

PLATE I The card given with each sabre to explain the classical symbolism of the hilt.

Swords of Honour and Glory

by Peter Dale

Lloyds of London is a universally recognized and respected name. Mainly known to the general public as the world's major shipping and marine insurers, its origins go back almost 300 years.

In Restoration London the coffee house was the meeting place for gentlemen of fashion. In 1691, Edward Lloyd moved his coffee house to Lombard Street in the City of London, doubtless to secure the patronage of the wealthy bankers and merchants in the Royal Exchange area.

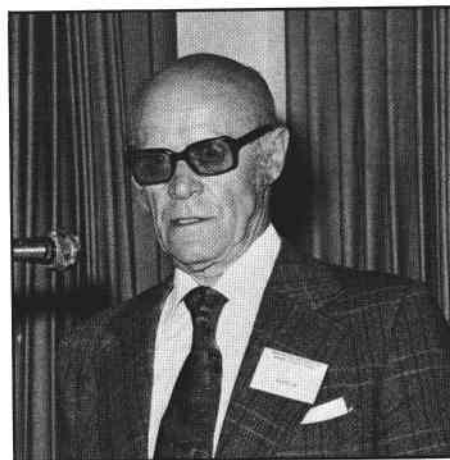
Lloyd was an enterprising man and, by 1696, began publishing *Lloyd's News*, a small, general news sheet with some shipping information. As many of the patrons of Lloyds were interested in marine insurance, *Lloyd's News* became *Lloyd's List* and was given over entirely to shipping intelligence.

As business increased the confined accommodation of a coffee house proved too small and, in 1774, more dignified premises were acquired in the Royal Exchange.

About the same time as this major change, John Julius Angerstein became a member of the Committee of Lloyd's. Angerstein was born in 1735 and came to London from Eastern Europe at an early age to seek his fortune, which he rapidly acquired by virtue of his tremendous ability, drive and personality. He became Chairman of Lloyd's from 1790 to 1796, and, with Sir Francis Baring, welded the group into a powerful corporation which grew in stature and repute. Being of a generous and magnanimous disposition, Sir John (as he then had become) initiated the establishment of large funds for the support of victims of naval engagements on the high seas, brought about by the French wars which commenced in 1793 and continued until Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, a period of 22 years. The monies raised were applied wherever there was need, and by the end of the first fleet action on June 1, 1794, a sum of over \$110,000 had been raised and distributed.

The wars continued, and Angerstein and his committee were very much aware of the need to stimulate patriotic feeling and to encourage the navy in order to protect the British Isles and the merchantmen on whom the country depended for supplies. So it was that the Patriotic Fund was conceived, which during the 22 years of war provided over \$2½ million to be dispensed to all and sundry, subject to their needs.

The Patriotic Fund was founded at a meeting called at Lloyd's Coffee House, Royal Exchange, London, on July 20, 1803. It was decided there that "to animate the efforts of our defense by sea and land it is expedient to raise, by the patriotism of the community at large, a suitable fund for their comfort and relief, for the purposes of assuaging the anguish of their wounds or palliating, in some degree, the more weighty misfortune of the loss of limbs, or alleviating the distress of widows and orphans and granting pecuniary rewards or honorable badges of distinction for successful exertions of value or merit." The "honourable badges of distinction" took



two main forms: presentation sabres, of the type presently to be discussed, and handsome silver vases, which we will discuss later.

In the extremely fashion-conscious late Georgian period, the sabre was an ideal choice, for such curved-bladed swords were the latest requirements for a fashionable officer's armoury, as they were quickly ousting the straight-bladed spadron from its long established popularity.

These swords were regarded as the most ornate and exceptional group ever to be awarded and were specifically designed to excite the admiration of all who beheld them; indeed many were the valiant deeds performed during that stormy period when Britain battled against the mighty fleets of France and Spain to clear the sea lanes and put down all attempts at invasion or reduction of what was the greatest sea power on earth.

Patriotic Fund sabres came in three main values, although all shared a common form of hilt.

