



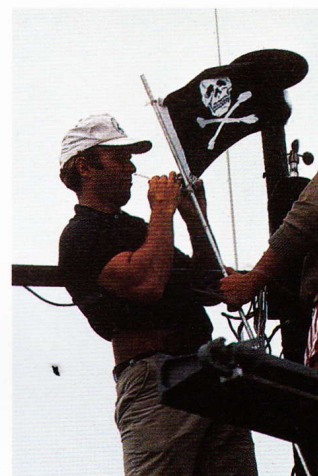
# Quest for a Pirate

# QUEST FOR A PIRATE

**Q**n a stormy night in April 1717 a small pirate flotilla under the command of Captain Samuel Bellamy lost a last, desperate, battle with the elements. Bellamy, his flagship the *Whydah*, and priceless treasure looted from more than fifty ships, were lost in the shifting sands off Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

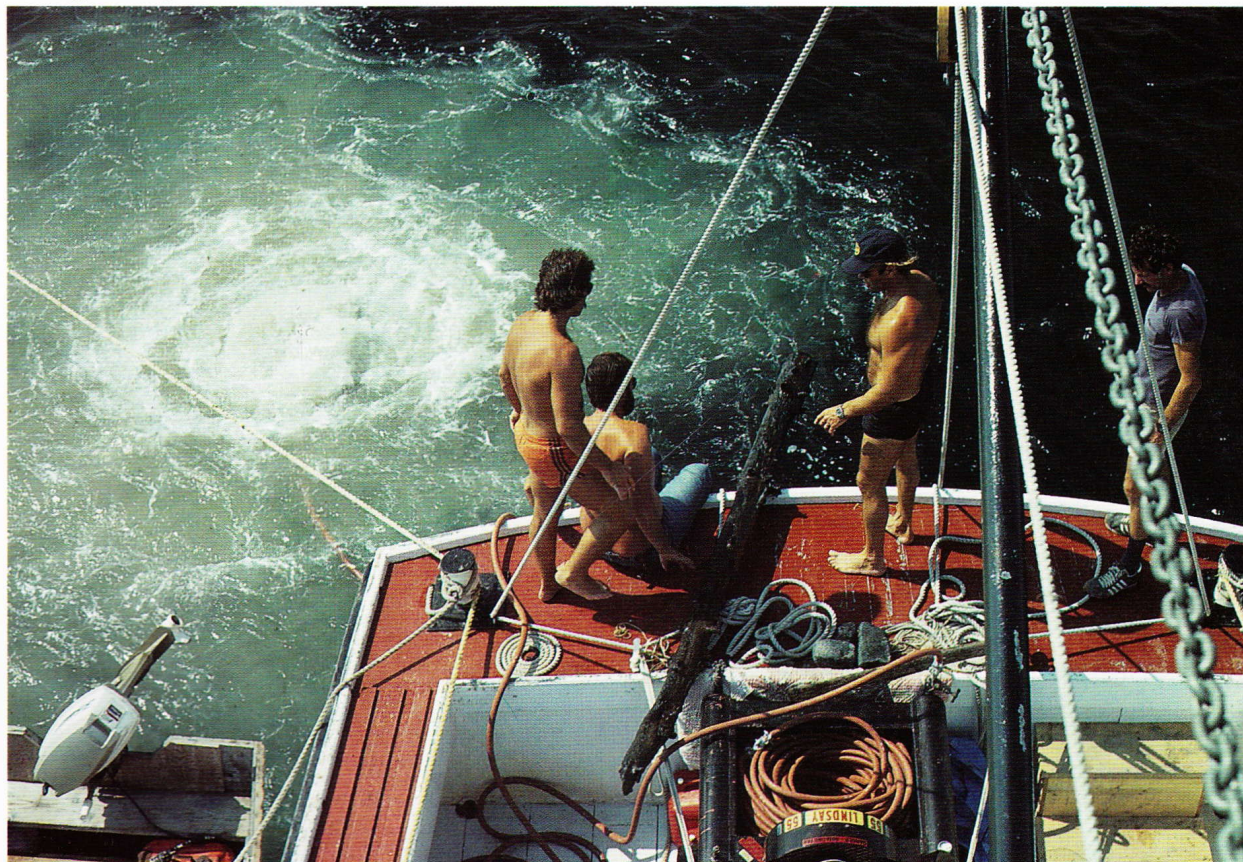
The story of 'Black Sam' Bellamy, the great consuming storm of April 1717, and the treasure onboard the *Whydah* was handed down through Cape Cod folklore, the passing of the centuries confusing fact and fiction. The story seemed real enough, however, to young Barry Clifford growing up on the Cape in the 1950s and 60s. As Barry matured so did his obsession with Bellamy and the *Whydah*, so much so, that by the early 1980s he was involved in a full-time search for the lost treasure. His first success came with the discovery of coins, whose dates matched the correct period, but it took another fifteen months of searching before he found the conclusive evidence, which proved beyond doubt that he had located the wreck-site of Bellamy's *Whydah*.

The story of Bellamy, the *Whydah* and Barry Clifford is a tale of two men separated by almost three centuries yet united by a common obsession - the quest for riches beyond belief.



