The real Ancient Mariner

Robert Fowke[1]

ON 14 NOVEMBER 1797 William Wordsworth suggested to Coleridge that he centre *the Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* around the image of a sailor shooting an albatross. Wordsworth had been reading *A Voyage round the World by way of the great South Sea* by Captain George Shelvocke, published London 1726. The passage which inspired Wordsworth's suggestion reads as follows:

> We all observed that we had not had the sight of one fish of any kind since we came into the southward of the streights of le Maire, nor one sea-bird, except a disconsolate black Albatross, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if he had lost himself, till Hatley, my second Captain, observing in one of his melancholy fits, that this bird which was always hovering near us, imagined, from his colour, that it might be some ill omen… he, after some fruitless attempts, at length shot the Albatross.[2]

Coleridge started to write his poem that very evening. His Ancient Mariner follows Hatley's route round the Horn and into the Pacific in 1719. Second Captain Simon Hatley thus became the model, in so far as there is one, for the Ancient Mariner. It is surprising how little is known about him.

To date, our knowledge comes mainly from three published accounts: Shelvocke's book, a hostile reply by his captain of Marines, William Betagh,[3] and a book by Captain Woodes Rogers[4] of the *Duke* published in 1712. These accounts show that Hatley sailed on at least two privateering voyages to the South Sea and that, in 1709 while on the *Duke*, he was shipmates with Alexander Selkirk and William Dampier, Selkirk being the model for Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Dampier being the model for Captain Pocock in Swift's Gulliver's Travels and, to some extent, for Gulliver himself. A strange coincidence of literary models.

Origins

In 1709 according to the accounts, Hatley, commanding a prize barque, was separated from the *Duke*, was captured and became a prisoner of the Inquisition in Lima. There is a report in the Archivo Histórico Nacional Madrid on the 'spontaneous' conversions to Catholicism of Protestant sailors held in Lima in this period. This document, Hereies Nacionales Espontaneos,[5] gives biographical details of a Simon Hatey (sic), born in 1685 in 'Jusdtoch' in

---

[1] The author's book *The Real Ancient Mariner, pirates and poesy in the South Sea*, is published by Travelbrief Publications, ISBN 9780954835149. It examines Simon Hatley's life, also the machinations of George Shelvocke, and it looks at the political and literary context, in particular the writing of *Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels* and *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*.

[2] Shelvocke, George (1726) 73

[3] Betagh, William (1728): *A Voyage around the world, being an account of a remarkable enterprise begun in the year 1719*. London: Printed for T. Combes.

[4] Rogers, Woodes *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* printed for A. Bell at the Cross Keys and Bible in Cornhill, 1712.

[5] AHN seccion Inquisición, Legayo 5345, Expediente 4

the Kingdom of England. His mother was a Catholic and his father was a Protestant. Hatey trained as a pilot in Bristol.

Spanish clerks were never too troubled about the spelling of English names. 'Hatey' could stand for 'Hatley' and 'Jusdtoch for 'Woodstock' given the Spanish habit of transposing 'J' for 'W'. Sure enough, the parish register of St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock, Oxfordshire, records the christening of a Simon Hatley on 27 March 1685,[6] son of Symon Hatley and Mary his wife. A later document contains the signature of this same Simon Hatley and describes him as a mariner and gentleman.[7] The Woodstock records are conclusive evidence that Simon Hatley of Woodstock is the same man as Simon Hatey of the Inquisition document and there is no evidence in any of the records that any other sailor named Hatley or Hatey sailed on the *Duke* or *Duchess*. Simon Hatley of Woodstock is therefore the man who shot Coleridge's albatross.

Coleridge has the Ancient Mariner refer to the ship's crew as 'we' but a senior officer would have referred to them as 'the crew' or 'our crew'. Coleridge demoted his mariner. Simon Hatley was a gentleman and an officer. The Hatleys were one of a small group of prosperous Woodstock families. Simon's grandfather, Robert, was mayor four times and his father, Symon, was mayor twice[8]. Simon grew up at no. 6 High Street, now a substantial house with bow windows. On the head of a lead drainpipe the letters 'H', 'S' and 'M' and the date, 1710, are picked out in white. The 'H' stands for Hatley, the 'S' for Symon, Simon's father, and the 'M' for Mary, his mother.[9]

The Inquisition document says that Simon Hatey was 'Latinate'. He would have gone to the local grammar school, about a hundred yards up the road, a single long room built against the north side of the church, running home down the cobbled street for lunch and supper. The school was pulled down in 1876.

