Leslie H. Bennett

Nelson's eyes



The Life and Correspondence of Vice Admiral Sir Henry Blackwood, KCB

On 5th October, 1805 Lord Nelson wrote to Viscount Castlereagh:

> *"I have only two frigates to watch them, and not one with the fleet. I am most anxious for more eyes, and hope that the Admiralty are hastening them to me."*

Nelson did not need to worry; time would prove that though short of ships, he did have the best eyes in the frigate business. Off the port of Cadiz watching the Combined Fleets was Captain the Honorable Henry Blackwood in HMS Euryalus, and over the next few weeks it was his eyes that would prove invaluable to Admiral Lord Nelson.

Born in 1770, just a year after Napoleon Bonaparte, Henry Blackwood had been at sea 24 years at the time of Trafalgar and a frigate captain for nearly eight years. He was a consummate sailor and ship handler; he had served in a number of frigates and had been developing his nautical skills in various parts of the world.

Frigate captains have been called the Eyes of the Fleet, but Henry Blackwood brought new meaning to the term, and because of his particular abilities, courage and superb seamanship, particularly in the long days off Cadiz in the Autumn of 1805, he alone qualifies to be known as "*Nelson's Eyes*".



Leslie H. Bennett was born and educated in England, the son of a Royal Navy officer. Throughout his life he has been involved in maritime matters, he spent his early working years with the Corporation of Lloyd's before moving with his family to Southern California to take up senior positions in Marine Insurance underwriting and broking. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Insurance Institute, and was the Rutter Gold Medalist in 1970. Since his retirement in 1996, Leslie has been doing consulting work in connection with insurance.

Leslie Bennett has always had a great interest in naval history. He is a member of the 1805 Club, the Nelson Society, the Society for Nautical Research and the Naval Records Society, and has an extensive library of books on the Nelson period. His research into the life of Vice Admiral Sir Henry Blackwood began a number of years ago when he was invited to contribute to one of the publications of the 1805 Club.

Leslie Bennett is married to Mary, and they recently celebrated 43 years of marriage; they have three children and four grandchildren. In addition to naval history, his interests include photography, oil painting; and together he and Mary enjoy travel and ocean cruises.

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The Life and Correspondence of
Vice Admiral Sir Henry Blackwood, Bart., KCB.
(1770 – 1832)

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