Hilts were made of gilt metal and the designs were based on classical themes; the grips were of diamond chequered ivory.

The various components of the hilt signified the following human virtues:

The knuckle-bar, shaped as the club of Hercules, was hoped to inspire suitably Herculean efforts on the part of the owner. Entwined around this club is a serpent, signifying wisdom. National unity was signified by the Roman Fasces, which formed the quillons; the wreath of olive leaves, just above the quillon block, denoted the just reward of a victor; the back strap, which is formed as the skin of the Nemean lion, also implied proud victory over the greatest odds.

Just in case this symbolism was missed by the more hard-fighting but less well educated lieutenants of the period, a card, suitably engraved and illustrated with these classical nuances, was issued with each sword presented (Plate 1).

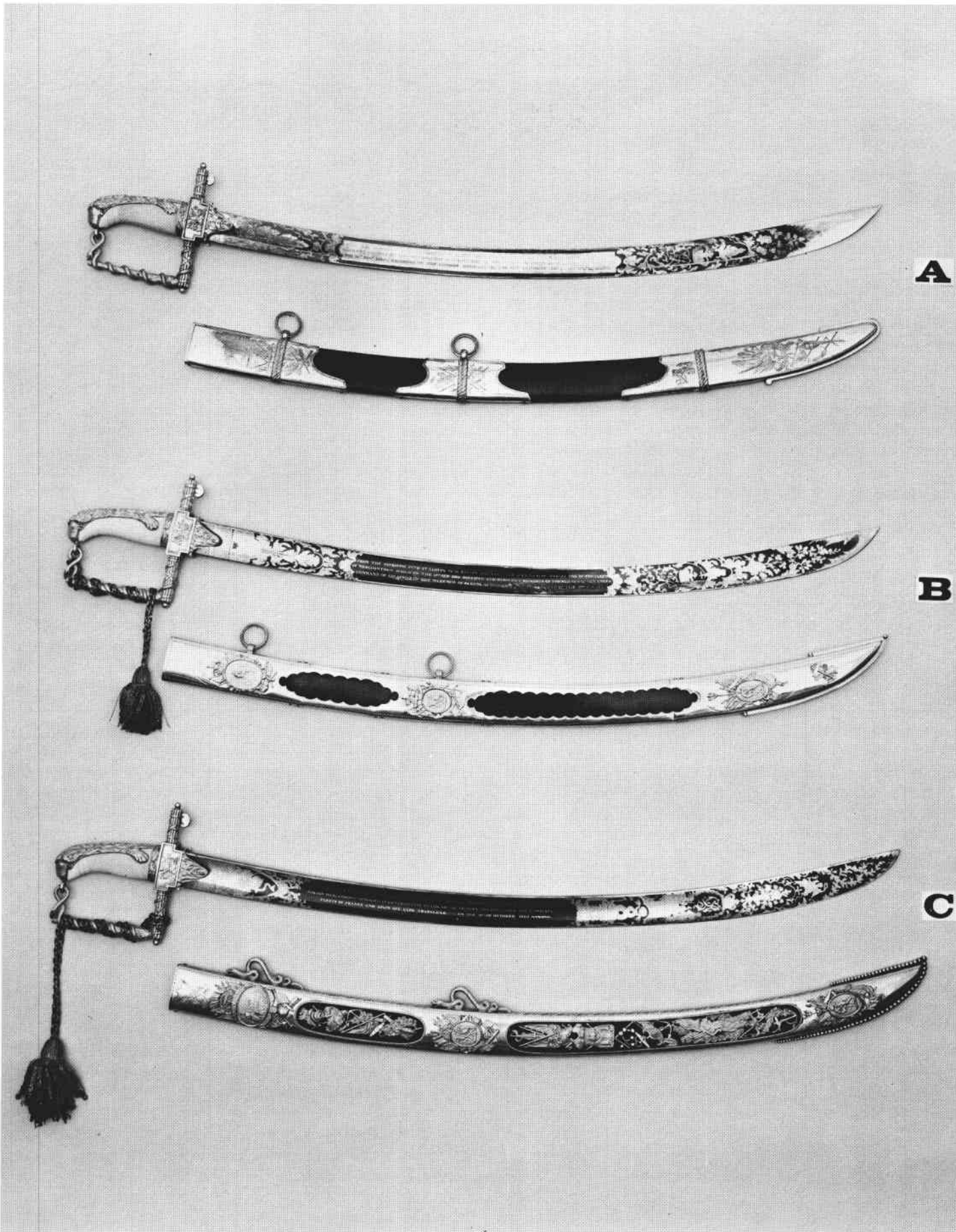


PLATE 2
All three main values of Patriotic Fund sabres. On top the £30 value, in the centre the £50 and at the bottom a Trafalgar sabre. Photograph by courtesy of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.

The gold and blue bullion sword knot wrapped around the hilt is the original. All values of swords appeared to have had knots of the same type but, because of their fragile nature, very few exist today (Plate 2b).

The most elaborate grade was the Trafalgar sword. This was a special variety of the £100 sword awarded to officers who commanded ships at the battle off Cape Trafalgar, 21 October 1805. Then closely followed a sword of £100 value, presented mainly to Captains; then a £50 value sword, intended mainly for presentation to Lieutenants and, lastly, a sword of £30 value usually awarded to midshipment and mates (Plates 2a, b & c).

By looking at the decoration on the blades the differences in value becomes more apparent.

Each sword awarded was duly inscribed and most of the inscriptions can be read by holding the sword horizontal with the cutting edge downwards. However, for some unknown reason a few swords exist which must be held with the cutting edge uppermost for the inscription to be read.

