

Cruising

The pirate crew had voted. The *Revenge* would not now follow its intended course to Genoa, but the crew decided to station themselves off Portugal and Spain. There their hopes would be to capture lucrative cargoes of wine. They would, however, as Gow put it, “cruise upon all Nations.”

The *George*, on leaving Amsterdam, had twelve guns mounted with six more in the hold. The ship’s cargo belonged to Dutch merchants and, since the Dutch were at war with the Algerians, these six had been taken along, below deck, for protection. All guns were now mounted, ready for action.

On November, 12th, about ten leagues off Cape St. Vincent, the pirates took their first prize, a small English sloop named the *Delight*. Carrying fish from Newfoundland bound for Cadiz, this was not a good prize, but a reasonable exercise. The pirate ship had appeared, as if by chance, off the sloop’s starboard bow, as the sun rose on that misty morning. There was no gun fire, no killing; it was a quiet affair with just a bit of shouting and waving of arms. The ship’s master, Captain Wise, lived up to his name. He knew the *Revenge* could out run his ship, and his crew were well out numbered. Along with some fish for provisions, anchors, chain, sail and whatever else was of use, the crew of four, plus the master, were taken onto the *Revenge*. Murphy was ordered to hole the hull of the *Delight* and the ship, with most of its disappointing cargo, was sent to the sea bed.

After nine days of fish rations the crew were in need of a change of diet, and some excitement. They took their next prize with almost as much ease as the *Delight*. Guns were fired across the path of the snow white, on deck, the pirates brandished swords and screamed bloody oaths.

This encounter was scarcely more successful than the first. The *Sarah*, under Captain Somerville, was bound from Glasgow for Genoa laden with fish!

From this ship the pirates took around thirty casks of salmon and herring, some log wood, the ship’s arms and ammunition. Again, the crew were invited to board the *Revenge* and the *Sarah* was holed and sunk where she had been taken, around twenty five leagues off Lisbon.

Gow’s pirates were well aware of the typical pirates’ flamboyant dress sense. Accustomed to much sewing of sails, these men could take any material and put together whatever style of finery took their liking. Breeches, waistcoats and tunics made from bright silks and calicos. These were, after all, the trade mark of successful pirates. Their clothes could be created in all colours. There would be no class restrictions; no point in sticking to the conventional colours of commoners. And a sash, the brighter the better, draped over one shoulder with loops for carrying one or two pistols was ideal.

Although no fine bales of cloth had been part of any prize so far, the men scattered clothes from the two ships on deck. The different crews were invited to take what they fancied. An unwritten rule here would have been; should any man take part in this “generous giveaway”, it would be assumed they wished to join with the pirates. It would certainly look that way if things reached a court of law. A young lad, William Oliver, cabin boy to Captain Wise, was among those who stepped forward and took what he fancied. This was, perhaps, an act of naivety. Who knows, but Gow smiled to himself. Only two others showed any interest and those two play acted as if it were just fun; to make it seem they were not too interested. The two were off Captain Somerville’s ship, being a young forward man, Alexander Robb, and the *Sarah*’s carpenter, John Menzies.

Gow was pleased at this. His own carpenter, Murphy, constantly pled with Gow to be permitted to leave the *Revenge* at the first opportunity. Gow continually refused, telling Murphy that his services were vital. Gow would watch Menzies. Indeed, Menzies had offered to help Murphy with the sinking of his own ship!

Again, this small ship, without arms, was of little use to the pirates. As it sunk to the bottom Gow watched it disappear, the evidence gone, out of sight, the crime now seeming to fade.

The two ships had been sacrificed since the pirates wished to continue cruising along the Portuguese coast. Had they let the ships sail off with their crews, the alarm would promptly have been raised ashore. Dutch and English men of war ships would have put to sea from Lisbon before the pirates had had a chance at that cargo of wine they so much wanted. The fish diet made healthy pirates but not rich ones.

Peter was a busy cabin boy at this time. Captain Wise and Captain Somerville’s men were kept in a makeshift cell between decks. Besides his usual chores, running around at John Gow’s request, Peter had to slop out and fetch rations to these men. He had struck up a friendship with William Oliver, who was several years older

than himself, but the closest in years among the three ships' crews. Now that Gow considered young Oliver to be a possible ally, he was given some freedom; freedom to get on deck and do some work.