Unfortunately No.6 is not quite the house of Simon's childhood. In 1704 Symon, the father, knocked down the previous buildings at numbers 6-8 and began work on the building we now see. Suitably for the father of a son with piratical tendencies, it is said to have been built with stone filched from the then building site of Blenheim Palace nearby.[10]

The school, the growing wealth, the home. Everything points to a happy childhood, but for the man who shot the albatross this secure world was evidently not enough.

The Sea

At that time the average age to start an apprenticeship was fourteen.[11] Some

---

[6] ORO Mis DD Par Woodstock c1. His birth date being in March, he could also be described as having been born in 1684 old-style. For this article I have used the modern style of dating with years beginning on 1 January.

[7] ORO E 215/4/D/5

[8] Marshall E. (1875) 425-6

[9] Crossley (1990) 342-60, building no.45

[10] Crossley (1990) 342-60 building no.45. Uncle Robert and the cousins disappear from view. Robert died in 1707.

[11] Little (1960) 19

time around 1699, the carter cracked his whip, his mother wiped a tear and Simon Hatley moved to Bristol to become an apprentice pilot.[12] He would have finished his apprenticeship by 1706 at the latest when he was twenty-one.

The War of the Spanish Succession began in 1702. In that year, William Dampier, 'pirate and hydrographer',[13] sailed to the Pacific to plunder Spanish towns and shipping along the coast of South America. There were two ships: the St George, a 26-gun frigate, and the Cinque Ports, a 16-gun galley.[14] During this voyage, Alexander Selkirk was cast away on the Juan Fernandez Islands by George Stradling, the young captain of the Cinque Ports[15], one among many disheartening episodes on a fruitless and disastrous voyage.

Dampier was back in England by 1707 having lost both ships. He travelled to Bristol and proposed a further privateering voyage to wealthy members of the Bristol 'Society of Merchant Venturers'. Two hulls were purchased: the *Duke*, a 30-gun frigate, and the *Duchess*, a 26-gun frigate. Woodes Rogers, a Bristol captain, was asked to captain the Duke and be overall commander and Dampier was appointed 'navigator'.

Deliberately, the owners took on twice the normal compliment of officers. This was to reduce the risk of mutiny, always a problem for privateers. By April 1708, Simon Hatley, now just turned twenty-three, had been taken on as Third Mate on the *Duchess*.

Masts rose skywards, guns were hoisted aboard, provisions stored away, but the owners had difficulty finding sufficient crew, in particular for the *Duchess*. They met on 23 June 1708,[16] and decided that Captain Courtney of the *Duchess* should go to Portsmouth to search for men and his Third Mate Hatley with an assistant should go to Ireland. Hatley was to work his way from Dublin to Cork along the Irish coast, collecting men along the way, there to await the *Duke* and *Duchess*. He took £2 15s 10d toward expences.[17] There is a letter to him, dated July 8, 1708, probably from John Hollidge, one of the owners, written in haste the latter part indecipherable:

> You are requested by the owners of the Duke and Duchess to go with what speed you can to Holy Head and to take passage from there to Dublin. [18]

It is of interest that Hatley, a third mate, was sent on a similar urgent mission to that of his captain. From this and the fact that he is later mentioned with what amounts to affection by Woodes Rogers we can perhaps infer something of his social standing.

---

[12] *Hereies Nacionales Espontaneos* no 12.
[13] His portrait with this description hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.
[14] Galley at this date meant a small ship which could be powered either by sail or oars, allowing useful manoeuvrability for a privateer or pirate.
[15] The original captain, Charles Pickering, died on Grande Island off the coast of Brazil in 1703.
[16] NA. C 104/36 part 1
[17] NA. C 104/36 part 1, account book.
[18] *Ibid*

Duke and *Duchess* set sail on 1 August 1708, proceeding down the Bristol Channel past the shoulder of the Quantocks where Wordsworth proposed the incident with the albatross to Coleridge ninety years later. They picked up Hatley and his men at Cork and sailed via the Cape Verde Islands to the Island of Grande off the coast of Brazil, suppressing a mutiny along the way.[19] They then sailed southwards towards the Horn.