A typical Trafalgar type would bear the following inscription "FROM THE PATRIOTIC FUND AT LLOYDS TO ISRAEL PELLEW ESQ: CAPTN OF H.M.S. CONQUEROR FOR HIS MERITORIOUS SERVICES IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE SIGNAL VICTORY OBTAINED OVER THE COMBINED FLEETS OF FRANCE AND SPAIN OFF CAPE TRAFALGAR ON THE 21st OCTOBER, 1805." (Plate 2c) All of the Trafalgar swords had very similar wording, the only changes being the name of the recipient and his ship.

In the centre of Plate 2 is a sword of £50 type: most of this value were awarded to Lieutenants either in the Royal Navy or the Royal Marines. The inscription on such a blade would read "FROM THE PATRIOTIC FUND AT LLOYDS TO LT. GEO. BEATTY OF THE ROYAL MARINES WHO ON THE 16th NOVEMBER 1803 WITH A DETACHMENT OF THAT CORPS UNDER HIS COMMAND (IN) THE MOST GALLANT MANNER CARRIED AND DESTROYED FORT DUNKIRK IN THE BAY OF ST. ANNE, MARTINIQUE, RECORDED IN THE LONDON GAZETTE 28th JANUARY, 1804".

Plate 2a shows a blade of £30 value and here, a completely different type of inscription can be seen. On Trafalgar, £100 and £50 swords the inscription appears in small, gold Roman capital letters on a blued ground; however, on most £30 swords the inscription is treated as here, small gold Roman letters on a stippled gilt background. This does not make the details so easily read. The inscription on this blade reads "FROM THE PATRIOTIC FUND AT LLOYDS TO MR. GEO. C. LAMB MIDSHIPMAN OF H.M.S. FRANCHISE FOR HIS GALLANT & SPIRITED CONDUCT ON THE BOARDING AND CARRYING BY THE BOATS OF THAT SHIP THE SPANISH ARMED BRIG RAPOSA FROM UNDER THE FIRE OF THE BATTERIES AND SHIPS OF THE ENEMY IN THE BAY OF CAMPEACHY ON THE 6th JANUARY 1806 AS RECORDED IN THE LONDON GAZETTE OF 15th APRIL".

All the Trafalgar and £100 swords have a small feature not found on swords of lesser values. That is, the recipient's initials etched within a multi-rayed star.

