

HALB6-1942

THE PAÇO D'ARCOS TOMBSTONE :  
CAPT. CONWAY SHIPLEY

Memory's span is brief, nor has the diffusion of a popular press done much to lengthen it. «Commando raids» are spoken of as if they were something new; and so they are to the present generation who forget, if they ever knew, that the very phrase was even more of a commonplace during the Boer war, or that in the navy of Nelson's day they were still more familiar under the guise of «cutting out expeditions».

*Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona;* there were brave men before the R. A. F. so to say, and one little-remembered hero is recalled by the inscription on a stone at Paço d'Arcos, that pleasant seaside suburb of Lisbon on the north shore of the Tagus. It reads as follows:

«SACRED TO THE MEMORY  
of  
CONWAY SHIPLEY, Esqre  
aged 25 years  
Late Captain of  
His Britannic Majesty's Ship  
«LA NYMPHE»

Who was killed in an attempt to cut an enemy's  
Vessel of War out of the Tagus on the

22nd. April 1808

«Circumstances which human wisdom could not foresee nor any exertion of courage obviate rendered the attack unsuccessful and closed the short but distinguished career of the gallant leader of it.

«But while his name will long live in the Records of Fame and the Remembrance of his Country it is hoped the Brave and Good of every Nation will venerate his ashes and contemplate with respect the last Mansion of  
A Hero».

Junot and his troops were then in occupation of Lisbon, while a British fleet, under Admiral Cotton, lay off the coast. «La Mouette», a French corvette, ordered to carry out patrol designed to stop what Junot deemed the all too frequent communications between Portuguese persons of note and their British friends who passed on both letters and persons to Brazil, lay off Paço d'Arcos. Her activities had evidently made it worth while to send in a cutting out expedition of five boats carrying 150 men under Captain Shipley's command. This set out shortly before midnight on the 22nd April 1808, presumably intending to board the Frenchman by surprise. They were, however, discovered and the boats driven off by gunfire. Not, however, before Captain Shipley and a soldier of the 4th Hanoverian regiment did reach the deck of «La Mouette», where both were killed, apparently by her commander, *lieutenant de vaisseau* Blond Plassan. Perhaps this explains why the body of the gallant captain and, presumably the soldier who boarded with him, was buried at Paço d'Arcos. The monument was in all likelihood set up after the French invaders had left Portugal. In the French bulletin mentioning the attack it is said that thereby the English meant to celebrate St. George's Day, but were disappointed. Not thus, it continues, did the French army recall the Emperor's coronation and the battle of Marengo! These details are taken from Sr. Rocha Martin's «Episodios de la Guerra Peninsular» serially published in the *Jornal do Comércio*.

*Note: The small grove in which the monument stands belongs now to the Military authorities of Paço d'Arcos, and it is necessary to procure a pass to enter.*