autumn of 1800. 'He lived in a two-roomed wooden hut while the farmhouse was being put ready for his accommodation.' The 'thatched farmhouse' burnt down 'in the winter of this year' (page heading 1801, although it could only have been 1802-3).

There is clear evidence that Newlands was more than a mere farmhouse. The rates paid on the house at Newlands of £3-5s-0d are higher than the £2-10s-0d Man paid for Pennington House and in total is more than Peyton paid for Priestlands.^{lxxvii} In all, the rates Cornwallis paid were four times the average for Milford.

Hampshire Chronicle - Monday 19 May 1800

The valuable VILLA and PREMISIES called *Newlands* ... containing Breakfast Rooms, Dining and Drawing Rooms, Library, Dressing Room and Bed Rooms Furnished in a Style of the most elegant Taste. The Offices ...are of every description: Gardens and Conservatory in high Condition, and with the Pleasure Grounds, and several Closes of Land, comprise about Twenty-five acres. The whole forming (for beauty of Situation, Prospects, and Convenience) a Residence most select and desirable.

More evidence comes from the sale particulars (see panel) in 1800. Furthermore, the 1797 map shows the house, lake and walled garden clearly (centre left). This was



Newlands in 1797; note Everton then called Evelton
Courtesy of the British Library. OSD 75 pt.1;
Item number: 15. Surveyed 1797, published 1810.

already a modern and desirable gentleman's residence.

The fire itself remains a mystery. Cornwallis-West states that Cornwallis lost a valuable library and treasures brought back from India, but there are no press reports of any such fire to be found. If there was a fire, then it may have been in an outhouse in which Cornwallis' possessions were stored or a small area of Newlands itself, but by no means the entire property.

He, triumphing o'er death, to bliss eternal soar'd!^{lxxviii}

Cornwallis' character shines through in his modesty and his consideration for others. In part, his modesty stemmed from an aversion to polite society, remarkable given his family background; his natural home was the quarterdeck. He declined the Order of the Bath after his Retreat in 1795, twice telling Spencer that he had done nothing to deserve it and asking Spencer not to let it be known that the offer had even been made.^{lxxix} Cornwallis-West suggested that he was concerned that his reputation derived too much from his ability to escape from difficult

situations rather than from winning a fleet action, but the refusal is in keeping with other evidence. He finally accepted the Order, in common with many other officers, in 1815 once peace had been restored.

His first will, written in 1793 on leaving India, stipulated that he was to be buried at sea, 'sewed up in an old cot or canvas ... in the same manner as seamen are buried'. His last will did not carry any stipulation, but it is understood that he left instructions that he was to be buried in Milford next to John Whitby without any tombstone or memorial.^{lxxx}

His report on the Retreat in 1795 extolled the performance of every last man in his squadron without mentioning his own leadership, courage and skill.^{lxxx} His will evinces a similar concern for the welfare of those under him, leaving to all household servants who had been with him 'for two years or more, the whole of their wages to be paid to them over again for the whole time they have been in my service and at the highest rate'. Past friends were not forgotten: £1,000 each to his former secretary and another named person, and £300 to the sister of an old friend in Jamaica and also to a local farmer and bailiff.

Without a male heir beyond one nephew, and allowing for the possibility that the nephew could yet produce a son, the 'the residue houses lands and every other property (not otherwise disposed of) to Mary Anna Theresa Whitby'.^{lxxxii} This reflected the long interest he had taken in John Whitby. Whitby had been the principal beneficiary in the will written in India, and the relationship if anything strengthened over the years. Mrs Whitby had written to Cornwallis in January 1806 - at a time when both her husband and Cornwallis were feeling the strain of the blockade - 'I always understood from him that you had ever lived upon the most affectionate terms together, more like Father and Son to the day of our marriage, as a Parent. He ever loved and revered you, and surely when you took me as a daughter under your care until his return, no one could have supposed you would have done so, had you not equally loved him.'^{lxxxiii}

Cornwallis' care for Mrs Whitby was confirmed in a letter he wrote to the Reverend Thomas Whitby in July 1806 after Whitby's death: 'He (Whitby) left her under my care when he went abroad, and she has lived in my house ever since.' The quasi-family relationship extended to Mrs Whitby's siblings, Cornwallis making bequest to all the Symonds family:

£1,000 to each of Thomas Edward, William, Sophia and Merelina, £500 to John Charles, and, for her part in looking after Cornwallis alongside Mrs. Whitby, £3,000 to Juliana.

