

## TENDING THE SIDE

The boatswain's pipe is one of the oldest and most distinctive pieces of personal nautical equipment. A pipe or flute was used in the days of antiquity, by which the galley slaves of Greece and Rome kept stroke. There is a record that the pipe was used in the Crusade of 1248 when the English crossbowmen were called on deck to attack by its signal. The pipe is mentioned by Shakespeare in the *Tempest*, and Pepys refers to its use in his *Naval Notes*.

In time, the pipe came to be used as a badge of office; it was also in some cases a badge of honor. The Lord High Admiral carried a gold pipe on a chain around his neck. A silver one was used by high commanders as a badge of office, or "whistle of command," in addition to the gold whistle of honor. The whistle was used for salutes to distinguished personages, as well as to pass orders, and the old instructions read that on most occasions it was to be blown "three several times." In the action off Brest on 25 April, 1513, between Sir Edward Howard, Lord High Admiral and son of the Earl of Surrey, and the Chevalier Pregant de Bidoux, it is related that when the Lord High Admiral was certain that he would be captured, he threw his gold whistle into the sea. The silver whistle of command was afterwards found on his body. The weight of a standard whistle of honor and names for its part were designated by Henry VIII. The monarch decreed that it should weigh 12 "oons" of gold, an oon being the original ounce. The chain was also to be of gold and to have an equivalent in gold ducats.

Aside from the symbol of the pipe as a badge of office and its use by officers for piping evolutions, it was used at the reception of high personages. Boteler, in his *Dialogues* of 1645, describes the correct procedure. "In receiving, the Prince himself or his Admiral. . . . They were to be received publicly with ceremonies." He adds:

The ship's barge to be sent to fetch the visitor having the cockson with his silver whistle in the stern. . . . Upon the near approach of the barge the noise of the trumpets are to sound and so to hold on until the barge comes within less than musket shot, and that time the trumpets are to cease and all such as carry whistles are to whistle a welcome three several times.

Tending the side with side boys, as we know it in modern practice, originated at a later date. Piping as a ceremony with side boys became the custom. It was customary in the days of sail to hold conferences on the flagships, and to invite officers to dinner while at sea, weather permitting. Sometimes the weather necessitated hoisting the visitors aboard in boatswain's chairs. The pipe was, of course, used for "hoist away" and "avast heaving." Members of the crew did the hoisting; and it is from the aid they rendered in tending the side that the custom originated of having a certain number of men in attendance. In time, it became a nautical gesture of courtesy. In the British Navy today when the captain is reported coming alongside, the officer of the deck gives the order, "hoist him in," even though the accommodation ladder is in use. Tending the side is not to be confused with a guard of honor.

The piping of the side is a distinct nautical courtesy, but the United States Navy has extended it to military, diplomatic, and consular officers, as well as to others of the legislative and executive departments of the government. In the British Navy, Commander Beckett writes that by Admiralty regulations, No Military Officer, Consular Officer, or other civilian is entitled to this form of salute. By the Custom of the Service a corpse of any Naval officer or man is piped over the side, if sent ashore for burial.

It is of interest that at the funerals of both Queen Victoria and King Edward the venerable custom of piping was carried

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FOOTNOTE.—Note President Harding and Admiral H. B. Wilson aft; the captain of the ship and the flag lieutenant at the gangway; the officer of the deck, full marine guard and band, and boatswain at the rail in readiness to pipe the side. The rail is manned. The seamen at salute on the left face outboard when the President leaves the ship. It is exceptional that service uniform is worn, as illustrated; full-dress uniform is prescribed for the reception and departure of Presidents and Sovereigns.

out as the coffins were lowered. In this manner the Royal Navy paid distinct nautical respects to two sovereigns who ever held the "Senior Service" of their empire close to their hearts.

There is a tradition that the present form of the whistle of the boatswain was adopted in commemoration of the defeat and capture of the body of the notorious Scotch pirate, Andrew Barton. Lord Edward Howard, in command of the *Lieon* and the *Jenny Perwin*, made the capture after a severe battle. It is related that Howard took the whistle from the body of Barton. When Howard in time became Lord High Admiral, he caused its adoption. Whistles of other kinds had been in use prior to this date, but it is believed that the design and probably the idea of a more elaborate and costly model as a badge of office sprang from this capture.

In the seventeenth century, it is recorded the master, the boatswain, and the coxswain rated the whistle. The coxswain had charge of the barge and shallop and was at all times to be in readiness to take the captain or admiral ashore. The orders were that the coxswain

is to see her [the barge] trimmed with her carpets and cushions, and to be the person himself in her stern with his silver whistle to cheer up his gang. . . . And this is the lowest officer on the ship that wears a whistle.