The very handsome effect created by this gilt and blued decoration is now sadly a lost art, one of many! Like so many ancient processes, it was never completely recorded on paper but simply handed down by word of mouth and example, so today we can only make logical guesses as to how it was carried out.

The blade would come into the decorator's hands with a sharpened edge and a finely polished surface. First the etched decoration would be carried out. The blade would be covered or "stopped" in an acid-proof wax and the main decorative motifs would be scratched, with a needle-like tool, through this covering, so exposing the bare steel beneath. The blade would then be washed over with dilute nitric acid which would bite or etch the scratched designs into the steel. The wax-covered parts would be unaffected by the acid and retain their polished steel finish. The acid would then be washed off with water, the wax stopping removed and the first stage, a blade with etched only decoration, completed.

The next stage would be the gilding. The areas to be gilt would be painted with a solution of sulphate of copper, applied to the blade by a fine brush. An amalgam of gold would then be prepared by mixing fine gold powder with heated mercury. This amalgam would be dabbed over the areas to be gilt by using a piece of crepe. The gold amalgam would only adhere to the areas treated with the sulphate of copper solution, where it takes on a silvery colour. The blade is then blued over a charcoal fire, which effects two purposes at the same time, for the heat, necessary to blue the steel, evaporates the mercury part of the amalgam and leaves only the gold part bonded to the surface of the blade. The silvery colour of the gold does not take on a gold appearance until the blade is carefully polished with putty powder and burnished. Any part of the blade required to retain its bright steel finish would be "stopped" by a coat of shellac before firing, the shellac would be removed after the firing process uncovering the bright steel beneath. The points of a number of sword of honour blades were sometimes left with a bright steel finish.

The differences in £100, £50 and £30 values are far more easily illustrated by the scabbards. Plate 2c shows a Trafalgar scabbard, a truly handsome example of the sword-cutlers art.

The basic body is made of wood but this is almost completely enclosed within a gilt metal mounting. At the top is a large oval medallion, showing the seated figure of Britannia holding a victor's laurel and gazing out over the assembled fleets. Above, on a curved panel, appears the name of the recipient's ship, in this case CONQUEROR, and below the legend, NELSON, TRAFALGAR, 21st OCTOBER 1805. Applied to other parts of the scabbard are small oval panels depicting Hercules in the execution of some of his labours. Favourites appear to be: Hercules struggle with the Nemean lion; his fight with the multi-headed Hydra and the taming of the three-headed dog-serpent, Cerberus.

The two oval panels on the back and front of the scabbard are covered in black velvet and are further decorated by applied gilt motifs of naval and classical nature. The two hangers take the form of serpents and the trail of the chape is of beaded form.

The cutlers details—Richard Teed, Sword Cutler, Lancaster Court, Strand, are engraved in Roman capital letters around

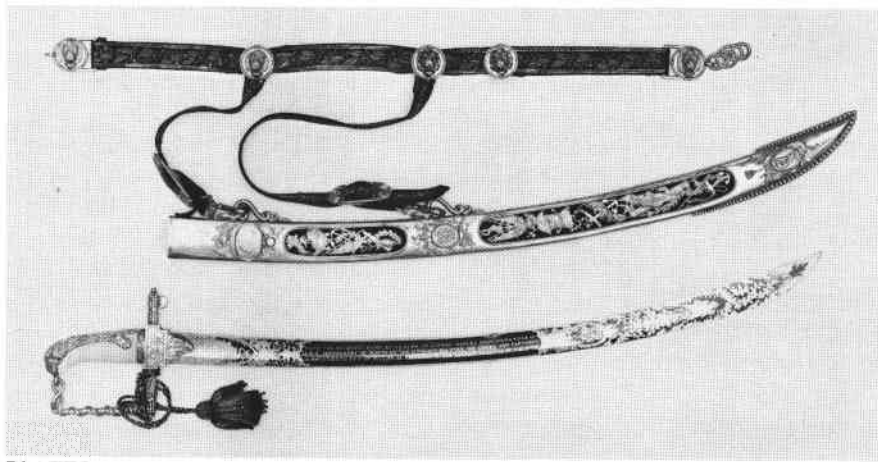


PLATE 3

Patriotic Fund sabre of £100 value. Presented to Captain Conway Shipley, Commander of H.M.S. *Hippomenes* for the capture of the French frigate *L'Egyptienne*, 27th March, 1804, with its rare original belt.

the thickness of metal at the mouth of the scabbard.