By mid-December, on the latitude of Port Desire (*Puerto Deseado*), they saw 'a large Bird called an Alcatros who spread their Wings from eight to ten Foot wide, and are much like a Gannet',[20] perhaps Hatley's first sight of the bird with which he is associated. The cold became intense and the officers gave away what clothing they could spare for the men's use. By January 1709, they were south of the Horn sailing through immense seas, the waist of the *Duchess* almost continuously full of freezing water. They were driven to a latitude 61°20 south, perhaps the furthest south that anyone had sailed until that date. At one point *Duchess* shipped a huge sea at the poop just as the officers were going into the main cabin to eat, smashing through the bulkhead which separated the cabin from the rest of the deck and thus allowing the water to drain forward, if not the officers 'must inevitably have been drowned'.[21] Next morning when *Duke* drew near, the rigging of the *Duchess* was festooned with clothes so that she looked like a giant clothes horse.

They made land at the Juan Fernandez Islands in the Pacific, picking up Alexander Selkirk who had lived alone on the main island since being abandoned there during Dampier's previous voyage, Woodes Rogers's description of the rescue being a prime inspiration for Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. They were now ready to pillage Spanish towns and shipping. It was agreed that each ship would appoint agents, two for the officers and two for the men. One of each would stay behind on his own ship and one of each would transfer to the other ship. Simon Hatley was appointed agent for the officers of the *Duchess* on board the *Duke* and on 17 February 1709, he was rowed across to his new quarters: to 'search all Persons that return from such Prize or Prizes that may be taken by either Ship: as also all Persons that the Captains of either Ship shall give leave'.[22] So there we have it. From 17 February 1709 for a period of several weeks, Simon Hatley, Plunder Manager for the *Duchess*, Alexander Selkirk, recently-rescued castaway and now second mate on the *Duke* and William Dampier, former pirate and author and now navigator, were all on board the *Duke* and sailing northwards. It leads nowhere but it is a fascinating coincidence. The models for the Ancient Mariner, Robinson Crusoe and Captain Pocock/Lemuel Gulliver were shipmates.

The two ships sailed north up the coast of Chile, capturing several prizes as they went. Simon took part in the capture of a large Spanish ship, the *Havre de*

[19] Most of the following details of the voyage of the Duke and Duchess are taken from Rogers, Woodes (2004) with some from Cooke, Edward (1712).
[20] Rogers W. (2004) 59
[21] Cooke (1712) 33
[22] Cooke (1712) 104

Grace, renamed the *Marquis,* fighting from one of the two small ship's pinnaces. He then helped to guard the prisoners while most of his shipmates went off to attack the port of Guayaquil.

The attack on Guayaquil was a success but the number of prisoners contributed to a shortage of water. Most of the prisoners were dismissed and the privateers sailed for the Galapagos Islands to recuperate, Simon commanding a captured barque. His crew consisted of four English sailors with five or six captives, three of them black according to one account, all of them according to another. At the Galapagos Islands he was separated from the main fleet.

> We all bewailed Mr Hatley and were afraid he was lost: We fir'd our Guns all Night, and kept Lights out, in hopes he might see or hear us … We pity'd our 5 men in the Barque that is missing, who if in having a melancholy Life without water, having no more but for 2 Days, when they parted from us.[23]

Duke and *Duchess* went on to capture the fabulously rich Manila Ship and returned to England in October 1711 just as peace negotiations were getting under way. They arrived home just before Robert Harley, Queen Anne's first minister, founded the South Sea Company.

