

## Plymouth and Devonport in times of War and Peace

1900 Henry Whitfeld

1826 **The Revenue boat 'the Harpy' intercepted boats from Cawsand** which were hove-to outside the 'hovering ranges'. (The distance from the shore, within which boats making their way up the channel were not permitted to 'hover' in an attempt to make trade with local vessels - effectively selling un-excised goods prior to formal docking and unloading, say at London).

The 'Lively' a Cawsand boat, was chased by the 'Harpy' and overtaken near Penlee Point. After an exchange of small arms fire, the 'Lively' hove-to and was boarded and found to be entirely empty. (But with the smell of alcohol reeking from the bilges). There was however, a small line found hanging over her stern with a marker buoy and sinker attached.

The Captain and crew were duly brought before the Plymouth magistrates but without the physical evidence of contraband, they were acquitted.

The twist in the tale to this story comes with the determination of Lt Roche of the 'Harpy' who by the use of drag anchors and sweeps, managed to recover 175 casks of rum and so deprive smugglers, possibly from the 'Lively' of their profit!

1831 **Forty smugglers were chased by preventative men from the beaches of Whitsand Bay.** They had just landed fifty kegs of spirits when they were disturbed. After a lengthy chase, musket fire and hand-to-hand fighting, several men were wounded. One was overtaken attempting to make good his escape - but hindered by the keg of spirits he carried on his shoulder. He, Sampson Trevan was fined £100 but in default of the payment, was imprisoned.

1832 **'Come back you cowards!'** was the cry from Robert Barrowford caught whilst amongst a gang of twenty smugglers disturbed whilst landing a cargo of brandy at Anderton in Millbrook Lake. He was carried off to face the magistrate whilst a small number of excise men guarded the haul. The remaining smugglers regaining their nerve, returned to retrieve their kegs, which they eventually made off with. Barrowford was subsequently fined £100, but was unable to pay, he therefore went to prison.

1835 **A crime to look out to sea?** A preventative man at Portwrinkle saw a group of men in a cliff top field looking out to Whitsands Bay. Fearing for his life, he discharged his gun and resisted attempts by sword stone and rock to disable him. Only one man was brought before the magistrate - who could find no evidence of ill-intent in the seaward gazing of cliff-top men. Case dismissed.

1840 **John Bray of Cawsand convicted.** Spotted a couple of miles south of the Breakwater raising a haul of kegs. His crew continued to lift their 'catch' and then made sail for Cawsand Bay. 'The Charles Turner', Bray's boat was boarded and found to contain the tools of the trade - creepers, stones with holes and so forth - and in the wake of the boat a bobbing trail of kegs. Evidence enough to

convince the Stonehouse magistrate of need for imprisonment to deter these men from their trade.

**1790 Vessel 'Lottery' in Cawsand Bay** whilst unloading contraband was confronted by 'the Hind', revenue cutter, in response the smugglers fired upon the 'Hind' killing the chief officer Humphrey Glynn. After a bloody fight the smugglers fled and were only apprehended after one of their company, named Toms to turn King's Evidence, naming Thomas Potter as the shooter acting with assistance from William Searle and Thomas Bentham. He was last seen alive arguing on the rocks at Whitsands. No evidence was found as to his disappearance.

**1796 The 'Viper' at Torpoint** captured twenty casks of brandy suffering three serious injuries. One smuggler was killed, with two seriously wounded. After being reinforced the smugglers were able to recover their contraband and make off.



**1815 The Cawsand fleet expanded** with a fleet of cutters varying from 80 to 120 tons each which were capable of passages to Holland and France and shipping over 1000 five-gallon casks as well as cargo of silks salt or tobacco