In the centre of Plate 2 is a typical £50 value scabbard. Again the basic scabbard body is of wood also enclosed within a gilt mounting, but a mounting of a less ornate form than previously. The three main mounts, locket mid-mount and chape are decorated with small ovals enclosing Herculean labours, each oval surrounded by an elaborate trophy of arms. Each main mount is joined by a gilt strip which runs along the edge of the scabbard top and bottom. All of the gilt mounts are joined to the wooden body by small screws, a rather ugly method and one that has resulted in a number of mount pieces being lost. The two ovals, front and back, are now covered in polished shagreen and lack the applied gilt motifs, as found on the Trafalgar scabbard. Also different are the hangers, which now take the form of cabled rings instead of serpents, as previously.

On the top of Plate 2 the £30 value scabbard is a much less impressive item. The scabbard body of wood covered in polished shagreen and the three mounts are quite separate. They are of gilt metal and engraved with purely naval motifs, without reference to Herculean or any other classical themes. Each mount is encircled by two cabled bands, those on the top two mounts pierced to take the plain hanging rings. On £30 scabbards and on most £50, the cutler's details appear in the normal place, engraved within a cartouche on the top, rear of the scabbard. Although less ornate than its more expensive cousins, the £30 is far more sought after by collectors, as so few were awarded in comparison to £50 and £100 values.

Plate 3 shows the details of a £100 value sword and scabbard together with the extremely rare belt for such a sword. The belt is of blue leather, faced with blue velvet and decorated with gold bullion oak leaves and acorns. The large, circular gilt clasp depicts Hercules kneeling, armed with a spear and bearing a circular shield emblazoned with the Union flag, attacking the three-headed dog-serpent, Cerberus. Below is the legend "PATRIOTIC FUND, 1803" (Plate 4). The mounts, which support the two hanging straps, are modelled as fine lion masks. The survival rate of these belts is very low; by their extremely fragile nature, far fewer belts have survived than swords to go with them. Belts for the £50 and £30 were not so elaborate as that described above: instead of the large, circular

waist clasp, belts of lesser swords were fastened by "S"-shaped snake clasps.

The cases were made of mahogany and lined inside with blue velvet. The sword, knot and belt all fitted snugly into partitions to hold them steady. A printed card, giving the details of Richard Teed, the maker, was pasted inside the lid of the case.

Little is known of Richard Teed until his inclusion in Holden's London Directory for 1799. Here he is entered as "Richard Teed, Jeweller, 3, Lancaster Court, Strand." In 1800 he is described as a "jeweller and dealer in antiquities."

His connection with the Patriotic Fund began with the founding of the Fund in 1803. Early swords were engraved "R. Teed, Lancaster Court, Strand." A little later this legend was made more impressive—"Richard Teed, Dress sword maker to the Patriotic Fund, Lancaster Court, Strand."

In Holden's Directory of 1811, Teed is still listed as "sword maker to the Patriotic Fund," although, by now, the Fund had ceased to reward officers with a dress sword.

It is very doubtful whether Teed actually made these swords, although he does sign himself "maker." He probably acted as an agent for the Fund and had the swords made up by established London cutlers. He may have had a workshop to assemble them but, more likely, received them already finished from his suppliers. His name also appears on a few other presentation swords of the period, all rather similar to the Fund sabres in style.

Teed was probably born in the English County of Devon. The name Teed, an unusual surname, is recorded in the town of Ottery St. Mary, in that county. Teed must have moved to London as a youngish man for, in 1785, in the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, he is recorded as having married Sarah Jenkins of St. Petrox parish in the Devon city of Exeter.