Lima

On parting from the main privateer fleet in May 1709, Hatley sailed for four days without food or water until one of his men died and the rest forced him to make for the mainland[24] just south of the equator. The locals were hostile. They tied the hands of the desperate sailors, whipped them and hanged them so that they must 'unavoidably have lost their lives, had not a Padre who lived in the Neighbourhood, come time enough by good Providence, to cut 'em down, and save them'.[25] The sailors were taken overland to Lima and thrown into prison, joining Thomas Stradling who had given himself up shortly after abandoning Alexander Selkirk back in 1704. Simon managed to smuggle out a letter. It is dated Lima, 6 November 1709:

> … Some of our Countrymen yt were here before we came they have made turn their Religion, we live a sorrowfull Life amongst them, & always plagued by the Fathers, putting us in Irons & in the Dungeon, to make us turn, but we are resolved to die first. I and one more they have had to the Gallows hanged until we were almost strangled, before they cut us down.[26]

---

[23] Rogers W. (2004) 113
[24] NA SP 34/28/23A
[25] Rogers W. (2004) 177
[26] NA. SP 34/28/23A

The remorseless pressure of the inquisitors had its effect. Several sailors converted and on 11 November 1710, Hatley himself stood in the *Sala de Audiencia* of the House of the Inquisition and admitted all the 'errors of the Protestant sect'. In two more *audiencias*, on 24 November and on 2 December 1710, he acknowledged further errors.[27] He probably spent the remaining years of the war in Lima under the patronage of a wealthy citizen before working his passage home sometime late in 1713 following the signing of the Treaties of Utrecht.

Litigation

The return of the *Duke* and *Duchess* resulted in a welter of the law suits: between the men and the owners and between the owners and the East India Company, jealous of its monopoly in eastern waters. Public auctions of the loot were delayed until February 1712 and lasted until May 1713, at the Marine Coffee House, in an alleyway off Birchin Lane in the heart of London's financial district,[28] raising a total of £147,975 12s $4^{1}/_{2}$d [29][30]. It was August 1713 before the Master in Chancery authorised payments to the crew, Hatley, by then on his way home, being listed as 'lost'. The men had expected a return of around £1,000 per share but received only £42.6s 0d per share. Hatley was eventually paid £180 10s 2d together with £40 'storm money' for his part in the taking of the *Havre de Grace/Marquis*.[31] To put this in context, in normal circumstances a junior mate would expect to be paid between £48 and £92 for the sixteen months that Simon was at sea.

The Spanish monarchy felt humiliated by the Treaties of Utrecht. In November 1717, Spanish forces invaded Sardinia, now controlled by the Austrian Emperor and moved on to invade Sicily, now also an Imperial territory. On 2 August 1718, Britain, Holland, France and Austria finalised a 'Quadruple Alliance' to bring Spain back into line.

Unwilling to wait for a formal declaration of war, a group of shady London merchants, the 'Gentleman Adventurers' Association', planned a new expedition to the South Sea. Their ships would sail under a commission from the Austrian Emperor since the Empire and Spain were already at war. There would be two ships, the *Success*, 350 tons and thirty-six guns, and the *Speedwell*, 200 tons and twenty-two guns.[32]

The principle partner in the Gentleman Adventurers' Association was an ex-Royal Navy purser by the name of Edward Hughes. He chose George Shelvocke, a former shipmate, to be overall commander. Shelvocke, corpulent and suffering from gout, had been out of work since the end of the War of the

---

[27] All this from AHN seccion Inquisición, Legayo 5345, Expediente 4

[28] Simpson's Tavern, a slightly later building, now occupies the site.

[29] Jones, Donald (1992) 20

[30] NA C 104/36 parts 1 & 2, C 104/37 parts 1 & 2, C 104/160, C 104/161

[31] Details relating to the court cases are from NA C 104/36 parts 1 & 2, C 104/37 parts 1 & 2, C 104/160, C 104/161 - Jones D. (1992) 20

[32] The following narrative details of the voyages of the *Speedwell* and *Success* are drawn from the conflicting accounts of Betagh, William (1728) and Shelvocke, George (1726).

Spanish Succession. Hughes advanced £20 to tide him over.

The Gentleman Adventurers recruited senior officers with experience of the South Sea. The Second Captain of the *Success*, serving under Shelvocke, was to be a former buccaneer, John Clipperton, who had sailed with (and mutined against) William Dampier in 1704 on the *St. George*. The Captain of the smaller *Speedwell* was a Robert Mitchel, of whom nothing more is known, and the Second Captain was Simon Hatley, now aged thirty-three.

