

HICKEY

VETERAN actor Michael Jayston, who has died aged 88, revealed his portrayal of heartthrob Mr Rochester in the 1973 television adaptation of Jane Eyre continued to win over female admirers decades after its original release.

Explaining that young women would still write to him having watched the Jane Eyre DVD, Jayston, pictured in his Rochester heyday, explained: “I send them a photograph back of what I look like now. I say, ‘Isn’t it a shame!’”

MAKING headlines after dressing up as Wrexham AFC mascot Wrex the Dragon, courtesy of his friendship with the club’s Hollywood star owner Ryan Reynolds, Sir Anthony Hopkins meets with grumbles of discontent from fellow South Walian.

Though not known to be a big football fan, Hopkins famously hails from Port Talbot – over 130 miles away from pal Reynolds’ fashionable North Wales team. Hopkins’ old South Wales stamping ground is instead down the road from Wrexham’s Welsh rivals, Swansea City.

RECALLING an insulting meeting with a leading agent when an up-and-coming actress, Dame Sheila Hancock tells the Full Disclosure podcast: “I’d put all my gear on...he sat me under a lamp and said, ‘Well, the first thing we’ve got to do is a bit of plastic surgery!’”

CURRENTLY promoting his movie portrayal of Bob Marley in biopic One Love, London-born actor Kingsley Ben-Adir, pictured, is reminded that Barbie director Greta Gerwig talked up his chances of being cast as 007 when he recently appeared in the blockbuster.

Asked whether he wants to be the next Bond, Kingsley awkwardly responds on Radio 2: “Whatever Greta says that’s nice about you...it’s very flattering and I loved working with her so much.”

Publicising One Love alongside Ben-Nadir, co-star and fellow Londoner James Norton, pictured on the left, can’t resist pointing out he’s also been regularly tipped for the Bond role. “It’s so nice seeing someone else squirm under that question, because I’ve had it for about five years,” Norton mischievously remarks. “And now I’m watching you.”

PAYING tribute to Dad’s Army star Ian Lavender following news of his death aged 77, Britt Ekland remembers touring with the Private Pike actor in a production of Run For Your Wife 30 years ago.

The Bond girl affectionately recalls: “We spent many days on the road together in the early Nineties and you always came into my dressing room and kissed my head. A true gentleman.”

CAPTAIN Kirk actor William Shatner, still busy at 92, confirms he’s happy for his Star Trek alter ego to be brought back from the dead by artificial intelligence.

“If I’m alive, I don’t want AI to do that,” Shatner clarifies, before adding: “But if I’m dead and they ask my family and they’re going to pay my family very well to sound like me, I would advise them to say yes.”

DXIST

EXCLUSIVE By Dr David Gibbins

SHE was one of the last of her kind, a sail and oar-powered warship built for the Royal Navy at a time when Britain dominated the world’s oceans and ships were essential for keeping the peace and securing the seas from the scourge of piracy.

In her pomp, HMS Royal Anne Galley would have been a sight to inspire awe and fear. Constructed and launched onto the Thames in 1709 from Woolwich, in South-East London, named after the Queen, she carried 42 cannons and a crew of some 200-strong. No paintings exist today of the ship but we can certainly imagine her, a state-of-the-art Stuart-era war machine, primed for battle.

Sadly, she was to last a mere 12 years. In late 1721, a broadside ballad was published in London telling a “sad and dismal story”.

“The Unhappy VOYAGE. Giving an Account of the Royal Anne Galley, Captain Willis Commander, which was split to Pieces on the Staggs Rocks on the Lizzard the 10th of November, 1721. having on board the Lord Belhaven, who was going as Governor to Barbadoes, with several other Persons of Distinction, the whole Number on board being 210, out of which there were only three saved”.

Above the ballad was a woodcut with three images of the Royal Anne Galley in progressive stages of destruction.

To the left, she is upright and intact, her gunports and stern windows visible, and to the right heeled over and sinking. Men are alive in the water to the left and dead to the right, cast into darkness like some medieval vision of hell.