Barry Clifford hoists the Jolly Roger

Searching for the *Whydah*





Just some of the treasure recovered from the *Whydah*



A dozen years, and more than 100,000 artefacts later, work is still underway in recovering the treasure of the *Whydah*. The riches recovered to date add up to the world's only authenticated pirate treasure. Almost 280 years after the sinking of the *Whydah*, the moment has come for the wider world to see and appreciate the precious loot plundered during the 'Golden Age' of piracy. It is time to reveal the reality lurking behind the pirates of our imagination.

Hilt from a pirate's sword



# SAM BELLAMY - THE PIRATE PRINCE

**T**he origins of Sam Bellamy are shrouded in the mists of time. According to the legends preserved by the old-timers on Cape Cod, Bellamy was a young English sailor who arrived in the New World colony seeking fame and fortune. Whydah Project historians believe that Bellamy originated from Devonshire, south-west England. If they are correct, then it is possible that his family may have suffered as a result of Monmouth's failed rebellion of 1685, or have held sympathies for James II (VII of Scotland), who was eventually overthrown in 1689. Alternatively, he may simply have come from one of those families of farm labourers that were increasingly displaced from the land as Commons enclosure, crop rotation and mechanisation rolled steadily forward with the progress of the Agricultural Revolution.

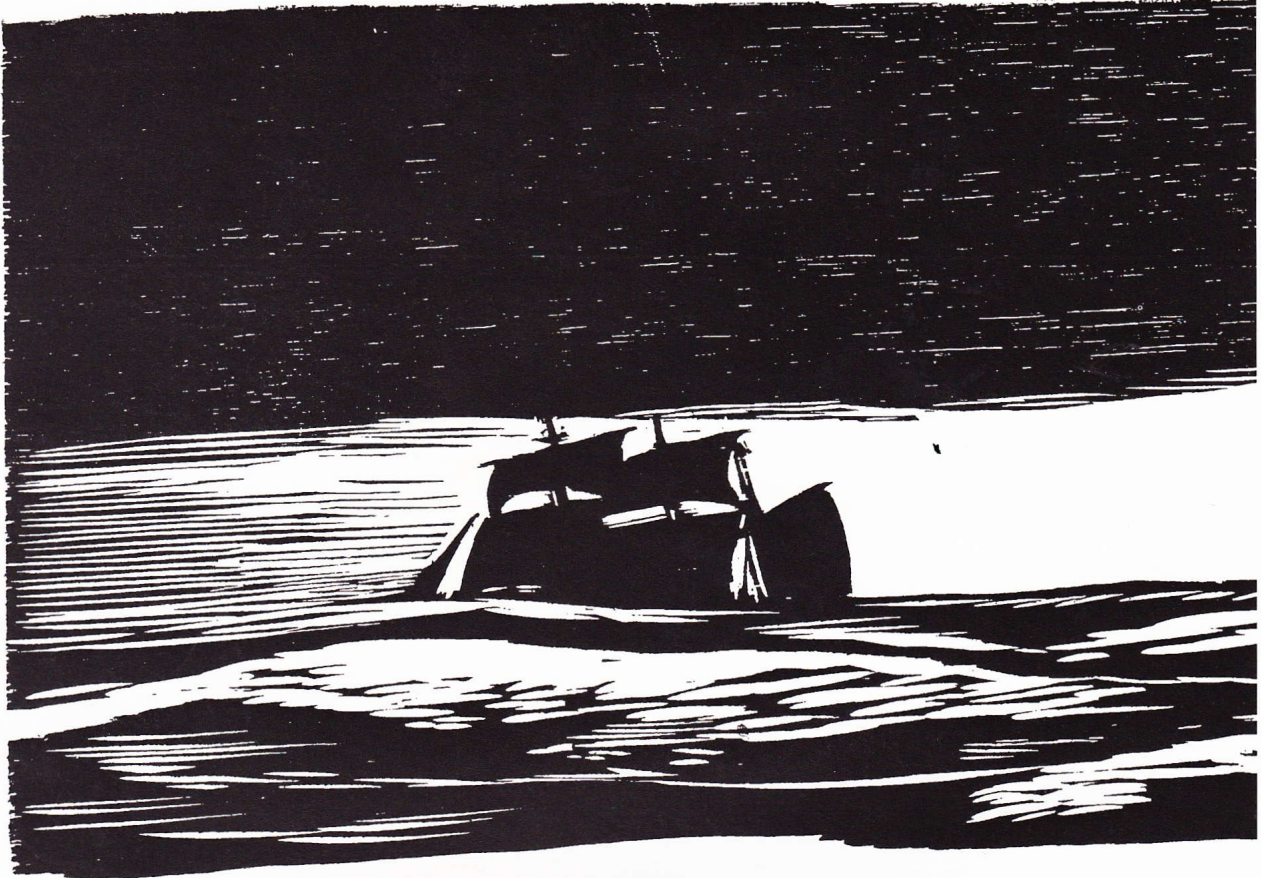
Whatever Bellamy's antecedents, he was on Cape Cod in 1715. That summer, a hurricane had led to the sinking of a dozen Spanish treasure galleons off the coast of Florida. What followed was something of a goldrush as adventurers headed for Florida to 'get rich quick' on the easy pickings. Bellamy was one of those adventurers. He persuaded local goldsmith Palgrave Williams to bear the cost of fitting out a vessel and they left New England behind them as they set sail for southern waters.



