



# DEAN KING

WITH JOHN B. HATTENDORF



## HARBORS AND HIGH SEAS

AN ATLAS AND GEOGRAPHICAL GUIDE TO  
THE COMPLETE AUBREY-MATURIN NOVELS OF  
**PATRICK O'BRIAN**



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# Harbors and High Seas

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**An Atlas and Geographical Guide to the Complete Aubrey-Maturin  
Novels of Patrick O'Brian**

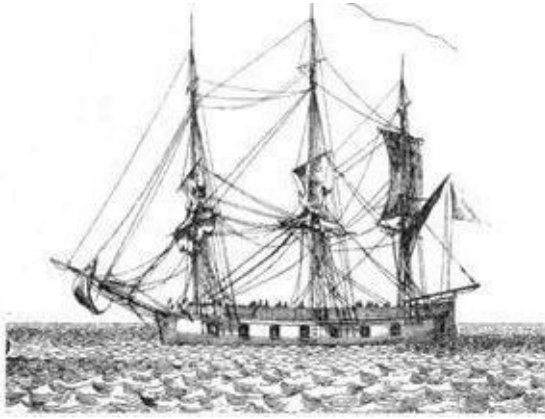
**DEAN KING  
with John B. Hattendorf**

*Maps by Jeffrey Ward, William Clipson, and Adam Merton Cooper*

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# A Note on the Third Edition

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All men owe honor to the poets—honor and awe, for they are dearest to the Muse who puts upon the lips the ways of life.

—Homer, *The Odyssey*, book 8

I would like to dedicate this final edition of *Harbors and High Seas* to Patrick O'Brian (1914–2000), creator of the Aubrey-Maturin novels. I have added a final chapter, “A Hot Time in Chile,” covering the geography of his twentieth novel in the series, *Blue at the Mizzen* (HarperCollins, UK; W. W. Norton, USA, 1999). It is for the better understanding and enjoyment of O'Brian's magnificent epic of the Royal Navy during the age of Napoleon that I wrote this book and *A Sea of Words*.

*Macte Virtute*, Patrick O'Brian.

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# Preface to the Second Edition

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IT'S NOT EVERY DAY that you have the chance to read Patrick O'Brian on board a square-rigged sailing ship, let alone en route from New York to Bermuda. This I did in the summer of 1998, on board "HMS" *Rose*, the replica of a 1757 sixth-rate built in Hull, England. The original fought in the Seven Years War and the American Revolution. She was scuttled by the British in 1779, in Georgia, to prevent the French from approaching the town of Savannah. But the *Rose* lives again today through her reconstruction in 1970 from her original plans. She now sails out of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

One of the forty-nine crew members, though only a lowly trainee, I served on the "C" watch; we gathered at the capstan for our two four-hour watches at four A.M. and four P.M. On the high seas, the windswept ocean, empty from horizon to horizon, can grow monotonous on a long passage. That is why this watch—also known as the sunrise-sunset watch—is preferred. The hands on duty at these times get to experience both the enchantment of daybreak and the glorious colors of sunset. That is, of course, while attending to duties such as trimming sails, checking the pumps, swabbing the deck, manning the helm.

When my watch was below, I slept hard. I now have a fuller appreciation for the benefits of Maturin's wind sock, which was meant to funnel cool air to the often stifling sleeping quarters below deck. (Alas, the *Rose*, wooden, unventilated, was socked in by the fog of sleeping sailors rather than wind-socked.) During the occasional, much cherished lull, I read *The Yellow Admiral*, again, on the gun deck, where the modern-day *Rose*'s mess tables offered respite across from a row of nine-pound guns. Thanks to Captain Richard Bailey—he's no Hugh Pigot—I was able to read with a navigation chart for Brest in front of me, scrawling a rough draft of a map for the second edition of *Harbors and High Seas*. This I then checked, using a variety of period charts, before sending it off to Jeff Ward, whose fine cartography adorns this new edition.