Hatley travelled to Woodstock that autumn. His father had died while he was in prison and he had inherited numbers 46-8 and 50 High Street, three rental properties.[33] On 29 September 1718, 'Simon Hatley, Mariner, Gent.', and 'Mary Hatley, Widow', his mother, signed an indenture[34] conveying numbers 46-8 and 50 to his sister, also Mary, and her husband Blagrove Gregory, son of another prominent Woodstock family, receiving £140 in return. Simon perhaps intended to invest the money in South Sea stock. One thing is certain—with his father dead, his mother very old and due to die shortly and his property sold, Hatley's connection with home was growing faint.

In November, Shelvocke sailed to Ostend to collect the Imperial commission. In breach of his orders, he fired off five barrels of gunpowder and broached the wine and brandy. On his return he was demoted to captain of the smaller *Speedwell*, (Mitchel disappears from the record at this point) while Clipperton was made captain of the *Success* and overall commander. The atmosphere between the officers became poisonous. Clipperton took to visiting Hatley and other officers on the *Speedwell* and, according to Shelvocke, he wanted Hatley to be made captain, Hatley being 'much such another as himself'—meaning that both Clipperton and Hatley were buccaneers rather than regular navy men, with all that that implied in terms of lax discipline – and piracy.

In December, Britain also declared war on Spain, and the Gentleman Venturers purchased a more credible commission direct from their own government. On 13 February 1719, *Speedwell* and *Success* set sail for the Canary Islands, the first *rendez-vous* point should they become separated. *Speedwell* was in poor shape. Her large guns were mounted between decks due to shortage of space. She was carrying the entire stock of alcohol for both ships, a curious oversight. —A storm hit them four days out and the ships were separated. Shelvocke pacified an incipient mutiny with tots of rum and sailed deliberately away from where he might expect to meet up with *Success*. The two ships would not meet again until nearly two years later in the Pacific.

Shelvocke blamed the mutiny on Hatley. There was a ferocious row on the open deck. Hatley said the owners had wanted *him* to be captain and criticised Shelvocke's seamanship. Shelvocke ordered the crew to address Hatley as plain 'Mr Hatley' from then on. Both men were likely drunk. All ships ran on alcohol but *Speedwell* was awash with the stuff, Shelvocke's favourite tipple

[33] NA. PROB 11/530, will of Simonis Hatley
[34] ORO E 215/4/D/5

being hypsy, a mixture of wine, water and brandy which he consumed 'in a wanton manner' as an antidote for his gout.

Shelvocke eventually reached the Cape Verde Islands where there was a suggestion that they 'go on the account' (turn pirate) and plunder Mahommedans in the Indian Ocean. Instead, they crossed the Atlantic and off Cape Frio, Brazil, they came across a Portuguese ship. Shelvocke raised the Imperial flag even though he now had a British commission. From a distance the Imperial black eagle on a yellow field looked vaguely like a pirate skeleton. Hatley, suddenly Shelvocke's 'best busker[35], rowed across in the ship's boat, his men armed to the teeth, and returned with 'presents' from Don Pedro, the Portuguese captain, including a purse of three hundred Portuguese *moidores*, a substantial sum. Portugal and Britain being allies, either the Portuguese captain was exceptionally generous or Hatley had committed an act of piracy.

Speedwell anchored off St. Catherine's Island,[36] Brazil, on 20 June 1719 to wood and water but the English sailors made themselves unpopular with the locals. Hatley, if Shelvocke can be believed, was a ringleader:

> … he began, and continued to comit such outrages, that I had daily complaints of his abusing their women in the grossest manner; and further, that he, and a gang that used to go about with him to buy fresh provisions, had threatened to ravish old and young, and set their houses on fire; nay and actually burnt one, which the inhabitants had permitted us to use as long as we had occasion for it.[37]

Except that the building was burned by Second Lieutenant Randal.[38] Shelvocke is far from trustworthy.

On the 31st, Shelvocke received a letter enclosing new articles signed by all the *Speedwell's* petty officers and thirty-six of the foremast-men. The new articles stated that all loot should be divided at sea rather than back in England on their return: 'If what we shall have the fortune to make this voyage should be carried to London, we should never receive the half thereof; for it is known to all, how the people on board the ships *Duke* and *Duchess* were treated …'[39]

Shelvocke blamed Hatley for the new articles. Hatley had become 'a mighty favourite of the people'. The rebellious crew then appointed Mathew Stewart, one of the mates, to be their agent. Finally the entire ship's company confronted Shelvocke on the quarter-deck and he and the senior officers were forced to sign the new articles.