Life on board a pirate ship is much more relaxed than on a merchant ship, and a dawdle compared to the regime on board a man of war. The *Revenge* was dirtier than it had ever been, but Peter enjoyed the feeling of being a part, an equally important part, of life on the ship. There would undoubtedly be punishment should he misbehave, but he knew that it would only be delivered with the approval of the whole crew, and he couldn't imagine what he would have to do to deserve that. William Oliver and Peter helped the men sharpen knives and cutlasses. They cleaned pistols and practiced running out the cannon. Sitting in the sunshine one afternoon, William Booth told the boys they were the luckiest men at sea. He had spent some years on a Navy frigate after an armed gang, led by two of the most brutish midshipmen he ever encountered swept onto the fishing boat he was working and took the entire crew of eight. Captains of these ships were responsible for finding crews and, as only around twenty per cent of Navy crews were volunteers, the rest had to be "persuaded" to join. Officially, men pressed into service should have been able bodied men between the ages of eighteen and fifty four. Booth had been 14 years old, though a large fourteen year old. That day the Navy took his sixty five year old great uncle and his father along with most of the men from family and left their boat, their livelihood, to drift.

"It was a great weight off my shoulders when I finally got off those ships. Ferneau was a bad merchant captain, but nothing like the Navy captains who could, and would, deal any punishment they felt like. Too bad if you found yourself on their wrong side. I've seen men gagged for uttering one word which the captain deemed out of place. The man would be seated with his legs clamped in irons and his hands tied behind him. This was Navy regulations. Then his jaws were pried open and an iron bit was shoved between his teeth. One of my captains enjoyed this punishment and would usually leave the poor lad like that, on deck, all night in all weathers. My next captain preferred the cat-o'-nine-tails, a whip with nine thick, three-foot lashes of knotted cord. He would have the bosun and his mates administer twelve lashes to the bare skin for drunkenness, stealing, quarrelling or neglecting duty. There was no court martial for those crimes. That captain would use court martial to order up to one hundred and fifty lashes. Then a piper would summon all hands to witness the punishment. The miscreant was stripped and tied by his wrists and knees to a grating. The bosun's mate and a second mate would take turns at administering the lashings. It was sickening.

That same captain would flog a man for being the last down from the rigging, and I've seen him send midshipmen to the masthead for arguing. They would spend hours up there. I've had clusters of iron balls whirl past my head and seen men's arms shot off and much worse. Duties, ridiculous and pointless, were designed to take as much effort as possible. We were given stones, no wider than my hand, to scrub the deck every morning. All that effort, for what? Make the most of this lot, boys. A pirate's life may be a short one but it is a jolly one."

It was too. Murphy with fellow Irishmen, Dobson, Wheatly and Newport, played their fiddles and whistles at every opportunity. During those days, Peter had hoped this would last forever.

For ten days the *Revenge* hovered on the edge of the shipping lanes, scanning and searching every direction for their next prize; a suitable, un-escorted ship, not too large or well armed. Without seeing a thing, they were about to head northwards when a sail was sighted to the south. This was a ship about the size of their own, though they could not see its colours. The pirate ship must have looked formidable for, as the pirates gave chase, the ship ran up the French colours and unfurled every sail they possessed to widen the gap between the ships.

Gow's crew were excited by this chase which went on for three days. Although the French ship sailed well, the *Revenge* kept her within sight at a constant distance, which was just within firing range. But on the third night, which was misty, the French master altered course and his ship made a fortunate escape.

The *Revenge* was now well south of its intended position.

Gow gathered his crew. Since the ship was short of fresh water, it was decided to sail the two days or so to reach Madeira. Gow had hoped they would encounter a Portuguese vessel in the area but, again, there was nothing. On reaching the islands, the *Revenge* dropped anchor a safe distance off shore. Peter, to his slight horror, was selected to accompany Peterson, Rollson, Moor, Macaulay, Winter and Belbin and all were sent in the ship's longboat on a plundering expedition. The men were well armed.

Their intention was to, perhaps, climb the chains of an unguarded ship, board her and offer anyone on board the opportunity to join them or be floated away in an under stocked longboat. Or Peterson and the men may find a ship at anchor and simply cut it free. Whatever, they were after that elusive cargo of wine, and were in dire need of provisions and water. But their luck was out again. Nothing of a manageable size, in fact, no ship

at anchor around the coast was spotted at all. The party rowed back to the *Revenge*. On board, the crew had sighted two ships heading in their direction, but both had given the *Revenge* a wide berth and had continued round the island, well off shore. Peter was relieved to be back on deck unscathed.