While creating new chapters for *The Yellow Admiral* and *The Hundred Days*, I also focused on locating many of the fictional sites left to the imagination in the first edition. Now, for instance, you will find markers for the fictional St. Martin's, France (where Aubrey cuts out the *Diane*), and for Polcombe Cove, England, both sites mentioned in the *Letter of Marque*, on the map of southern England. In chapter 8, you will find a revised map for the actions in the Ionian Islands, which includes markers for the fictional towns there. And among the new maps you will find one of Woolcombe House and its environs in chapter 18, "Rough Seas on the Brest Blockade," about *The Yellow Admiral*. I am most pleased as well that Geoff Hunt has drawn pictures of the fictional Dyak Island ([page 167](#)), where the shipwrecked *Dianes* play cricket and hunt boar in *The Nutmeg of Consolation*, and Moal ([page 179](#)), where the Surprises participate decisively in a war amongst the natives of that remote Pacific island, in *The Truelove* (*Clarissa Oakes*, in the British edition).

One caution on the location of fictional places: The placement is necessarily somewhat subjective as O'Brian often quite intentionally gives only vague hints at where these places might be. In fact, in some instances the evidence would even seem to be contradictory. Having studied the particulars available, I claim only to have made something between a guess and an educated guess as to where they might lie in the hopes that this might aid the reader in visualizing the action.

Finally, many thanks to all of the readers who wrote to me with suggestions for the second edition of *Harbors and High Seas*, and to the officers and mates of the *Rose*; one could hope to share with no more salty yet kindly a crew.

—Dean King



# Foreword

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## DEAN KING

IF STEPHEN MATURIN TAKES the fall for readers of Patrick O’Brian’s Aubrey-Maturin novels regarding nautical terms, it is Sophie Williams who has that honor regarding geography. As with Maturin and his ships, most readers readily empathize with Sophie’s plight. In fact, it is with considerable relief that in *HMS Surprise* the reader hears her plead with Maturin, “ ‘I am sure there are quantities of your countrywomen who know where Pappenburg is, and Batavia, and this Ligurian Republic; but we never do find such places with Miss Blake. And this Kingdom of Two Sicilies: I can find one on the map, but not the other. Stephen, pray tell me the present state of the world.’ ”

Maturin’s succinct response to Sophie’s plea, however, only touches on the complex geography of the era. Today, two centuries later, much more is needed. In fact, in our first companion book to O’Brian’s novels, *A Sea of Words*, Professor John B. Hattendorf devoted ten pages to explaining the five different coalitions that formed to oppose French aggression during the War of the French Revolution (1792–1802) and the Napoleonic War (1803–1815). Not only did islands and territories change hands through battle and treaty, but when war broke out again in 1803, some exchanges were reversed and others were not. The Treaty of Amiens returned Minorca to Spain and the Cape of Good Hope to Holland. Britain later recaptured the Cape, and took Mauritius from the French, but never regained Minorca, although they sometimes operated from Port Mahon (the principal port of Minorca) anyway.

Readers of *A Sea of Words* indicated that the next most anxiously awaited tool for O’Brian aficionados was a book of maps. *Harbors and High Seas*—organized in twenty chapters, one for each of the Aubrey-Maturin novels, and providing original and period maps, plus descriptions and engravings of many ports and coasts—is our answer. The purpose of this book is to help readers follow the geography of the action as it unfolds. For those who need to brush up on, say, the first dozen books before delving into the last handful, this book should also serve as a useful refresher. On the other hand, I have made a studious attempt to describe the plots, with salient information regarding ships and characters, without giving away endings.

Little did I realize when I started working on *Harbors and High Seas* what a rewarding and often fiendish challenge it would be. The fiendish part was trying to locate in the oversize but often sparse atlases of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries the many obscure locales to which O’Brian sends Aubrey and Maturin and determining beyond a reasonable doubt which sites were fictional.

The rewarding parts were many. *A Sea of Words* contains the masses of information—about sailing and square-rigged ships, about Admiral Lord Nelson and the Royal Navy, and about many other nautical, natural science, and historical topics—that allow you to better understand the events of the Aubrey-Maturin novels. But *Harbors and High Seas* gives you the basis to truly absorb them. For the reader, geographic knowledge, like the keel and ribs of a ship, serves as a framework onto which all of the adventures, the humorous and poignant moments, the battles, can be fit.