Artist's impression of  
Black Bellamy



The dream of instant wealth proved to be an illusion. Determined not to return to New England empty-handed, Bellamy and Williams, by early 1716, had taken the relatively small step of "going on the account" - of turning to piracy. In the course of just fifteen months, the Bellamy/Williams gang captured more than 50 ships, including the recently commissioned *Whydah*, a 100-foot, three-masted galley. The vessel's name, after a natural harbour on the Guinea coast of west Africa, betrayed her business - the slave trade. Bellamy pounced on the galley as she headed for England with a load of ivory, indigo, sugar and thousands of coins, having disposed of her human cargo in the slave markets of the Caribbean.



The three-masted galley *Whydah*

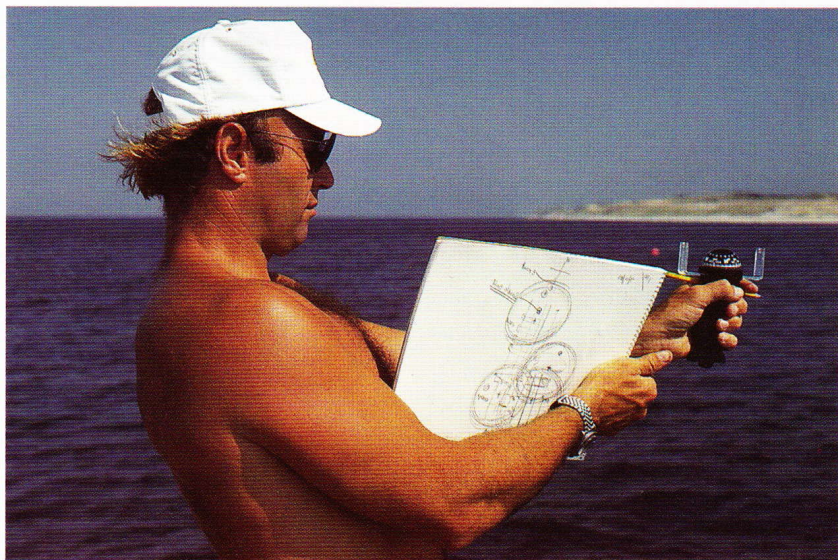
Late April of 1717 found Bellamy and Williams back in northern waters with a fleet of five ships. Williams, in one of the vessels, put into port at Block Island to visit relatives, while Bellamy aboard the *Whydah* continued towards Cape Cod with the other four ships. It is not known for certain what drew Bellamy back to Cape Cod but folklore tells of a romance with a local girl, Maria Hallet. Whatever it was that lured him north, it proved to be a siren song. The pirate flotilla was struck by a ferocious storm, complete with blinding rain, 70 mph winds and crashing waves rising as high as 40 feet. Bellamy fought the elements like a man possessed but despite his frenzied efforts the *Whydah* ran hard aground and breaker after breaker pummelled the helpless ship until she capsized and broke her back. Of the other ships in the little fleet, the *Mary Anne* was run aground while the *Fisher* and the *Anne* survived but were severely damaged.

Only nine men in total from the two doomed ships survived the maelstrom, just two from the crew of 146 that served on the *Whydah*. Even then their ordeal

was not over as eight of the nine were brought to trial in Boston by Massachusetts colonial authorities determined to inflict harsh punishment on those responsible for the scourge of piracy. Six of the seven survivors from the *Mary Anne* were judged pirates and were hanged. The seventh man, Thomas South, and *Whydah* survivor Thomas Davis, a Welsh carpenter, were deemed pressed men, sailors with special skills whom the pirates had forced to join them. Davis' trial testimony provides a graphic account of how Bellamy and the *Whydah* met their end. The ninth man has disappeared into the mists of time. He was John Julian, a young native Indian boy who knew the coastal waters well and was forced to act as pilot on board the *Whydah*. It is believed that he may have survived the wreck only to be sold into a life of slavery.

Almost immediately, the Governor of Massachusetts sent Captain Cyprian Southack to the wreck site to report on whether or not a salvage operation was possible. The lack of modern equipment, the cold and continuing bad weather made salvage impossible. The 'mooncussers', the wreck scavengers of Cape Cod, roamed the beach, however, removing anything of value washed ashore. Within two weeks the constantly moving ocean floor around the Cape had buried the *Whydah* from sight. The death of a ship had given birth to a legend.