The crew decided to employ different tactics. Next day the *Revenge* hoisted British colours and set course for Porto Santo, some thirty five miles to the north east. The *Revenge* dropped anchor in the bay and, once again, the longboat was lowered over the side. Five men set out, this time, with a civil request for permission to purchase food and to take on water. They took with them, as a gift to the Governor, three barrels of salmon and six barrels of herring. They used Captain Somerville's Bill of Health and other papers. These papers were in order. The "safe conduct" document came from the government of its home country identifying the ship, its mission and demanded the safety of the ship and its crew. This suited well, so long as no one looked too closely. Peter was not part of this party but was ordered into action when Gow spied the longboat returning, with company on board. All appeared calm as the men rowed back to the *Revenge* in the afternoon sunshine. Peter and William Oliver were given just minutes to try to make Gow's cabin fit for visitors and smarten themselves up. Indeed, this was an official visit. The Governor of Porto Santo climbed on board along with two other hefty men. The three, sweating profusely, were invited by Gow for refreshments in his cabin. This was Peter's first go at hospitality. Ferneau had never included or instructed the boy when he had entertained on board the *George* at Santa Cruz. Peter hadn't a clue how to serve these important men and stumbled into the cabin with some hastily rustled up wine in an ale jug and Hubbins at his feet. He was surprised. Calmly, Gow, now handsomely dressed, looked the part and received the guests courteously. He took three, thick glass spirit bottles from his own, polished sea chest and offered his guests drinks from this rare selection. So all went well. However, as the evening drew in, the three dignitaries rose to take their leave and, there being no sign of the promised provisions, Gow's tone changed abruptly. He unmasked. The Governor and his men found themselves surrounded by armed pirates. Williams informed the three that they were now prisoners until all the provisions and water, which had been promised to them, was stowed on board. The surprised Portuguese gentry trembled, crossed themselves and begged for mercy as if going to their execution. The men were taken below deck and locked in the "cell". Although Peter and Oly made sure there was enough food and water taken to them, all refused to eat or drink. Oly took water, which could hardly be spared, for the three to freshen themselves, but they refused even that. Twenty four smelly hours later, to Gow's satisfaction, a large rowing boat was seen to leave the fort and make its way towards the *Revenge*. The crew armed themselves and readied the guns. But the sounds of animals and hens on the boat carried across the still evening air and Gow watched with satisfaction. Here came the provisions. A cow and a calf, a pig and crates of hens, along with other food and seven butts of water were hoisted onto the *Revenge*. A happy Captain Gow discharged his prisoners, to their great joy, and presented them with two ceros of beeswax as payment for the provisions. The *Revenge* fired three guns as the Governor was rowed away from the ship. This involved just three small piles of powder, booms and puffs of smoke, no cannonballs.

Next morning, with a fair wind, the pirate ship set a course for Cape St Vincent. Back in their old hunting ground, on December 13th, the pirates took their third ship, the *Bachelor*. Bound for Lisbon with a cargo of timber from New England, with just 20 leagues to sail, the pirates struck and boarded the ship. Discouraged by yet another pretty worthless cargo, only some of that cargo of wood and provisions such as bread, barrels of pork and beef were taken along with anchor cable, the ship's mainsail, foresail and mizzen topsail. Her captain, Benjamin Cross, and crew of seven were taken on board the *Revenge*. Gow's hopes for young Alexander Robb came into fruition when the young volunteer pirate grabbed some of the cargo taken off the *Bachelor* and, wickedly, tossed it into the sea: this, just to see it splash into the waves and to watch the faces of that ship's crew. This excited Williams who took hold of stunned crew member, John Reid, and, with one swipe of his razor-sharp cutlass, cut off the startled man's beard! Gow's pirates whooped with delight. Robb continued his performance by threatening Captain Cross into emptying his pockets. Not content with the pickings he then ordered the man to strip. Robb exchanged his rags for a fine captain's tunic and breeches. Williams, not to be outdone, appeared on deck in a scarlet cloth jacket and breeches. Gow's crew immediately recognised this outfit as having once belonged to the unfortunate ship's surgeon, the late, John Guy. Gow allowed the pirates their revelry which went on until darkness fell and, at the end of it all, he discovered he had another pirate volunteer, Robert Teague, a fit young foremast man off the *Bachelor*.