That was Shelvocke's version. However, in affidavits[40] sworn by members of the crew concerning Shelvocke's arrest for piracy in 1722, it is stated that

---

[35] One who cruises for prey on the high seas, from the Spanish *buscar*, to search.
[36] Now Florianopolis, population approximately 800,000.
[37] Shelvocke (1726) 23
[38] Betagh (1728) 43
[39] Shelvocke, (1726) 32
[40] NA. HCA 15/37 'S': Instance papers 1718-30: affidavits of James Morville, William Burrow, George Gill and Jacob Robins.

the new articles were initiated by Shelvocke himself and that he was to receive an additional 5% originally allowed to the chief owner. Further, Mathew Stewart had started the voyage as Shelvocke's steward, serving in the great cabin, and Shelvocke had promoted him over the heads of better-qualified sailors. Stewart was Shelvocke's man. Shelvocke also proposed a relative to be officers' agent and made himself agent for the owners, demoting the former owners' agent and thereby taking twenty more shares for himself. *Qui bono.* As a result of the 'mutiny' on St. Catherine's Island, Shelvocke gained complete control of the distribution of rewards.

They left St. Catherine's Island and sailed south. The sea seethed with vast numbers of 'whales, grampuses, and other fish of monstrous bulk'. Approaching the Strait of le Maire they passed 'continuous chains of mountains, one with another, perpetually hid by snow'. They were blown to 61° south, in 'continual mists' and in constant danger of icebergs. There were no more teeming whales, no grampuses. Just fog, wind and horizontal sleet. 'No sight of any fish of any kind, since we were come to the Southward of the Streits of le Maire'. Until—

> At length did cross an Albatross
> Through the fog it came;
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it in God's name.

Except that no one hailed the 'disconsolate, black albatross' which appeared out of the sky that October in 1719. It merely hovered for several days like a lost soul until Hatley took a gun and shot it, 'hoping for better weather thereby'. It was probably a Dark-Mantled Sooty albatross, commonly about the size of a large goose.

After the passage of the Horn, *Speedwell* sailed up the coast of Chile. Towards the end of February 1720, off the coast of Peru, Hatley took command of the *Mercury*, a small prize.[41] He had travelled along that coast before and knew that many small vessels traded to Lima that way. *Mercury* was little more than a fortified barge but she could sail where the pickings were rich, leaving *Speedwell* to deeper, safer waters. Off Capo Blanco at the opening of the Gulf of Guayaquil Hatley took a 200-ton pink and transferred his crew to her leaving only a skeleton crew on the *Mercury*.

On 9 March 1720, a strange ship came into view, the *Brilliant*, one of a squadron of three warships fitted out in Lima to track down the privateers. According to the former Spanish captain of the pink, his ship had been checked out by the *Brilliant* a few days previously and *Brilliant* would therefore be unlikely to check her out again. Hatley ordered all his English-looking sailors below decks, leaving just a few Indians and blacks above to mimic a Spanish crew. *Brilliant* fired a warning shot. Had they heard anything of the

[41] Narrative details of the capture of the Mercury and their subsequent captivity in Lima are from Betagh (1728).

English privateers? asked her captain. No they hadn't. Why were they not further on their way to Lima? Because of the currents, Hatley replied.

At that moment, John Sproke (who had presented the mutinous articles to Shelvocke on St. Catherine's Island) suddenly emerged from below decks with two other English sailors. English sailors wore their bellbottoms longer than the French and Spanish. A French sailor on the *Brilliant* spotted them:

> 'Par Dieu, Monsieur!' he called out. 'Ils sont Anglais!' [42]

Brilliant fired a broadside at close range. Hatley was slightly wounded in the head and he and his crew were taken captive. They were disembarked at Paita for overland transportation, six hundred miles down the coastal road to Lima, and Hatley, in pain from the wound to his head, was singled out for rough treatment. A purse containing ninety-six Portuguese *moidores*, money taken from the Portuguese ship off Cape Frio, had been found in his possession. By May 1720, he was back in prison in Lima. Peace had been declared and the colonial authorities wanted to avoid further tensions with Britain so all the English sailors were soon released—except Hatley. He was chained and kept in solitary confinement. He spent over twelve months in irons before the authorities finally decided that George Shelvocke was 'the principal in the piratical story'.