Richard Teed died in 1816 and left all his personal estates and effects, money in the Funds, leasehold houses, shares in canals, mines, bridges, fire companies and wheresoever, to his wife, Sarah.

From his will it would appear that Teed, like many other sword and gun makers, had done very well out of supplying the tools of war. By dying in 1816, a year after the war had ended, he did not, unlike his contemporaries, suffer a severe reduction



PLATE 4
Gilt copper waist-belt clasp from the belt of a Trafalgar £100 sabre. The design shows Hercules spearing the three-headed dog-serpent Cerberus.

in income and personal fortune by the ending of this lucrative trade.

The number of swords awarded by the Fund is uncertain but the figures given can serve as an approximate guide.

For the Battle off Cape Trafalgar, 21st October, 1805 — 29 swords were awarded. £100 value 41 swords, £50 value 89 swords and £30 value 17 swords appear as being awarded in Lloyd's records.

In May, 1809, the Patriotic Fund decided to cease awarding swords as a reward for deeds of valour. However, officers, who after this date received grants of money, no doubt would have preferred a sword. Therefore, they went to Teed, who made them up a suitable Patriotic Fund sabre from parts remaining in stock. These post-1809 sabres are quite distinctive, as often parts of different values were put together to make up a "mongrel" sabre. Teed, of course, knowing that there was little point ordering new components from his suppliers, used up all the existing components to hand, sometimes making a rather ugly freak in the process. The Portsmouth Royal Naval Museum has recently acquired a sword of £50 value awarded to Lt. Benjamin Baynton for an action in 1810. It certainly can be described as a "mongrel," for it includes components from £30, £50 and £100 swords.

Some officers were given the choice, either a sword or an extremely handsome silver vase presented by the Fund (Plate 5). These vases were superb examples of the silversmith's art and were designed by the great artist John Flaxman and made, usually, by Digby Scott and Benjamin Smith, of the London firm of Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, the Royal goldsmiths. This "honorary plate," like the swords came in different values. The main values awarded were £50 and £100; however, vases valued at well over £100 were awarded to high ranking officers. Rear Admiral Sir Richard Strachan was awarded a vase, value £300, for his heroic achievements off Ferrol in November, 1805. Vice-Admiral Collingwood, who took over the command at Trafalgar upon the death of Nelson, was awarded a vase valued at £500—a colossal amount in its day. Nelson was awarded a vase of similar value but, of course, it was presented to his widow, Lady Viscountess Nelson. However, this vase was not completed until four years after the resolution and when it was finished the cost had rocketed to £650—the inflation of



PLATE 5
Silver vase presented by the Patriotic Fund to some officers who took part in the Battle off Cape Trafalgar, 21st October, 1805.

war! At the other end of the financial scale a number of pieces of plate of more modest value were awarded. A silver tankard of £30 value was awarded to Mr. William Nesbitt, who commanded the *Queen Charlotte*, a Berwick smack, for his gallant defense against a French privateer of much superior force, in which action he was severely wounded. Another tankard, of similar value, was awarded to a Mr. Tracey, secret ary to Commodore Hood, for his gallant action in cutting out a French corvette, close under Fort Edward in Martinique, in 1804 he again was wounded. However, this incident goes to prove that sometimes the sword is mightier than the pen!

Having taken a brief look at some naval types of the period, a recipient of a sword of honour could be worth closer examination. It is difficult, in these days of instant communication, to visualize the position of a frigate captain during the early 19th century. Usually roaming the seas alone, like a magnificently efficient and beautiful bird of prey, the captain and crew were constantly on the lookout for enemy ships. When sighted no radio message, to high authority at base, could ease the captain's decision as to attack or not. He was virtually king of a small floating island kingdom and his decision alone would decide the fate of himself, his officers, his crew and indeed his ship. Frigates, commanded by a brave, skilled captain and manned by a well-trained and disciplined crew could and would take on vessels of much greater weight of guns, indeed, one frigate would often take on a number of enemy vessels and, because of the daring of the captain and disciplined bravery of the crew, would often turn the near impossible odds and claim a gallant victory. News of such small actions or indeed, great fleet actions, often took weeks, sometimes months, to trickle back to the Admiralty in London and then to be announced in the *London Gazette* for the people of England to rejoice or mourn, depending on the outcome.