Accommodation on board the *Revenge* was now a problem. To dispose of some surplus prisoners Gow and his pirates, next morning, decided to set Captain Wise adrift with his crew in the *Bachelor*. As a parting gift, Wise and each one of his crew were presented with four ceros of beeswax. Gow's generosity with other people's

property, perhaps, had a soothing effect on an uneasy conscience. He was a curious mix of vagabond and gentleman. On this occasion he showed some sense of fairness. Peter stood by his friend, William Oliver, as the boy became increasingly alarmed. Oly had been given none of this pay-off and he called to Gow to raise his complaint. He was seized by Winter and Rollson as his crew mates climbed over to the *Bachelor* and prepared to leave. He screamed at Captain Wise to beg for his release, but Gow would not let him leave. "Be satisfied, Lad. I will send you off this ship with your pockets filled with gold." And with that the two ships parted.

After cruising in the area for several days, a French ship was sighted. Gow's crew scurried about the deck preparing the guns and gathering pistols, swords and knives. They shifted cargo out of the way and, as the *Revenge* gave chase, Williams hoisted the Jolly Rodger, the red flag he had stitched together. This, "no surrender" signal would have confirmed the French master's worst fears. It gave clear notice to the merchant vessel that any attempt at fighting would result in the deaths of his entire crew. The French ship slowed. So, again, Gow's pirates boarded a prize ship with little trouble. This turned out to be the best prize to date. The ship, the *Lewis Joseph*, bound from Cadiz was laden with wine, fruit and oil. Captain William Mens and his crew of twelve boarded the *Revenge* where they were confined below deck. A skeleton crew of pirates manned the *Lewis Joseph* and the two ships stood off to sea to divide the spoils. All of the wine, some oil, fifty sacks of almonds, two hundred and fifty barrels of raisins, thirty six barrels of figs, twenty nine chests of oranges and lemons and a chest containing four rich suits of clothes were taken from the *Lewis Joseph* onto the *Revenge*. The pirates removed five guns and their carriages, plus the entire, considerable, store of ammunition, fourteen muskets and all of the best sails which the French ship carried.

As the men worked, a large ship bore down on them from windward, surprising the pirates. In their panic, the pirates believed this was a Portuguese man of war, but it became clear this was another French merchant ship, probably bound for home. This French ship being of much greater force than the pirate ship, had no fear and came close. Although armed with at least thirty two guns and with eighty or so men, plus passengers, Gow, not entirely put off, gathered his men on the quarter deck. This could be the making of them. But the timing was all wrong. Quite rightly, they agreed that with six of their trusty pirate crew on board the *Lewis Joseph*, there were not enough hands to man the guns never mind try to stand by the sails, and with the *Revenge* stuffed full to bursting with prisoners, this challenge was not going to happen. The pirate council was agreed, but for one member. Williams rounded on Gow. He called him a coward, a man not fit to command a pirate ship.

"Take all these dogs from their cells onto the deck now. Cut their mean throats and get them into the sea. We must have this ship." Williams spat into Gow's face. Gow neither raised the tone of his voice nor a hand, which enraged Williams further. With a savage brutality he became outrageous and desperate as he discovered he was alone. Demanding, now, that Gow give the order to attack the merchant ship, he pulled a pistol and fired at the captain. Gow stood shocked and surprised to be unharmed. The pistol, which had misfired, incensed Williams who hurled the weapon at the captain before he crumpled to the deck. Winter and Peterson had each fired at the raging man. Winter had struck him in the leg and Peterson had injured his stomach. He lay as if dead while the men decided they should throw him over the ship's side. As they lifted him up, Williams struggled free and was off again, this time, to the hold and into the powder room. With his second pistol cocked he threatened to "blow them all to Hell." He meant every word. As Melvin rushed him, for the second time, thankfully, Williams' pistol misfired. The demented man was taken to be locked, to their dismay, among the prisoners he had enjoyed treating so barbarously for his own pleasure. He was clapped in irons and left to cool off.



The officers on the passing French merchantman must have been puzzled at the antics on the decks of the *Revenge*; entertained, perhaps, as they neared the end of a long, hazardous journey home from the West Indies.