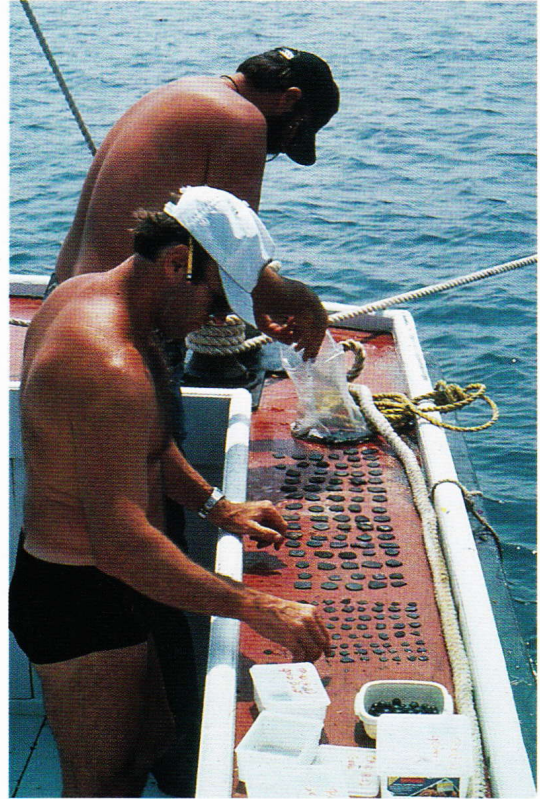
## THE TREASURE HUNTER



Clifford checking Southack's map references

**B**arry Clifford grew up on Cape Cod in the 1950s and 60s, spending much of his time hunting and fishing in the woods and marshes that surrounded his home town of Brewster. It was there that he became spellbound by the magical tales about the *Whydah* weaved by his Uncle Bill, a renowned Cape Cod worthy and storyteller. Others on Cape Cod poured scorn on such stories, arguing that the treasure had never existed, that it had been looted by locals or carted off by Cyprian Southack shortly after the wreck. Even Barry's father doubted that great riches were waiting to be found on the seabed but young Clifford found his Uncle Bill's retort, "gold don't float", convincing.

Sorting out coins



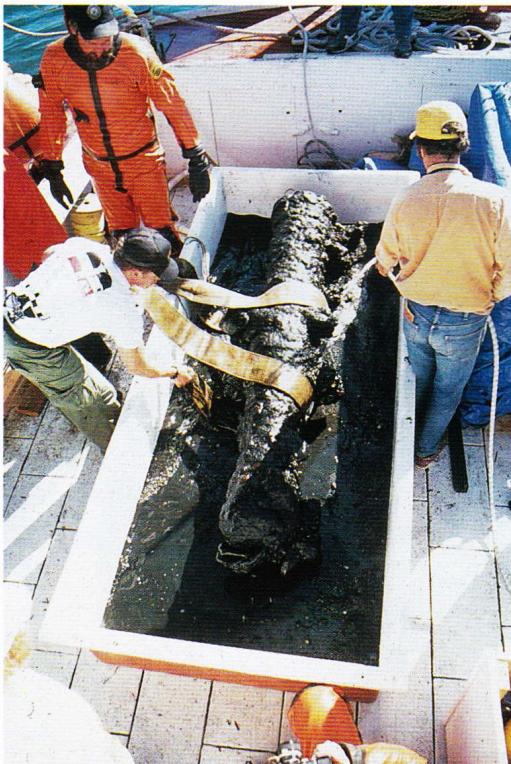
Diving for sunken treasure



One night in the mid-60s, after his last high school American football match, Clifford and a group of his team mates ended up on the beach at Wellfleet. As a perfectly formed moon illuminated the ocean with an eerie glow, Clifford vowed before his fellow warriors:

*"There's a shipwreck loaded with gold out there, and I'm going to find it."*

A cannon from the *Whydah*



Clifford would fulfil his vow but finding the *Whydah* would take a lot more than a moonbeam and a teenager's wishful thinking.

Following high school, Barry moved west and graduated in physical education from the Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado in 1969. For a while the *Whydah* took second place as he got on with life - marrying, starting a family, divorcing, returning to Cape Cod, remarrying, and teaching high school. Eventually, treasure fever began to burn again.

Gold - coins, ingots and jewellery



The 1970s were spent poring over old charts and accounts, particularly those of Cyprian Southack. By amassing this information, Clifford was able to roughly estimate the position where the *Whydah* went down. In 1982 the intensive search began in earnest. At first it was frustrating and the financial and personal costs were high. By 19 July 1983 Barry Clifford was literally down to his last dollar, and the final tank of fuel for his boat. Weather conditions were reminiscent of those on that fateful night in 1717 when the *Whydah* was lost, and perhaps Barry subconsciously took that as an omen when he allowed himself to be persuaded by a visiting camera crew to take out his boat on one last sweep. Excitement broke out on the recovery vessel when the divers discovered an antique cannon. Back on deck a piece of 'concretion' from the cannon was eagerly examined and as the compound of sand, salt and time crumbled away a streak of lightening illuminated a blackened silver coin - a 'piece of eight' dated 1684.



Hoisting another concretion on board

Within a matter of days more than 3,000 coins were recovered, the date on the coins indicating that they could indeed have come from the wreck of the *Whydah*. Ultimate confirmation had to wait until 1985, however, by which time over 7,000 coins, gold bars, jewellery and weapons had been recovered. In September divers recovered an encrusted ship's bell. As the covering of sand, corroded iron and dried salt was painstakingly removed it teasingly revealed the date "1716". Excitement grew to fever pitch as delicate cleaning revealed the full legend:

"THE • WHYDAH • GALLY • 1716"

This discovery confirmed that Clifford's quest, his boyhood obsession, had succeeded. He had found Sam Bellamy's *Whydah*.