It is my hope that after you use this book, you will not only be able to envision the routes taken by the *Sophie*, the *Surprise*, or one of Captain Aubrey's temporary commands, but you will also better understand how the physical world was perceived during this era. Despite the advances made during the great age of discovery more than two centuries before, there were still plenty of uncharted—not to mention unbound—places. It's not surprising when you consider how rarely European traffic reached the remote parts of the world.

In his novel *The Unknown Shore*, O'Brian writes about St. Julian's, a harbor on the coast of Patagonia: "The first man ever to come there by sea, Magellan, built a gibbet on the shore and then hanged his mutineers; and Drake, coming there nearly sixty years after, did the same. So the creatures of this lost, ill-omened shore were used to strange things, whenever ships came in: the occasions were rare enough, for in the two centuries that separated Magellan from Mr. Anson only a score of ships had touched there ..." (p. 148). And in *The Reverse of the Medal*, O'Brian informs us that "Jack had often travelled five thousand miles in quite frequented sea-lanes without seeing another ship."

Time and again this is illustrated in *The Naval Chronicle*, the journals published twice yearly from 1799 to 1818 detailing the naval actions of the Napoleonic wars and providing a forum for the discussion of maritime issues. Frequent hydrographic updates—and accounts of shipwrecks—provide just how necessary accurate sailing charts were and just how often they were not available. For instance, an 1814 edition reports: It would be of great benefit were the coast of Brazil to be surveyed from Demerary to Cape St. Roque, as no good charts exist of this part of the American coast, and even the cape that is the projecting angle of the continent and is fronted by a dangerous reef (Roccas) at the distance of several leagues seems not yet to be ascertained within twelve or fifteen miles of its true situation in latitude!

Not only were many coasts still unexplored, but, as occurs so devastatingly in *The Wine-Dark Sea*, new ones were forming. An account in the spring edition of *The Naval Chronicle* for 1812 tells of an island being formed in the Azores, an archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean off Portugal: When the *Sabrina* approached the volcano, it was still raging in the most awful manner, spewing large stones, cinders, and ashes from under water and sending shock waves to the ship with each explosion. At noon, the mouth of the crater emerged from the sea. The smoke drew up waterspouts that dissipated in a heavy rain, blanketing the *Sabrina's* decks three miles away in fine black sand.

Two weeks later, the ship returned and found a new island, two miles around and quiet. A part

from the ship landed on the steep shore to take possession of the isle in the name of His Britannic Majesty and to ascend the Atlantic's newest peak. On Sabrina, the crew found a large fuming basin with a stream of boiling water flowing to the sea. The ascent of the two-hundred-foot peak was not easy. The sulfurous ground was so hot that once they reached the summit, they immediately descended and departed, the volcano belching smoke behind them.

The formation of terra firma out of the blue was an awesome event not lost on the intrepid crew of the *Sabrina*. Even though they had reason to believe the volcano might soon erupt again, they were determined to explore and to implant on Sabrina Island an English union jack in the name of the king. It is a telling event. In many ways, Aubrey and Maturin are the fictional embodiment of the spirit of discovery, this national pride, and this unadulterated gumption exhibited by the crew of the *Sabrina*.

A few notes about using *Harbors and High Seas*: First of all, once again I had the privilege of turning to Professor Hattendorf, the Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, with my innumerable questions, the answers to which and more you will find in his informative introduction to this book. If you wish to learn about the physical world, about the trade routes, winds, and tides, this is an excellent guide.

Second, the maps in the introduction and the general reference maps of Britain and Europe were drawn by Adam Merton Cooper. Following these, the twenty chapters in *Harbors and High Seas* which correspond to the Aubrey-Maturin books, contain route maps by Bill Clipson. To maximize the amount of information we could provide, places relevant to more than one book are often not repeated. For instance, many of the Spanish locations in book 17 are actually marked on a map of Spain in chapter 13. (By not creating another map of Spain, we were able to provide close-up looks at the West African coast and Ireland's southwest coast in chapter 17.) So, for places that you can't find in a given chapter, refer to the index.

Also, please note that the ship and other icons are merely illustrative art that will help you locate key sites. Obviously they are not to scale (or they would be invisible). As for the fictional sites marked on the various maps that appear in this book, they are approximations based on the evidence in the novels which is sometimes too vague for more than an informed guess. Moahu, for example, is in the Pacific Ocean somewhere between the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands and Christmas Island. Its exact placement on a map cannot be determined by the information given.