Most of the survivors of *Speedwell* and *Success* arrived back in Britain in the spring/summer of 1722 within a few weeks of each other. William Betagh, Shelvocke's Captain of Marines, who had been captured along with Hatley, was back by October 1721 and became agent for Edward Hughes, the leading owner. Shelvocke himself arrived in London, on 1 August 1722, hoping 'by a genteel donation'[43] to pacify the owners for the loss of the *Speedwell* (in the Pacific) but instead, the owners read aloud a letter from Betagh listing all Shevlocke's misdeeds and Shelvocke was locked up along with twelve of his crew in the 'Woodstreet Counter', a small prison in the heart of the City of London. Next day, Mathew Stewart, his former steward, was arrested at Dover and an account book was found on Stewart's person. In Stewart's handwriting was a list of the proceeds from the capture of a rich Spanish ship in the Gulf of Panama in May 1721 (after Simon was taken prisoner). Shelvocke had made no mention of these proceeds to the owners.

Shelvocke was a crook but a clever crook. He contacted an unnamed brother-in-law who acted as intermediary with two of the owners. Bribes were paid. The two owners pretended to come to a settlement and, since they were parties to the action, 'a sudden stop was made to the prosecution'.[44] With regard to accusations of piracy also levelled against Shelvocke, the problem for the prosecuting authorities was that only Simon Hatley knew what had

---

[42] Betagh (1728) 243
[43] Betagh (1728) 228
[44] *Ibid* 230

happened to the Portuguese ship off Cape Frio and he was still captive in Lima.

George Shelvocke's *A Voyage round the World by way of the Great South Sea* was published in 1726, the year of publication of *Gulliver's Travels*. In it the heroic Shelvocke overcomes all difficulties although handicapped by a mutinous crew and by his surly, incompetent officers, in particular Second Captain Simon Hatley and William Betagh of 'unparalleled wickedness'. On reading Shelvocke's book, William Betagh was moved to publish a reply 'as his (Shelvocke's) pretended narrative is intirely a deception, and his whole conduct an indignity to his country …'.[45] *A Voyage Round the World*, published in 1728, is less well written than Shelvocke's book but it rescues Hatley from the worst of Shelvocke's libels.

Crime does pay, sometimes. Dampier, Clipperton and Selkirk were already dead, Woodes Rogers died in 1732, but Shelvocke lived on until 1742, in his son's house on Lombard Street, ending his days in ease and affluence while his son became Secretary of the General Post Office and a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Of Simon Hatley we know nothing after his return from Lima in 1723 having narrowly escaped hanging or the mines.[46] He 'went immediately for Jamaica, never showing his face to any one of the owners: so that *Shelvocke* imagined there was no witness of consequence to reveal his craft and treachery'.[47]

It is perhaps fitting that the model for the Ancient Mariner should sail off into the sunset avoiding accusations of piracy rather than settle by the fireside with a pair of comfy slippers and a pipe.[48]

---

[45] *Ibid* 'Dedication'
[46] *Ibid* 33
[47] *Ibid* 33
[48] *Bibliography*

AHN: Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid:
NA: National Archives, London
OLS: Oxford Local Studies
ORO: Oxford Record Office
Betagh, William (1728): *A Voyage around the world, being an account of a remarkable enterprise begun in the year 1719*. London: Printed for T. Combes.
Cooke, Edward (1712): *A Voyage to the South Sea and round the World*. London: Printed by H.M. for B. Lintot and R. Gosling.
Crossley, Alan (ed.) (1990): *Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire vol. XII*
Jones, Donald (1992): *Captain Woodes Rogers' Voyage round the World 1708-11*. Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association.
Little, Bryan (1960): *Crusoe's Captain, being the Life of Woodes Rogers*. London: Oldhams Press.
Lloyd, Christopher (1966): *William Dampier*. London: Faber & Faber.
Marshall, Edward (1875): *The Early History of Woodstock Manor*. Oxford: James Parker and Co..
Rogers, Woodes (2004): *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* . Santa Barbara: The Narrative Press.
Shelvocke, George (1726): *A Voyage round the world by way of the Great South Sea*, London: printed for J. Senex.