Back to matters in hand, the pirates again voted to let most of the prisoners go in the unwanted ship, the *Lewis Joseph*. Although none of his crew were given their liberty at this stage, Captain Cross, the New England captain was given a quarter share in this ship along with sixteen cerns of the beeswax to distribute among his companions. He was boarded onto the *Lewis Joseph*. Captain Somerville was taken out of confinement next. He was given a half share of the *Lewis Joseph*, as if it were the pirates' to give. His mate received the other

quarter. Oly and Peter, observing, agreed this was fair justice. All of Captain Somerville's men were eventually boarded onto the French ship apart from Robb and the useful carpenter, Menzies; two pirates. The *Lewis Joseph* sailed away, north.

Winter stepped onto the quarter deck at eight next morning adorned in a fine suit, a gift from captain Gow. The crew recognised these garments as the late Captain Ferneau's finest. But all agreed that Winter had earned this favour along with the step up to fill Williams' shoes.

The remaining prisoners were given some fresh air on deck and a chance to choose some of the fine clothes off the *Lewis Joseph*. First to step forward was a thin young man named Harris, off the *Bachelor*. He had only torn breeches to his name which could have been the reason he seemed so eager. From that day he was given his freedom, but he was uneasy. He was heard to mutter to James Belbin, "You need not care about me for I am one of you." A strange one, he slept in his hammock clutching a cutlass and pistol, but appeared well pleased.

It was the unanimous opinion now that, even as a prisoner, Williams was an encumbrance. At their first chance, he should be sent off the ship with instructions to be handed to the authorities as a pirate. The very opportunity sailed into the pirates' hands just days later, on January 6th. This was the Bristol ship, *Triumvirate*, carrying fish, which was of little use to the pirates. The ship's fine, new longboat was removed to replace the leaky longboat off the *Revenge*. Macaulay set the old boat adrift. No-one seemed to care. As well as the longboat the pirate crew helped themselves to arms, sails, cables, a cask of rum and a cask of brandy and, this time, some goodies in the form of a silver cup, watch and some spoons.

The prisoners were taken from their stinking and cramped accommodation. Those not confined, but who had been pressed to work for the pirates, joined them on the deck of the *Revenge*. Gow viewed the rabble from the quarter deck and eventually all but four were taken, shuffling in irons, onto the *Triumvirate*. Two of those selected were Philibert Le Leyer and Ervy Toul off the French ship, *Lewis Joseph*. Michael Moor had discovered from the French captain that Le Leyer was an excellent and experienced pilot. Le Leyer had been taken from among the prisoners and given his freedom on the ship as Gow's second mate, but the man had not come up to expectations. When all the prisoners had eventually been taken off the ship only he, Ervy Toul, and young William Harvey off the *Bachelor* occupied the cell. All were regarded by Gow as too promising to be sent off the ship, but not to be trusted meantime.

From the crew of the new prize, Gow selected a youth of eighteen, James Stammers, since this boy's eyes had twinkled from the moment he stepped onto the pirate ship. He was full of questions and interest. None of the pirates had even bothered to lock him below deck. He was put to work with Oly and Peter. The fifth prisoner kept on the *Revenge* was Thomas Curland, the only other unmarried man off the Bristol ship. From his original crew, Scotsman, Robert Reid, along with the ship's carpenter, again begged to be let off the ship with the prisoners, but Gow refused their pleas. To Murphy he repeated, "I have no other carpenter to my satisfaction." At this point Ervy Toul, the only one of the French crew who had eagerly come over to the pirate crew, jumped onto the *Triumvirate*. Belbin struggled with him as he fought, all the time begging the captain to let him go with his shipmates. Again Gow refused. He shouted, "Damn you, you dog. You were willing to stay at first and you shan't go now." Toul was bundled back onto the *Revenge*.

Pleased, Gow now had a complete crew and, free from the burden of all those prisoners, they would continue the cruising.

All that remained to be sorted was Williams. Gow could hear the mad-man screaming and bellowing below deck as he went to supervise his transfer to the *Triumvirate*.

Amidst the raging tantrum it became evident that Williams believed he would be in mortal danger if put ashore in Portugal. He implored to have his wretched life ended on the ship, or to be set adrift in the longboat. Gow shook his head. The old longboat was well out of sight by now and he was not parting with the fine new one; not for a scum like Williams. Gow wondered why Williams was so sure he would die in Portugal. What had he done there? This part of Williams's history was news to Gow and, in the end, made no difference to the crew's decision to have Williams removed. The deal was in place. Captain Joel Davis, in command of this strange crew, had instructions to deliver Williams to the first English man of war they might meet, and to hand him over as a pirate.