Closest of all may have been the Whitbys' daughter, Theresa, whose words:

Methinks again thy sainted voice I hear,
As when with day my childish sports did end,
And it pour'd nightly blessings in mine ear!^{lxxxiv}

reflect the attachment. At various times when away from home, Cornwallis wrote to her, evincing a special care for the young girl. Ultimately, he left his estate to her, partly directly and partly through her mother. In return, she did not forget, as the lines above and those which open this article attest.

There is a small footnote to this relationship. In retirement, and possibly earlier, Cornwallis kept a parrot which he called Poll which gave him much amusement in his later years. It is probable that there was another, as Mrs West mentioned two of these long lived creatures in her will in 1886.

I leave my pet parrots and birds to her kind care but should she not desire so many I wish them confided to my maid Mary Louisa Oakford with ten pounds per annum for their maintenance whilst they exist to provide their food and wraps I know the said Louisa Oakford will treat them kindly.^{lxxxv}

Other anecdotes about Cornwallis were reported frequently in the years after his death. One story concerned the crew of *Canada* who addressed a respectful note to him declining to fight until they were paid, Cornwallis replying in robust style, 'I only hope that we may fall in with the largest first rate out of France, for I'm positive the devil himself could not keep you from tearing her to pieces.' Another described how he found his brother, the Earl, sitting on the quarterdeck during the voyage out to India in 1786, instructing a quartermaster to advise the Earl that a 'soldier-officer' should not sit upon His Majesty's quarter deck. The Earl rose, and the two brothers went off together for breakfast.^{lxxxvi} Anecdotes such as these cannot be relied upon for accuracy – as Cornwallis sailed for India

two years after the Earl, this one is clearly inaccurate – but they tend to be told of people who are well regarded, a useful indicator, therefore, of the respect in which Cornwallis was held.

Nicknames, too, tell a tale. ‘Billy Go-tight’ arose from his abstemiousness in the hot climate of India and ‘Billy Blue’ from hoisting the Blue Peter on arrival in Torbay as a signal of an immediate return to sea.^{lxxxvii}

At the time of his death on 5th July 1819, Cornwallis was the third most senior admiral in the Royal Navy after St Vincent and the long since inactive Benjamin Caldwell. He had served his country well without seeking honours for which he had a marked dislike: he once remarked to Mrs West when she was still a girl, ‘Worth makes the man and want of it the fellow.’^{lxxxviii} His own family’s motto was *Virtus vincit invidiam* (‘virtue overcomes envy’),^{lxxxix} a maxim which was his guiding principle throughout his life.

NOTES

ⁱ R D Blackmore *Stonehaven* (London 1887) pp 243-4.

ⁱⁱ Theresa C I West *Frescoes and Sketches from Memory* (London: J Mitchell 1855) p 6. These lines refer to Cornwallis specifically. See Barry Jolly ‘Poetry or Autobiography? - The Verses of a Victorian Lady’ *Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society Occasional Magazine* ns 5 (2018) 60 ff for an explanation of Mrs West’s poetry, including her relationship with Cornwallis.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Leyland *Dispatches and Letters Relating to the Blockade of Brest, 1803-1805* 2 vols (Navy Records Society, London 1899-1902) I, p xiii.

^{iv} George Cornwallis-West *The Life and Letters of Admiral Cornwallis* (Robert Holden, London 1927).

^v Richard Morriss (Ed) *The Channel Fleet and the Blockade of Brest 1793-1801* (Ashgate for the Navy Records Society 2001) and Leyland above.

^{vi} Andrew Lambert, ‘Cornwallis, Sir William (1744–1819)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6346, accessed 1 Nov 2017]

^{vii} <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/constituencies/eye>

^{viii} With responsibility for home affairs (England and Wales) and for relations with the Protestant countries of Northern Europe.

^{ix} Cornwallis-West pp 23-33.