This image was very much in my mind when I first dived off Lizard Point in Cornwall in the appropriately named Dead Pool – the rocks rearing up in front of me like the teeth of some giant sea monster. Off Man O’War rock, the tide rushes past at up to five knots, making it as much a danger to divers today as it was to mariners of the past.

Strewn among the gullies are the remains of a wreck that reflect the violence of the sea at this location but preserve rich evidence for a pivotal time in British naval history. Now with the completion of a project funded by Historic England to record more than 600 artefacts, the story of the ship can be told in detail. Whereas we know much about the Tudor Navy from the excavation of the Mary Rose, the early 18th century is less well attested in wrecks.

THE remains of HMS Royal Anne Galley were discovered by local diver Rob Sherratt in 1991, and investigated by a small team over the next decade. One of the most exciting finds was silver cutlery bearing the crest of Lord Belhaven – an important passenger on his way to govern Barbados – confirming the identity of the ship and leading to the site being designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973.

Since 2021, I have been licensed by Historic England to survey the site along with Ben Dunstan. In addition to our work on the wreck, documentary research in The National Archives has added greatly to our knowledge of the ship and her voyages. With the War of the Spanish Succession over, the Royal Navy in the 1720s was becoming the undisputed master of the oceans and was able to devote itself to the greatest scourge of the seas at the time – the North African pirates who were preying on ships and coastal communities

Lonely last resting place of the pride and joy of the Navy

More than 300 years after meeting her doom on the rocks off Cornwall’s Lizard point, the Royal Anne Galley, one of Britain’s last warships powered by both sail and oar, is slowly giving up her secrets to underwater archeologists

in the Mediterranean and north-west Europe and the pirates of the Caribbean who ranged as far as the west coast of Africa.

The Royal Anne Galley was a galley-frigate, with a single bank of oars on either side beneath her gunports. An early expression of “gunboat diplomacy”, she was

designed to chase pirates – with her oars she would have been able to follow them in the Mediterranean when sailing ships were becalmed or in the estuary backwaters of North America where pirates had strongholds. A few years after her launch, she was deployed against the pirates of North Africa, and then in 1713 she delivered presents from Queen Anne to the Emperor of Morocco in return for the freedom of captives. After that she went north as part of the blockading fleet after the Scottish uprising of 1715, preventing Jacobites from fleeing across the North Sea and their European supporters from posing any threat to the recently crowned King George I.

In 1719, she was again ordered to the

waters off Africa, this time not to the Barbary Coast, but further south to the Gulf of Guinea. English traders had requested that, “Two ships of Warr might be appointed to Cruise on the Coast of Africa to protect their Trade from Pyrates”. Their trade being the vile business of slavery – the Guinea coast was where European traders went to acquire slaves to sell in the Americas.

That year alone, more than 30 ships had been seized or burnt by pirates.

During an arduous voyage of many months in 1720, the Royal Anne Galley patrolled the Gulf of Guinea. She then sailed across to the Caribbean and returned to England, where she was fitted out for what

was to be her final voyage. On May 9, 1721, Lord Belhaven had “kissed his Majesty’s hand, in order to set out for his Government of Barbados”.