"In gratuity for your trouble and charge with the prisoners, and in recompense," as Gow put it, "and for the goods we have taken from you, we wish you to take with you thirteen ceros of beeswax." Davis looked stunned. Williams was weighted in irons and dragged on deck where he begged the men to throw him into the sea. They jeered and took fun in calling him a pirate; proclaiming it was time he was hanged. Williams was transferred

onto the *Triumvirate* and the din faded as Captain Davis with his unfamiliar crew, including his new first mate, Ditty, along with seamen Brown and Bemburgh, all good men from the *Bachelor*, set sail for Lisbon.

On board the *Revenge* watches were set and a meeting was arranged in the great cabin. Gow and his crew were in no doubt that it would be only a matter of days before the *Triumvirate* would arrive in Lisbon and would certainly give the authorities an account of their business, their strength and their rough position. Gow begged to reason with his crew that the coast of Portugal was no longer a safe place for the *Revenge*. The crew agreed. In the following debate several suggestions were put forward. Rollson was in favour of sailing to the coast of Guinea or even as far as the West India Islands or the north of America. He had huge support for the West Indies idea and the meeting became excited and loud. It was dawning on the men that, in fact, the world was theirs to plunder. The coast of Guinea and the West Indies would be rich in pickings, they were all sure.

"Tobago," Belbin yelled, "That's the place to take up our station." Peterson and Winter had heard tale of a new breed of pirates in the bay of Mexico. Peterson had heard that pirate ships could join with Spaniards calling themselves Guarda del Coasta. "Guard ships for the coast," he explained, "but under whose pretence make prize of ships of all nations..." This evoked a raucous applaud. He continued, "sometimes their own country..." The men stamped their feet and cheered, "but especially of the English!"

Gow smiled at this but had to quell the noise and bring the men back to reality. He explained that, for a long voyage, they would run huge risks of running out of water and food. Then there was always the chance that they may brush with the Spaniards. In fact, even after their beating and cheering, the crew agreed they could never trust the Spaniards. They had on board an inadequate supply of ammunition. Where could they possibly seize more of that?

But Rollson suggested that they should go straight to the north of America. Once there, a couple of sloops could easily be taken on the New England coast or off New York. With the provisions thus taken the *Revenge* could then set off for the South Seas. Again Gow argued that this was too risky.

It was Belbin's turn to offer a suggestion. "Honduras, and to the Bay of Campeachy among the buccaneers and the logwood cutters. I've been there. We would have no trouble picking up forty stout and good sailors; bold and enterprising men who understand the Spaniards and the Spanish coast on both sides of America. They will have fire arms and ammunition with them and would join us for the adventure and the fortune. Provisions might be had anywhere." This simply opened up more ideas. Sail to the islands of New-Providence, or to the mouth of the Gulf of Florida, and then cruise on the coast of North America. Make a retreat at New-Providence and cruise from Florida up the Carolina coast as high as the Capes of Virginia. Nothing was being resolved. Plans were going round in circles so, again, Gow called for order. He had a plan which he had been thinking about for several days.

"We could sail to the north of Scotland. I come from Orkney, the islands off the north coast. My family is well known in the small town which shelters in the bay at Stromness. There we would be well protected from the weather and high, winter seas, and food and water would never be a problem. Here there are in many dangers; from men of war, from shortage of provisions and water, but equally as pressing is the need to careen the hull of the *Revenge*. At Stromness there will be shelter to beach the ship and prepare it for some good cruising. There may be the opportunity to enrich ourselves ashore before we take our leave of the island folk. When these men of war ships come looking for us they will never think to come north; as far north as we will go. I know the north of Scotland and the islands well. I was born and bred in those parts. There will be no dangers if we are careful and patient. Besides, there are a good many stout fellows in Stromness looking for adventure and some fortune. To go south puts us into too many dangers as we are fixed at this time, dangers from hunger, the weather and enemies. I say we go north and prepare in safety for some real action!" There was not the enthusiastic reaction Gow had hoped for, but the men talked it over. Going north was, the men could see, the best solution for the time being. They would put their trust in Gow's judgement and prepare to sail to Orkney. "Better get your winter woolies looked out boys," was John Gow's advice to Peter and John Harris as he passed them.