

16th August 1995

Dear George Fleming,

Thank you for your splendid book, which arrived the next morning after we spoke on the phone.

I have now had time to read it and congratulate you on the depth of your research, but very particularly on your sensitive handling of this very sad story. I was much moved by your final chapters, reflecting some of the worst sides of human relationships.

To have achieved a memorial to Dick Hagenius in Belfast is a tremendous personal success for you and I congratulate you on it, but

your book is a very necessary  
complement to the memorial. I  
hope it is widely read.

You will be in the hands of your  
publisher, one reviewer, but it deserves  
wide recognition. If you are not  
happy with the way this is going,  
let me know.

Congratulations. My supporting part  
has been very small, but I am  
proud to have given it.

Yours sincerely  
Terence Lewis

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16 Feb 99

*Dear George Fleming,*

You had probably given me up for lost. Right at the start, may I apologise most sincerely for the long delay in acknowledging your kind letter and the copy of your excellent book. There is no excuse, but the reason for the delay is that the College term leading up to Christmas had *GANGES*-like tendencies (frenetic is too leisurely a word) and by the time January came around I wanted first to read the book before writing. Anyway, better late than etc.

And it is a remarkable story you have told. One that ought not to have been overlooked and I congratulate you on helping to right an important omission and on placing a sad story in its proper context. The name of Magennis deserves full credit and your writing (and your efforts to have him marked in Belfast) will stand as lasting memorials to another brave sailor who has helped to contribute to the traditions of the Royal Navy.

As Cunningham observed when facing overwhelmingly superior odds in the Mediterranean, there is no question but that we will do our duty; ships can be re-built in a few years, a tradition takes centuries. Put another way, reputation is a quality that takes patience and time to build; once lost or tarnished it is hard to recover. Megennis is a character all of us who have served any time in the Service will recognise well, crucial in a tight spot, sometimes a handful, but always loyal. You have captured these strands beautifully.

It is also a pleasure to read of another *GANGES* boy carving his niche in history (and I mean you, of course). We were all indeed lucky to have had such a privileged start to our sea-going lives (and indeed to life itself). Properly trained, imbued with a sense of worth and a good job to do and – most of all – we went to sea for the first time secure in the knowledge that we knew everything. Come to think of it, this is possibly why the memory is so positive: it was the last time we did know everything. Most of what follows in life is a process of discovering how little we know ...

Like you, no doubt, I was very sad to see Lord Lewin cross the bar recently. His letter to you was characteristically modest and supportive. I would like to add to his words my warmest good wishes to you on your very significant achievement.

*Yours sincerely,*

*... to stimulate, inspire and teach a new generation to act and react instinctively as naval officers in the front line ...*