One note regarding the historic scenes and charts found in *Harbors and High Seas*: other than the four prints from *Old London Taverns* (Brentano's, 1901), these are taken from the forty volumes of *The Naval Chronicle*. The captions that accompany them also come from *The Naval Chronicle*. They have been edited, sometimes heavily, for clarity and brevity. Other excerpts from *The Naval Chronicle* have also frequently been heavily edited. In citing the various volumes, for convenience I have called

the January-to-June edition of each year the “spring” edition and the July-to-December edition the “fall” edition.

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And by the way, Pappenburg (or Papenburg, as it is usually spelled) was a town in the Grande Duché of Ahremburg (today part of Germany), near the Ems River and the Dutch border; Batavia (today Djakarta) was the major city and port of Java in the Dutch East Indies; the Ligurian Republic, which existed from 1797 to 1805, was a strip of coast surrounding Genoa; and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, which appears on some period maps and not on others—from 1806 to 1815 it was known as the Kingdom of Naples—was formed of southern Italy and the island of Sicily.

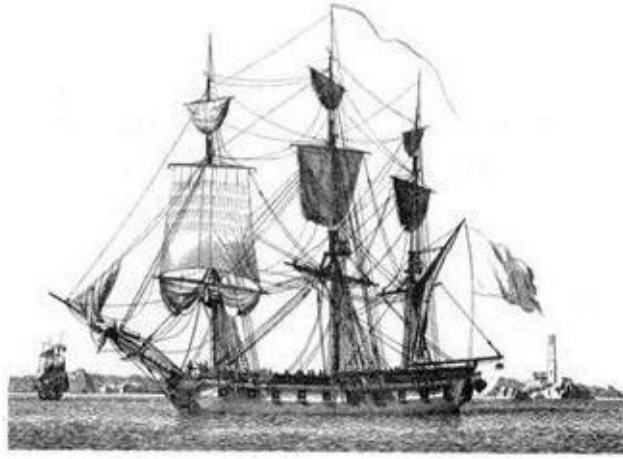
Finally, sad to say, the great island of Sabrina suffered a rather swift demise despite its two-mile shoreline and two-hundred-foot peak, though its creation was not entirely for naught. According to *The Naval Chronicle*, the islet of Sabrina “gradually disappeared ... leaving an extensive shoal.”

Footnote:

This excerpt is paraphrased, as are all of *The Naval Chronicle* excerpts in this book.

# Introduction

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# Not a Moment to Lose

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*John B. Hattendorf*

TO THE LANDSMAN, NAVIGATING the oceans can seem a mystifying endeavor—particularly with respect to the Age of Sail, when uncharted reefs and lee shores often meant sudden death to the misguided or unlucky ship. In those days, signing on as a seaman was an act of faith. Belief in the captain's skill had to be total.

For the captain, guiding a wooden ship halfway around the world was also, in many senses, an act of faith—in his own talent as well as in the goodwill of nature. The captain's decisions could alter the course of a voyage in the most momentous way, such as in 1788 when, in the stormy seas surrounding Cape Horn and pelted by hail and sleet, Captain Bligh put the ship about, deciding to sail around the world in the *other* direction.

Of course, as Sir John Barrow recounts in *The Mutiny of the Bounty*, Bligh had some compelling reasons to make that decision: “the ship began to complain, and required pumping every hour; the decks became so leaky that the commander was obliged to allot the great cabin to those who had no berths, to hang their hammocks in. Finding they were losing ground every day, and that it was hopeless to persist in attempting a passage by this route, at this season of the year, to the Society Islands, and after struggling for thirty days in this tempestuous ocean, it was determined to bear away for the Cape of Good Hope ... to the great joy of every person on board” (p. 41).

No matter what the conditions, it took an extraordinary man, endowed with a special intellectual intuition, and resolve, to make and answer for such a decision. To comprehend and calculate innumerable variables, to study charts and relate that sometimes flawed information with the physical clues around him—the color and temperature of the ocean, the altitude of the sun and stars, the appearance of an albatross, perhaps—became, in essence, a sixth sense.