Bell from the *Whydah*



# THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY - MEN ON THE EDGE

**S**am Bellamy's relatively brief career as a pirate falls into what has come to be known as the 'Golden Age' of piracy. Why were the years from about 1680 to 1730, and in particular the decade 1715-1725, marked by an unprecedented outbreak of widespread piracy throughout the Caribbean, and along the coast of colonial North America? Depositions taken from survivors from Bellamy's fleet provide an insight into the people who crewed pirate ships. The answer lies not only in the New World but in developments that were taking place in Britain and Europe.

Refugees from Monmouth's unsuccessful revolt of 1685 are known to have sought better times in the Caribbean as did some of the many thousands of Jacobites who followed King James II (and VII of Scotland) into lasting exile in 1691, following the defeat of his army in Ireland and the signing of the Treaty of Limerick. The majority of these 'Wild Geese' were Irish but their ranks also included Scottish supporters of the Stuart cause. Most of them sought service in the armies of France and, to a lesser extent, Spain. Some of the more adventurous sought commissions from the monarchs of France and Spain to



James II (and VII of Scotland) led his Jacobite followers into exile: Portrait by Sir Peter Lely

scour the seas as privateers. Many of the most prominent privateering captains of the late seventeenth century were Irish, including Richard Bobbington, John Hoar, the Walsh family, James Kelly and Captain Nathaniel Grubbin (who led an attempted invasion of the British colony of Jamaica in 1693).

The Stuart cause had become embroiled in a wider European dynastic dispute, the War of the Spanish Succession, which was eventually settled by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. Under the Treaty, France agreed to limit the number of Jacobite exiles in her military service and to revoke privateering commissions. The Irish and Scots privateers in French service had been sailing close to the wind of international legality and following the revoking of their commissions the step to "going on the account" was a very small one to take. The exiled Jacobite ranks swelled in numbers following 1715, and 1719, as yet more adherents to the cause of the White Rose fled Scotland following failed uprisings. Pirate captains with Jacobite sympathies included Richard Holland, Edward England, Howell Davis and Bart Roberts.



White sailors and black slaves lived on virtually the same lower rungs of society

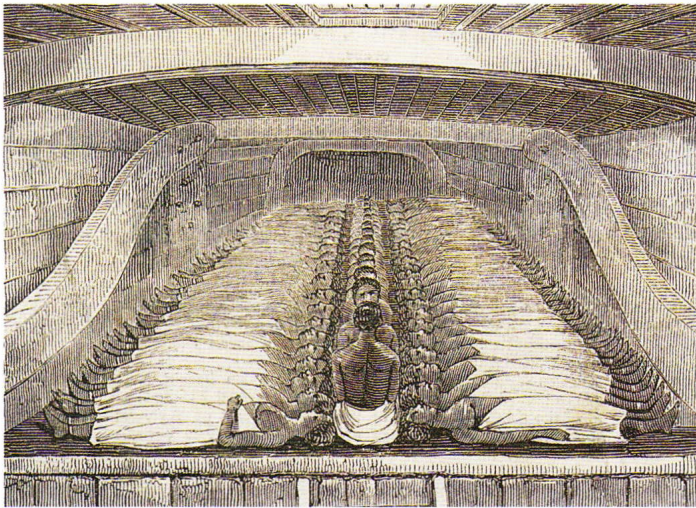
Pirates were also drawn from the ranks of merchant seamen denied legitimate work due to a depression in world trade, and from farm labourers driven from the land by the relentless march of enclosure, rotation and mechanisation during the early stages of the British Agricultural Revolution. If Sam Bellamy did originate from the south west of England, then his move to Massachusetts may have been motivated by such circumstances. Finally, there were significant numbers of black men serving among pirate crews (see **Black Men Under a Black Flag**), who preferred the life of a pirate to that of a slave on a colonial plantation.

While dynastic strife, international diplomacy, economic depression and changes in land management provided the fuel, the spark that ignited a particular intense conflagration of piracy was the summer storm of 1715, which sank laden Spanish treasure galleons and attracted adventurers and fortune hunters from far and near. Samuel Bellamy was one of those drawn by the promise of easy pickings, only to encounter disappointment. There was only one thing to do - "go on the account".

# BLACK MEN UNDER A BLACK FLAG

**C**ontemporary reports refer to the discovery of many negro corpses being washed up along the Cape Cod shore following the storm that wrecked the *Whydah* and her attendant craft. The *Whydah* had been used as a slave-ship prior to being captured by Sam Bellamy, but her human cargo had been auctioned in the slave markets of the New World long before the pirates struck. So who were the dead Africans? All available evidence suggests that they were pirates.

The depositions given by those who survived the sinking of the *Whydah* reveal that the crews aboard Bellamy's ships included English, Irish, Scots, Welsh, French, Dutch, Spaniards, Swedes, native American Indians, and around 25 former African slaves, liberated in various raids on slave ships. There were another two dozen African-Americans, in all probability escaped slaves who had thrown in their lot with Bellamy.