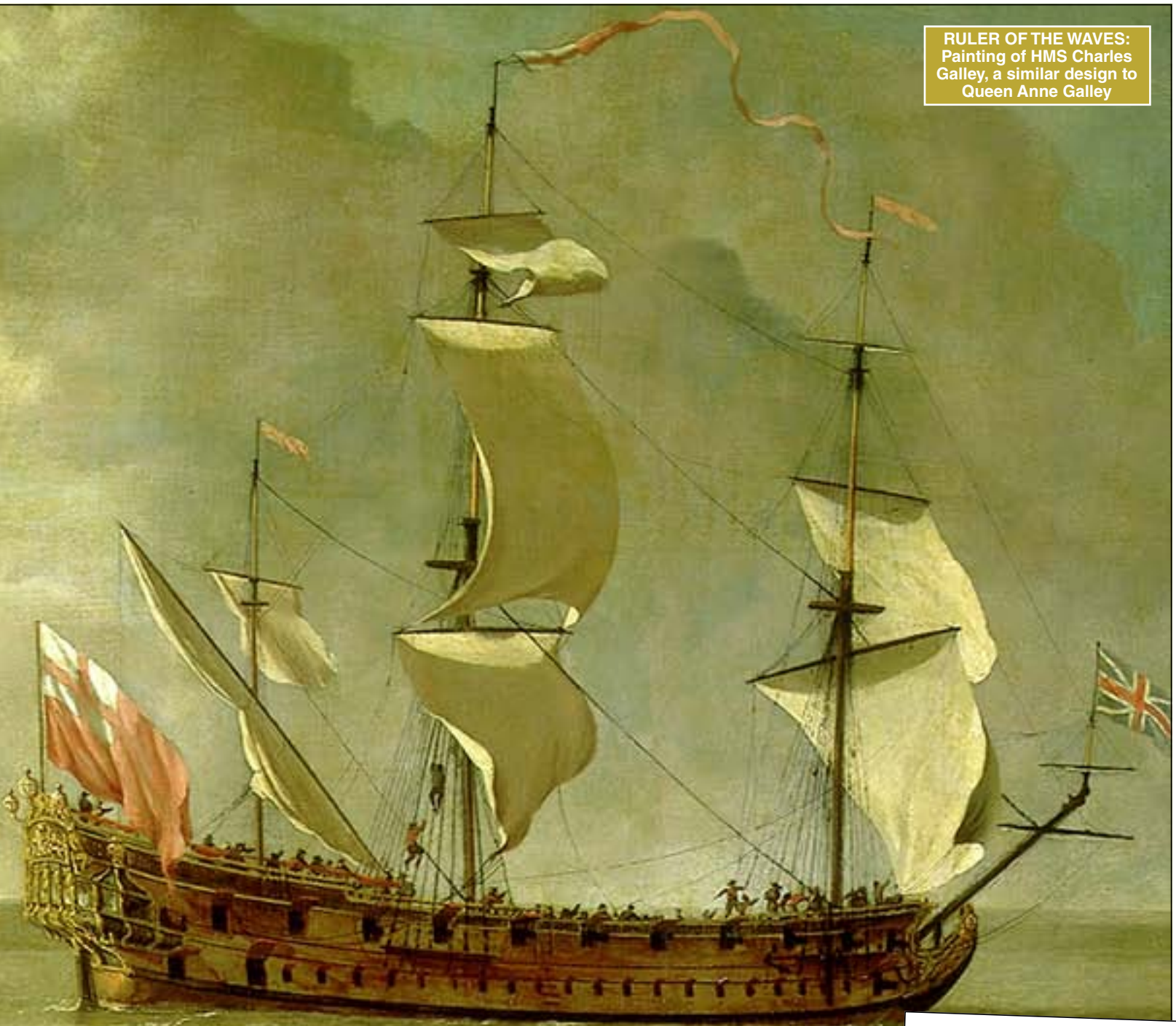
Aged 40 or 41, Belhaven was a Representative Peer of Scotland at Westminster, had been “Gentleman of the Bedchamber” to George, Prince of Wales – the future King George II – and was a veteran of the campaign against the Jacobites.

The other “persons of distinction” on the ship included William Hamilton, 18-year-old son of the Earl of Abercorn and a “Volunteer in the Sea Service”, and Thomas Hamilton, whose father Sir David Hamilton, Fellow of the Royal Society, was a physician to Queen

Anne and wrote a diary of her final five years up to her death in 1714 and the accession of King George. Having delivered Lord Belhaven to Barbados, Captain Willis was to inform himself “whether any Piratical Ships or Vessels are hovering about...To proceed in quest of such Pirates, and use your utmost endeavours to take, sink, burn or otherwise destroy them”, afterwards proceeding with the same instructions to the Leeward Islands and Jamaica and then “To range along the Coast of North America from North Carolina to Newfoundland”.