Admiral Sir Israel Pellew, brother of Viscount Exmouth, was just such a man. He was born in 1758 and entered the Royal Navy in 1771, as a mere youth aged 13 years. He served in the American War, 1778-79, and was promoted to Lieutenant in 1779. In 1783 he commanded the cutter *Resolution*, of 12 guns and 75 men, and captured, after an action of an hour and a half, the *Flushing*, a Dutch privateer, of 14 guns and 68 men, one of whom was killed and six wounded. He was promoted to the

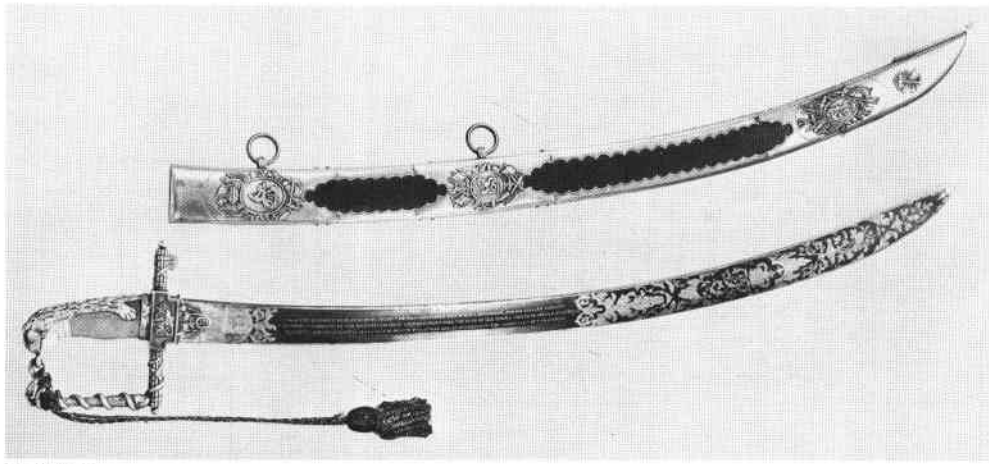


PLATE 6
Patriotic Fund sabre of £50 value. Presented to Lt. Sir William Parker of H.M.S. *Renommee* for an action with the Spanish schooner *Giganta*, 4th May, 1806.

rank of Commander in 1790. He served as a volunteer, under his brother, on board the *Nymph*, at the capture of *La Cleopatra*, the first classic frigate action of the war, in consequence of which he was promoted to the rank of Post-Captain, June 25, 1793, seven days after the action.

In the spring of 1795 he removed to the frigate *Amphion* on the Newfoundland station. In September, 1796, the *Amphion's* fore magazine caught fire and exploded, while she was refitting at Plymouth. There were at least 300 people, of both sexes, including visitors, on board at the time; less than 40 were saved and many of those were severely injured. Pellew himself suffered severe wounds to his head and chest.

Captain Pellew then removed to the frigate *Cleopatra*, stationed in the English Channel, where he captured *L'Emilie*, French privateer of 18 guns and 110 men.

In the spring of 1804, he was appointed to the *Conqueror*, 74 guns, stationed in the Channel. Later in 1804, he joined the Mediterranean fleet under Lord Nelson, and sailed with that fleet to the West Indies in pursuit of the combined squadrons of France and Spain. The *Conqueror* was present at Trafalgar in 1805 and had 3 men killed and 9 wounded. Pellew was presented with the Sword of Honour we have already seen.

Like so many officers, after Trafalgar, when Britain proved, absolutely, her superiority of the seas, his career lacked the desperate action previously encountered. He rose steadily in the list of sea officers and was finally appointed Admiral in 1830. He died at Plymouth in 1832.