As many as 90% of the slaves in any one voyage could fail to survive

Recent research has confirmed that the cosmopolitan nature of the *Whydah*'s crew was by no means unique. It is estimated that as many as 25% to 30% of the pirates active in the period 1715-1725 were of African origin or descent. Black people played an important role and there were tough, practical reasons as to why blacks made ready, good pirates.

The eighteenth century was the height of the 'Triangular Trade' whereby manufactured goods were traded for slaves on the west coast of Africa, the slaves were transported to the Americas and sold to finance the purchase of raw materials (eg sugar, rum, cotton, coffee),

which were in turn shipped back to Britain. The slaves were herded below decks and made to lie on narrow wooden shelves, packed like cargo and with hardly any room to move. Poor food, poor ventilation and no sanitation took a heavy toll and as many as 90% of the slaves transported in a single ship could fail to survive the voyage to the colonies. The following extract from a book written by a former slave, Gustavus Vassa, evokes the misery of the conditions of life on board slave ships:

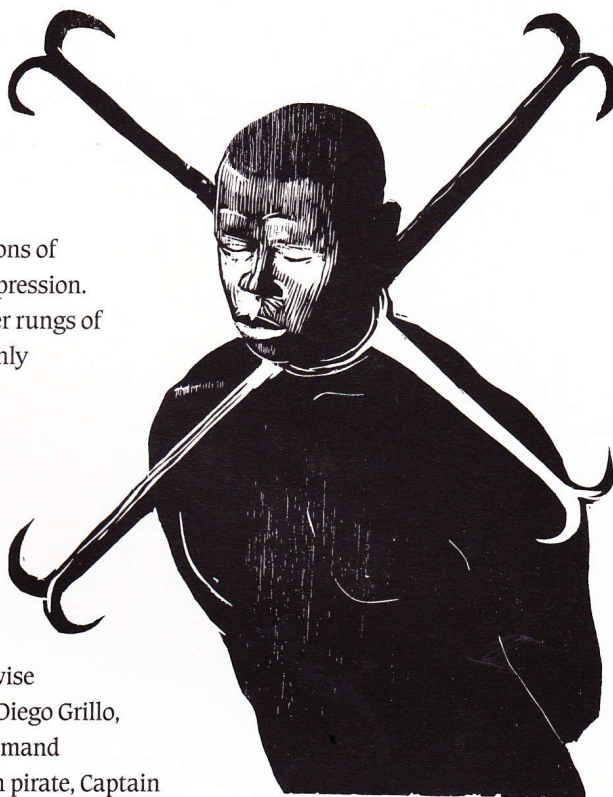
*"... I was soon put under the decks, and there received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life; so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything... but soon to my grief, two white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands... while the other flogged me severely..."*

When pirates raided a slaveship they frequently offered the male slaves a choice between joining their ranks or continuing on their journey to a lifetime of servitude in a strange land. Not surprisingly, many chose to join the society of the Jolly Roger where they were made welcome. Anyone resourceful enough to escape from slavery, to elude recapture and to join the pirate brotherhood, could be relied upon to fight to the death to keep his freedom.

The tolerance which distinguished the pirate fraternity in a century of hatred and brutality was not born of altruistic notions of racial equality; rather it sprang from a shared experience of oppression. White sailors and black slaves lived on virtually the same lower rungs of society and many of them saw "going on the account" as the only avenue of escape from either form of servitude. Their primary loyalty was to the pirate brotherhood, not to race. Pirates governed themselves democratically, and shared their loot equally. No wonder so many blacks chose piracy above their likely lot in European or colonial society.

Some historians have argued that blacks played a servile role in pirate society, but there is no proof that any pirate crew prohibited its black members from carrying weapons or otherwise discriminated against them. Indeed, at least three black men - Diego Grillo, Francisco Fernando and Laurens de Graff - were elected to command predominantly white crews prior to 1717. The notorious Scottish pirate, Captain Kidd was known to have had a black quarter master. Another black pirate leader, Abraham Samuel, eventually retired from piracy to rule a kingdom on Madagascar.

Legend includes other stories of black pirates, such as the un-named man from Rhode Island, whose love affair with an American Indian woman was forbidden by her white masters on Gardiners Island. It is a matter of historical record that in the summer of 1728, pirates under a black commander raided the island and escaped following a running battle with three British vessels. It is tempting to imagine that the happily reunited lovers may have watched the action from the quarterdeck, with the Jolly Roger, the black flag, waving triumphantly over them.



Escaped slaves could be relied on to fight to the death to keep their freedom



Blackmen under a Black Flag

# ANNE BAWBEE

**A**mong the many thousands of coins that Barry Clifford has recovered from the wreck-site of the *Whydah*, a solitary Scots bawbee (an old Scots sixpence) is the clearest physical evidence of the many connections linking Scotland with the story of Sam Bellamy, and the 'Golden Age' of piracy more generally.