^x Cornwallis-West pp 19-24.

^{xi} Cornwallis-West p 36.

^{xii} Cornwallis-West p 80.

^{xiii} Cornwallis-West pp 82-3 & 263-4.

^{xiv} Cornwallis-West pp 90-2.

^{xv} *The Naval Chronicle* 7 (January-July 1802) (p 13-5).

^{xvi} Cornwallis-West pp 110-3.

^{xvii} Michael Lewis *A Short History of the British Navy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1957) pp 131-3.

^{xviii} Rodney’s official report and maps claim the decision to break the line was his own, but this has been widely disputed. In fact, his own early sketches of the battle show *Canada*, *Centaur* and *Duke* to

the fore, each of which was instrumental in capturing a French ship. See a post by Robert Bellamy - *The Battle of the Saintes Part 1: The Battle Plans* Navy Records Society web-site, posted on September 5th, 2013.

^{xix} Originally in the possession of George Cornwallis-West and reproduced in *Life and letters ...* pp 116-7.

^{xx} Letter to *The Naval Chronicle* in October 1801 quoted in full in Cornwallis-West pp 127-9.

^{xxi} Theresa C I West *Frescoes and Sketches from Memory* (London: 1855) p 6.

^{xxii} Cornwallis-West p 130.

^{xxiii} *The Royal kalendar: and court and city register, for England, Scotland, Ireland, and the colonies 1815* p 162.

^{xxiv} Cornwallis-West p 131. The Earl had sounded out William's interest in the East Indies naval command in 1782.

^{xxv} See <http://forum.sailingnavies.com/viewtopic.php?f=10&t=2257> [accessed 9/4/2018] for a discussion of even more detail of the inter-relationships of these families.

^{xxvi} *Hereford Journal* 15 October 1788.

^{xxvii} *Manchester Mercury* 28 October 1788.

Sheffield Register, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, & Nottinghamshire Universal Advertiser 15 November 1788.

^{xxviii} Barry Jolly *Mrs Whitby's Locket* Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society (2011).

^{xxix} Website: The Age of Nelson: Michael Phillips: Ships of the Old Navy: Minerva; Andrew Lambert, 'Cornwallis, Sir William (1744-1819)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008.

^{xxx} Cornwallis-West pp 151-61.

^{xxxi} Widely reported at the time, see for example <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1973/mar/21/royal-navy> The ramifications were widespread.

^{xxxii} Richardson, William A Mariner of England (1780-1819) pp 108-10 and Cornwallis-West p 259. The two give different dates and duration of the passage.

^{xxxiii} Promoted to Rear Admiral of the White; he appears not to have been in the lower rank of Rear Admiral of the Blue. See for example *Derby Mercury* of Thursday 7 February 1793.

^{xxxiv} Cornwallis-West p 259.

^{xxxv} John Marshall *Royal Naval Biography ...* Supplement Part 1 London 1827 pp 31 & 411.

^{xxxvi} At the end of the period in *Caesar*, they were again on convoy duty. Cornwallis-West pp 259-62 and Website: P Benyon: Index of 19th Century Naval Vessels: respectively *Excellent* and *Caesar*.

^{xxxvii} Website: P Benyon: Naval History of Great Britain - Vol I p 241.

^{xxxviii} *The Navy List* 1850.

^{xxxix} <https://sailsofglory.org/showthread.php?1296-On-this-day-June-16-1795-Cornwallis-s-Retreat>

^{xl} William James *Naval History of Great Britain 1793-1827* 6 vols (London 1837) I p 242.

^{xli} This section follows, in an abbreviated form, Barry Jolly *Mrs Whitby's Locket* pp 21-4.

^{xlii} The details of this episode, through to the court martial, are taken primarily from Cornwallis-West pp 291-342 and Corbett pp x-xvi & 131-232.

^{xliiii} Letter to Major-General Ross 18th March 1796 in Ross *Vol II* pp 299-300. Charles Ross was the son of General Ross and married a daughter of the second Marquis.

^{xliv} Ross III p 515. Ross, his former ADC, was by now Lieutenant General.

^{xlv} Barry Jolly *Mrs Whitby's Locket* p 23.

^{xlvi} Cornwallis-West p 141.