You may well wonder what kind of effort would merit recommendation for a Sword of Honour. Let me quote a few examples:

Lt. William Coombe, R.N., "For his part in the capture of the French Corvette *Lynx*, 21 January 1807." What did he really do? His captain, commander of *HMS Galatea*, cruising off Caracas on the Spanish Main, was unable to bring his frigate to bear upon the French corvette which was attempting to reach Caracas with dispatches. It was decided to dispatch six of the ship's boats to overhaul the *Lynx* (161 crew), and Lt. Coombe in the 5th boat was placed in charge. By the time the boats, carrying a total of about 70 officers, crew and marines, caught up with the Frenchman, they had rowed 40 miles, from 2 to 10 p.m., with fighting still to be done. Coombe lost one

Lieutenant and 8 men killed, had 19 wounded, including himself and three other officers. The French lost 1 officer, 1 men killed, had 19 wounded, and surrendered their ship. Coombe joined the navy as a Midshipman at age 12, and was a number of sea battles, including Trafalgar where he was made a Lieutenant. Blind in one eye, and with a leg off at the knee, he was still able to join the action and was killed off Guadaloupe 28 November 1808, by a 28 pounder shot in the left side. His sword was awarded posthumously.

Lt. Michael Fitton, R.N., of *HMS Pitt*, "For his gallantry and superior professional abilities in the capture of the French schooner *La Superbe* off Cape Maize 26 October 1806." The *Pitt* carried ten 18 pounder carronades and two 6 pounder guns. The *Superbe* had 14 guns and was the most formidable French privateer in the West Indies. After a long chase, with spirited action, lasting three days, with every officer and man often laboring at the sweeps, the privateer was driven ashore and abandoned by its crew. Papers on board showed Capt. Diron as Master—he had captured and looted many ships amounting to nearly a million dollars. The *Superbe* was towed off the beach and taken to Port Royal. Most of the 94 crew escaped. The *Pitt's* crew was 54 men and boys. Fitton was recommended for promotion by Rear Admiral Dacres who was transferred and superseded by a new commander. The Admiralty allotted Fitton a ship to command, but not enough money for the purchase. Fitton made up over £400 from his own pocket, but never did get his promotion, died Lieutenant.

Lt. James Oliver, R.N., of *HMS Baccante*, "For his noble conduct in gallantly attacking a fort on the Island of Cuba which with the number of men it contained ought to have maintained its position against 50 times the number of opponents, 5 April 1805." This gallant exploit was accomplished by two boats of the *Baccante* (22 guns) with 3 men under command of Lt. Oliver. It was reported that three French privateers were lying in the harbour of Mariel, Havana and the boats were sent to capture or destroy them. The harbour was defended by a forty foot round tower mounting three 24 pounders and loopholed for musketry, which it was necessary to capture before attacking the ships. On the first boat arriving near shore, the tower opened fire, wounding on

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Without waiting for the other boat, and leaving three men in his boat, Lt. Oliver, with the remaining 13, by means of a ladder scaled and carried the tower without further loss. Leaving the tower in charge of a sergeant and three marines, Oliver, now joined by the second crew, entered the harbour to search for privateers, but found they had sailed the day before. He therefore made prizes of two schooners laden with sugar, and brought them out in spite of opposition from troops and militia. This kind of task is typical of what young men between the ages of 19 and 25 were expected to do in order to qualify for an Award of Honour: the three examples have been taken at random, but perhaps explain my title, *Swords of Honour and the Navy*. Today, when you are in London, you may visit the great gallery on Lime Street, where guides will escort you around the galleries, and you may visit the busy scene of underwriters at their stands, and if you so desire, you may also enter the

hallowed Nelson Room, wherein there is a fabulous display of trophies, paintings, medals, jewels, swords, and artifacts, well displayed and of course including a few of the Patriotic Fund presentation swords of the pattern we have been discussing.

I should like to express my gratitude to Messrs. T. Atkins and A.J. Carter of Lloyd's of London for their assistance in supplying information for this presentation, and to our fellow member Val Forgett for his kind assistance, and especially for bringing his specimen of the Lloyd's Patriotic Fund sword to this meeting, so that you may see one "in the flesh," as it were.

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