Many of the pirates active during the 'Golden Age' were former privateers. Some were drawn from the first wave of Jacobite refugees who fled the British Isles with the overthrown King James II (and VII of Scotland). Although this band was mainly comprised of Irish adherents, 'the Wild Geese', it did include a sprinkling of Scottish Jacobite privateer captains - Dunbar, Campbell, George and Osbourne.

The Scots among the exiled Jacobite ranks were increased by refugees from the bungled rebellion of 1715 and the abortive Spanish 'invasion' of 1719. As many as 600 Scots were sold into slavery as rebel/convicts following the 1715 rebellion. It is known that some escaped servitude and threw in their lot with pirates operating in the Caribbean. The survivors told of a Scots surgeon, named Ferguson, serving aboard the *Whydah*. *Whydah* project historians believe that this Scots medic may well have been one of the captive rebels who sought his freedom with the buccaneering brotherhood.

Any Scottish exiles aboard the *Whydah* would have had their number supplemented by men drawn from the crews of the four Scottish ships which Sam Bellamy is known to have plundered. These were the *Agnes* out of Glasgow, under the command of Captain Andrew Turbett, the *Anne*, also out of Glasgow, and commanded by Captain Alexander Montgomery, and two unnamed ships out of Leith and Whitehaven, which were commanded by Captains Young and Dixon respectively. At least eight of the captured Scottish mariners volunteered to join the Bellamy/Williams gang. Bellamy kept the *Anne* as part of his own flotilla and she was with the *Whydah* when that fatal, final storm struck off Cape Cod. The *Anne* was severely damaged but escaped the *Whydah's* fate. She was abandoned by her crew off the coast of Maine shortly after.

There were of course other notable Scottish pirates operating during this period. The notorious Captain William Kidd, whose favoured field of operation was the Indian Ocean, was a native of Greenock. Bellamy's famous former confederate 'Blackbeard' met his end at the hands of a Scot, Evander MacIvor, who applied the fatal blow with a highland claymore. Ironically, some believe that 'Blackbeard's' real name was Drummond and that he himself was a Scot. Other Scottish pirate captains included Alexander Dalziel, James Carnegie and John Gow.

We will never know how that little Scots coin came to be at the wreck-site. Had the surgeon Ferguson retained it as a keepsake of his native land, or did it belong to a Jacobite exile of an earlier vintage? Did it belong to a member of the crew of the *Anne*, or any of the three other Scottish ships captured by Bellamy? Perhaps it passed through a more tortuous route to its resting place in the sands off Cape Cod.



A Scots Bawbee

## TREASURE TROVE



he artefacts recovered from the wreck-site of the *Whydah* represent the world's only authenticated pirate treasure, and its value is incalculable.

**Quest for a Pirate** is a prime selection of the more than 100,000 artefacts recovered from the *Whydah* wreck site since the first discoveries in 1984. These include more than 2,000 coins, the vast majority of which are 'pieces of eight'. The hoard of Spanish silver Reales includes denominations which date from the 1670s to 1715. This mountain of silver is adorned by nine Spanish gold Escudos, better known as 'Doubloons'. These coins, which date from 1688 to 1712, include denominations of one, two and eight Escudos. Research indicates that some of the gold coins were minted in Mexico, while others may have been minted in Lima, Peru. If this is the case, they may well have been produced from gold of much greater antiquity, melted down from pre-Columbian artefacts, recast as coins and en route for Spain when Bellamy struck.



Last worn by a pirate almost 300 years ago

Conservationist working on a leather pouch





Not surprisingly, the vast bulk of the coins surrendered by the wreck of the *Whydah* are Spanish. However, the smattering of British and Scottish coins in the exhibition record raids made on English and Scottish vessels. The British coins include two English William III half crowns, dated 1697, and an English Charles II crown, dated 1667. Last, but not least, is the solitary Scottish bawbee, which is returning to Scottish soil after an absence of almost 300 years.

Other precious materials exhibited include fine examples of Akan (ancient African) gold jewellery and a number of gold bars and ingots. The pieces of Akan jewellery recovered from the *Whydah* amount to the earliest known collection of this highly sought-after African art. Much of the jewellery has been broken up, and the gold bars and ingots bear the score marks of pirate

knives, demonstrating how the plundered loot was divided among the pirate band.



Brass sideplate from a musket (above)  
rescued from a concretion (top)

But in many ways the most important treasure yielded up by the *Whydah* is not made of gold or silver. It is the everyday objects, used by real pirates and recovered from the wreck site, which have provided a unique insight into life during the 'Golden Age' of piracy. The weapons in the exhibition include elegant pistols which may have been carried into action by Bellamy himself, in the capture of fifty ships. The fine nautical instruments on display were

probably prized possessions of law-abiding master mariners, who had to surrender them when Bellamy came calling. Leather goods have also survived on the sea bed and the exhibition includes a pouch and a shoe and stocking, last worn by pirates almost 300 years ago. The discovery of a teapot with a human shoulder bone wedged into it is a testimony to the mayhem created by the storm which struck Bellamy's little fleet on the night of 26 April 1717.



Grenade (above) and conserved  
pistol assemblage (right)





A sword handle

Many of the unique objects from the *Whydah* have been found inside 'concretions', encrustations formed from a compound of sand, salt and time. Visitors to **Quest for a Pirate** will be able to see conservationists working on some of these concretions, eventually revealing for the first time any riches which they might contain. Also on display are cannons which once shook the thrones and the counting houses of Europe.