^{xlvii} The full, and very readable, text of the defence statement is to be found in Cornwallis-West pp 323-40.

^{xlviii} Rodger, N A M *Command of the Ocean* Penguin Books 2005 p 435.

^{xlix} *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* April 7, 1796; Issue 5975.

^l *Morning Post and Fashionable World* April 16, 1796; Issue 7528; *True Briton* (1793) April 22, 1796; Issue 1037; and *Star* May 12, 1796; Issue 2414.

^{li} Ross p 303.

^{lii} See Cornwallis-West p 340. Cornwallis-West takes the generous expressions in the letter at face value, thereby ignoring Spencer's subsequent treatment of both Cornwallis and Whitby.

^{liii} Ross II pp 299-300.

^{liv} The general consensus appears to be that this was voluntary, but Cornwallis-West - p 342 - produces evidence to the contrary.

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- lv Wikipedia: William Carnegie, 7th Earl of Northesk.
- lvi Sir Lewis Namier *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* 2nd edition (London: Macmillan 1957) p 29 ff.
- lvii Namier pp 24-8.
- lviii For Henry Cornwallis, see L. Namier, J. Brooke (eds), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1754-1790* (London: Boydell and Brewer 1964 on-line).
The other constituency information is from earlier volumes of *The History of Parliament*, all on-line.
- lix Wikipedia: Charles Cornwallis, 1st Marquis Cornwallis
- lx *The Scots Magazine* 1 February 1769
- lxi L. Namier, J. Brooke (eds), 'CORNWALLIS, Hon. William (1744-1819)' in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1754-1790* (London: 1964).
- lxii J Steven Watson *The Reign of George III* (Oxford: OUP 1960) pp 131-41.
- lxiii Watson *op cit* pp 113-120, 181-9.
- lxiv L. Namier, J. Brooke *loc cit*.
- lxv L. Namier, J. Brooke *loc cit*.
- lxvi Cornwallis-West, G *The Life and Letters of Admiral Cornwallis* (Robert Holden & Co Ltd London: 1927) p 492.
- lxvii Various letters in Leyland pp 3-7.
- lxviii See the web-site of the Royal Museums Greenwich: Sustaining the Empire War, the Navy and the Contractor State, 1793-1815 and
summary: https://www.rmg.co.uk/sites/default/files/Sustaining_the_Empire_project.pdf
- lxix Julian S Corbett (Ed) *PRIVATE PAPERS of George, second Earl Spencer FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY 1794-1801* Vol II (The Navy Records Society, Elibron Edition 2005) pp 446-7.
- lxx Leyland II pp 345-6.
- lxxi National Archives WO 1/924.
- lxxii Leyland Vol 2 pp xi-xii.
- lxxiii See Barry Jolly *Mrs Whitby's Locket* pp 42-6.
- lxxiv Barry Jolly *Mrs Whitby's Locket*.
- lxxv Cornwallis-West pp 344 & 382-3. The year of the fire can be determined from Cornwallis' movements with the Channel Fleet.
- lxxvi Hampshire Record Office 11M56/130
- lxxvii See *Introduction: Milford Then And Now* above.
- lxxviii Mrs West's last words on Cornwallis: as n1 above.
- lxxix Cornwallis-West pp 278-80.
- lxxx Cornwallis-West pp 259 & 521.
- lxxxi Reproduced in full in Cornwallis-West pp 267-70.
- lxxxii Will dated 11th December 1815. National Archives: Prob 11/1818.
The Royal kalendar: and court and city register, for England, Scotland, Ireland, and the colonies 1815 p 162
- lxxxiii Cornwallis/Whitby Correspondence in the Raymond Richards Collection, ref. M148/6, Special Collections and Archives, Keele University Library.
- lxxxiv As n1 above, but p 6.
- lxxxv Will of Theresa John Cornwallis West: Probate 16th November 1886
- lxxxvi For example, *Edinburgh Evening Courant* 9 March 1829 & *Morning Post* 12 October 1826.
- lxxxvii Cornwallis-West pp 250 & 414.
- lxxxviii Cornwallis-West p 514.
- lxxxix *The monthly magazine and British register* XXI (1806) p 230.