As Stephen Maturin blithely states in *The Letter of Marque*, “ ‘I believe ... that to the mariner, paths are stretched across the ocean according to the wind and weather: these he follows with as little thought or concern as a Christian might walk down Sackville Street, cross Carlisle Bridge, pass Trinity College and so come to Stephen's Green, that haunt of dryads, each more elegant than the last.’ ” While Maturin's tongue-in-cheek appreciation of navigation on the high seas—likening it to a simple walk through the streets of Dublin—also gives him the irresistibly delightful opportunity to backhandedly suggest that Aubrey might be something other than Christian, it also contains more than a modicum of truth. Maturin's mind simply wanders whenever Aubrey begins calculating routes, particularly when the probable route of an enemy also must be factored into the equation.

Long removed from that age, most of us can hardly imagine the difficulties of operating :

complicated, so awkward, and so intricate a piece of engineering as a tallmasted sailing ship on an ocean voyage. By the time of the Napoleonic wars, the arts of navigation and seamanship were based on some of the most advanced scientific and technological concepts of the day. The roots of these fundamentals can be traced back to classical knowledge, gaining headway in the technological revolution born of the first great age of discovery during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when courageous navigators explored the Atlantic and Indian oceans. By the end of the eighteenth century European seamen were participating in the second age of discovery, which focused on the little-known expanses of the Pacific.

The captain of a large sailing ship needed skills and experience in two broad areas, requiring quite different types of knowledge. First, he had to know his ship—how to operate and repair her rigging and sails, how to care for the health and morale of her men, and how to maintain and use her charts, logs, navigational instruments, and guns. Second, he had to be a ship handler and voyager who knew how to make the best use of winds and ocean currents all over the world. With practical experience, one could learn the first specialty in half a dozen years. The second, however, took half a lifetime to master. It was an education that began almost as soon as a son was born to a mariner or, not then, when he was sent away as a ship's boy, not yet a teenager. It was necessarily a long tradition of seafaring that helped inculcate these skills in each new generation.

Today we would classify the different types of knowledge that a master mariner needed under such categories as maritime meteorology, cartography, and hydrography.

Knowledge in these areas developed gradually and was much more rudimentary than it is today.

## **WINDS AND WEATHER**

Because wind was the fundamental source of power in a sailing vessel, a seaman needed to know as much as possible about its patterns around the globe, patterns that had been discovered only by trial and error. By the late eighteenth century, mariners clearly understood the general pattern of the winds and how to use them, if not fully their causes.

We know today that winds are fundamentally the movement of the earth's atmosphere, which by its weight exerts a pressure on the earth that we can measure using a barometer. The globe is divided into relatively permanent bands of different atmospheric pressures. At the two poles these bands exert more, or higher, pressure than the mean pressure. At the equator it is lower than the mean. Between the polar highs and the equatorial low, there are two more bands of permanent pressure difference—one high and the other low.

The high and low bands of pressure create movement in the atmosphere—wind. This wind draws from the center of a high-pressure area toward the center of a low-pressure area. Because of the earth's rotation, this movement of the atmosphere is deflected in a clockwise direction in the Northern

Hemisphere and in a counterclockwise direction in the Southern Hemisphere. Thus, on each side of the equator, in the Northern Hemisphere, the wind blows in a clockwise direction. In the Southern Hemisphere, in the different bands, the wind blows in a different direction. There is little wind near the center. At the equator the low-pressure area is called the “doldrums.” It is a region where there is generally little wind, but where one can also encounter the occasional squall or thunderstorm, or even hurricanes at certain times of year. On the two outer sides of that band, in a broad region where the low-and high-pressure bands meet, the winds are known as “trade winds,” or “trades,” a term that comes not from any reference to commerce but from the expression “to blow trade,” meaning to blow regularly.

The two trade winds are affected by the same equatorial low pressure, but being on different sides of the equator, the earth’s rotation causes the northern trade to blow from the northeast and the southern one to blow from the southeast. Higher, toward each of the poles, the prevailing winds blow from the west and thus are called the “westerlies.” Between them and the trade winds are areas of light winds called the “variables.” They were also known as the “horse latitudes” because of the ill—often fatal—effect that the lack of wind and stifling heat had on horses being transferred to America.



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