Had she proceeded on this endeavour her place in history might have been very different; as it is, her remains around Man O’War rock off the Cornish coast survive to give

RULER OF THE WAVES: Painting of HMS Charles Galley, a similar design to Queen Anne Galley



FIREPOWER: David Gibbins with cannon on wreck site. Below right, silver cutlery bearing crest of Lord Belhaven



TIMELY FIND: Gold pocket watch face showing maker’s name. Right, mourning ring



vivid archaeological testimony to the ship and the men who sailed her. The accounts of the three survivors to the Admiralty show she left Plymouth on Tuesday, November 7, 1721, bound for Barbados, but had encountered such severe winds that two days later the captain decided to return to Plymouth.

In the event, she was blown into the rocks in the early hours of November 10 and “dash’d to pieces”, with more than 200 of her crew and some 25 passengers perishing “within pistol shot” of land. The ballad tells us: “One Gentleman was drove on Shore, ’Bout whom they found a thousand Pound, Whose Name’s supposed to be Crosier, by Writings in his Pockets found: Likewise they say the Lord Belhaven, Having on a Diamond Ring, his Shirt mark’d B. the floating Ocean, Did to Shore his Body bring.”

Finds from the wreck include many beautiful gold moldores, the Portuguese coins minted from Brazilian gold that were common currency in England at the time. In Robinson Crusoe, published only a few years before the disaster, Daniel Defoe has his hero valuing his lost wealth in moldores.

Other finds reflecting wealthy passengers include gold pocket watches and three exquisite gold mourning rings, set with precious stones and engraved around the outside with images of skeletons – one with the tiny lettering “memento mori”, meaning “reminder of mortality”. One is inscribed in memory of Daniel Williams, a doctor of divinity and prominent Presbyterian theologian whose library survives in London.

Several iron cannons remain at the site as well as numerous six- and nine-pound cannonballs and a lead musket shot that attests to her primary function as a warship.

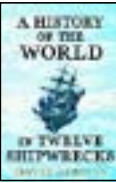
LIFE on board is revealed by fragments of high-quality glass cups appropriate for the passengers and officers, as well as utilitarian pottery and a heavy bronze tap from the ship’s cooking cauldron, a rare artefact from a wreck of this period. The names of the crew are known from the ship’s muster roll and the wills many of them made in Portsmouth before departure, worded in consideration of “the perils and dangers of the Seas”.

More than two years later, a woman named Eunice Weld, whose husband and son both died in the wreck, petitioned the Admiralty for a pension but was turned down because the deaths had not been in action. Then in 1724, a Scottish minister named Robert Wodrow wrote that the morning before the departure of the Royal Anne Galley from Plymouth, a mysterious woman in a mantle and hood approached Lord Belhaven in his chambers

“He belived she was either a god or a devil, for she had warned him not to go aboard the ship, for he would never return; and, as a sign, she told him many secret passages of his life, which he was sure no body but himself could know,” he claimed. “They asked, what he would do then? He said he would go on in his designe, come what would! And went that day to the ship, and in a litle the ship perished, and he in her.”

More than two centuries later, the novelist Wilkie Collins wrote that local people near Lizard Point were still apprehensive about Pistil Meadow, the supposed burial site of many of the victims, a place they regarded “with feelings of awe and horror, and fear to walk near the graves of the drowned men at night”. As a diver, the heightened awareness I feel in a dangerous place means that the emotions of those scenes depicted in the woodcut seem to be imprinted on the seabed, giving extra meaning to the remarkable artefacts that have been recovered.

● *A History of the World in Twelve Shipwrecks* by David Gibbins (W&N, £25) is published tomorrow. For free UK P&P, visit expressbookshop.com or call Express Bookshop on 020 3176 3832



DIVE INTO HISTORY: Maritime author Dr David Gibbins