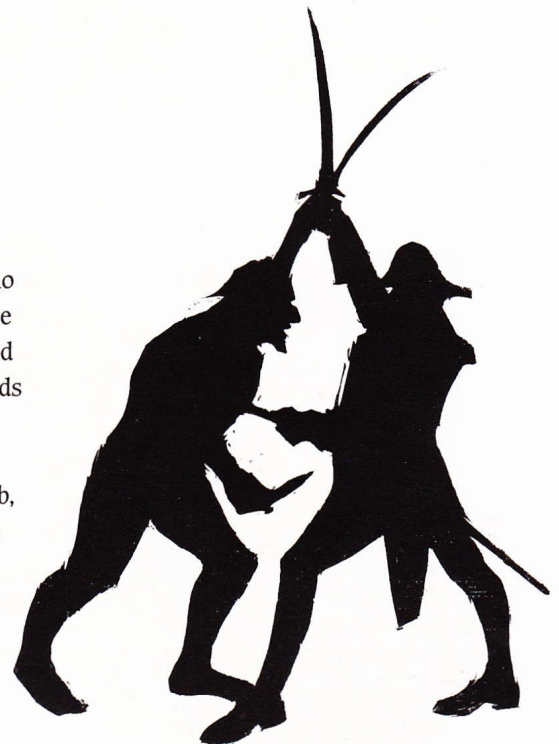
## Time Bandits

**Q**uest for a Pirate tells the story of Samuel Bellamy, a pirate prince who was active during the period known as the 'Golden Age' of piracy, the outbreak of piracy which occurred in the Caribbean during the period 1680-1730. Piracy, however, has a much longer pedigree, dating back thousands of years to the dawn of seaborne trade.

Among the earliest ancient Greek records of piracy is the story of Sennacherib, an Assyrian king who fought a great battle against the Chaldean Sea Raiders in the Northern Persian Gulf in 694BC. The Romans also had their problems with pirates, and in 75BC a pirate gang made the mistake of kidnapping and ransoming the young Julius Caesar. The future Roman Emperor went on to track down the gang and to crucify all the pirates.

Although we may not think of them as such, the Vikings who reached the height of their operations in the 10th century AD were very successful pirates. The Sandinavian word 'viking' literally means to go raiding on the high seas.

Back in the Mediterranean, beginning in the 11th century, Crusaders making their way to the Middle East ran the risk of falling prey to the Islamic Barbary Corsairs. This tradition of Arab piracy continued until the nineteenth century, when it was crushed by an early overseas operation by United States Marines.





Harsh punishments were inflicted on those responsible for the scourge of piracy

Among the most powerful pirates of our imagination are Drake, Hawkins and the English privateers, who plagued treasure galleons plying the Spanish Main in the late sixteenth century. With the death of Elizabeth I, these semi-legitimate pirates fell from favour and gave way to the outlawed buccaneers, a name derived from an American Indian style of cooking emulated by pirates. The 'Golden Age' of piracy came to a close as the pickings in the Caribbean grew more scarce. Many of those who had been active during that period, including the Scottish born Captain Kidd, transferred their area of operation to the Indian Ocean by the 1720s.

The tradition of the 'privateer' was revived by the Americans in their War of Independence. The Scottish born John Paul Jones was regarded as a naval hero by the Americans and as a traitor and pirate by the British. Another famous American privateer was Jean Lafitte, a notorious pirate pardoned by the American government for his heroic role in the defence of New Orleans during the Anglo-American War of 1812. Pirates seemed to have prospered as colonial peoples sought to break the link with Europe's imperial powers. The Latin American wars of independence in the 1820s also were accompanied by outbreaks of piracy.

The South China Sea has historically been another favoured haunt of pirates. By AD 400 the problem had become so acute that the Chinese and Japanese authorities collaborated in a purge of pirates. As trade with Europe developed, the Asian pirates targeted western ships. In 1849 the British Royal Navy inflicted a famous defeat against the Chinese pirate leader Shap'n'gtzai in the Haiphong Delta. The power of the South China pirates was largely broken by the 1860s, although shipping continued to give Bias Bay, just fifty miles east of Hong Kong, a wide berth, as it was known as a pirate base until as late as the 1930s.

More modern piracy is not unknown in Bellamy's old stamping ground - the Caribbean. Piracy is certainly responsible for the fate of some of the 3,000 craft which have disappeared in the West Indies since World War II. Unfortunately, piracy continues to raise its head today. The 1980s saw a revival in piracy in the South China Sea as defenceless economic refugees fleeing Vietnam by sea, the 'Boat People', became a target for twentieth century pirates. Other pirates have even been so bold as to attack 'super-tankers' transporting oil, other raw materials and manufactured goods.

As long as wealth is transported across vast spans of largely unpoliced ocean, the pirate will continue to attack easy prey. However, transformed social conditions, and developments in technology and international co-operation will ensure that the phenomenon of piracy will never again be the menace it was during the years when Sam Bellamy was "on the account".

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