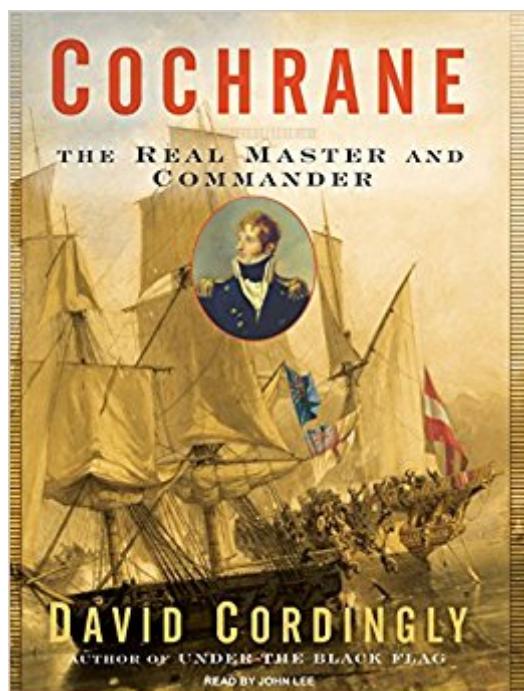


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# Cochrane: The Real Master And Commander



## Synopsis

From the bestselling author of *Under the Black Flag* comes the definitive biography of the swashbuckling nineteenth-century maritime hero upon whom Jack Aubrey and Horatio Hornblower are based. Nicknamed *le loup des mers* ("the sea wolf") by Napoleon, Thomas Cochrane was one of the most daring and successful naval heroes of all time. In this fascinating account of Cochrane's life, historian David Cordingly unearths startling new details about the real-life "Master and Commander," from his daring exploits against the French navy to his role in the liberation of Chile, Peru, and Brazil, and the shock exchange scandal that forced him out of England and almost ended his naval career. Drawing on previously unpublished papers, his own travels, wide reading, and the kind of original research that distinguished *The Billy Ruffian*, Cordingly tells the rip-roaring story of the archetypal romantic hero who conquered the seas and, in the process, defined his era.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thomas Cochrane was one of the Royal Navy's greatest frigate captains and most controversial figures during the Napoleonic Wars. A counterpoint to Horatio Nelson and his band of brothers, who were masters of fleet actions and blockade, Cochrane was a daring commerce raider whose prizes were so rich that he sailed into port with solid gold candlesticks lashed to his mastheads. He was a master as well of coastal raiding and cutting-out expeditions, culminating in the crippling of a French squadron at Basque Roads in 1809. Cordingly, an established historian of Nelson's navy, tells Cochrane's story with flair and sympathy—especially when recounting his professional destruction by a corrupt and inefficient naval establishment, which he challenged from his seat in

Parliament with the same energy he turned against the French at sea. Cochrane's support of radical domestic causes further marked him, and in 1814 he was convicted in a Stock Exchange scandal whose details remain unclear. Surmounting disgrace and imprisonment, Cochrane in 1818 was offered command of revolutionary Chile's navy. He led it to victory against its Spanish enemy, then repeated the performance for another rebel state, Brazil. Less successful fighting for the Greeks against the Turks, he returned to Britain a national hero, had his case successfully reviewed and was restored to rank and honor. Small wonder that Cochrane's career was a major source of Patrick O'Brian's popular series, though Cochrane might have considered Jack Aubrey a bit of a bore.

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"John Lee's deep, booming voice and skill with every accent make him the ideal narrator for an audiobook swimming in a sea of nineteenth-century nautical words." ---AudioFile

I think I am correct in saying that I have read all of the biographies of Thomas, Lord Cochrane, published in the last few decades, and I would rate this volume as the best of all, giving good coverage of all phases of Cochrane's long naval and political careers. Unlike some authors, Cordingly is careful to match Cochrane's own accounts of his activities against other primary sources, and to give equal balance to Cochrane's activities in the wars for South American independence with those during the Napoleonic Wars. Cochrane was an extraordinary man, his genuine history perhaps more amazing than any of the fiction inspired by his real-world activities, this is a biography that does him justice, lauding his good qualities and achievements without hiding his flaws and failures.

"Cochrane: The Real Master and Commander" by David Cordingly is the biography of Thomas Cochrane, British naval commander during and after the Napoleonic Wars. His exploits have been drawn on for such fictional naval heroes Horatio Hornblower and Jack Aubrey. Cochrane not only served with the British navy but also was instrumental in the fight for colonial independence of Chile, Brazil, and Greece. Always outspoken, he made many enemies in the government resulting in false accusations of stock fraud, imprisonment, and loss of national honors. His forty year fight to clear his name took much the same courage as battles on the sea. This story of a little remembered naval hero needs to be read.

Chances are you've already heard of Horatio Hornblower, Jack Aubrey, maybe even Frank Mildmay. But how about Thomas Cochrane, the real life British naval officer upon whose life and career all of these fictional characters are at least in part based? That's what I thought. Don't worry, David Cordingly's *Cochrane: The Real Master and Commander* has got you covered. The best biographies illuminate not only their title character but the time and place in which that character lives, and this book does that in spades, with some eye-opening revelations. For one thing, I had no idea that the British Navy during the Napoleonic Wars were on the whole, well, pirates. Oh yes, they were, and I'll tell you why. The British Navy was essentially a money-making proposition in those days. Whenever a British ship caught an enemy ship, it would be sent back to England where it would be assessed by the Admiralty and assigned a value, one-eighth of which was then shared among the officers and crew of the capturing ship. The more enemy ships they captured, the more prize money they made, and Cochrane, whose improvident father had cost the family the hereditary estate, was forever in a row with whoever was in charge about getting full value for the ships he captured. An eye ever to the main chance Cochrane may have had, but he was also by everyone's account, even his enemies', of which he made many, a master mariner. Cordingly writes that some of Cochrane's actions, described in full in you-are-there prose, are still cited by naval historians as the best of their kind. He was his own worst enemy on land but at sea he was unsurpassed. He wreaked havoc with Napoleon's navy up and down the coasts of France and Spain, and not for nothing did the French call him "le loup de mer," or the Seawolf. Ashore, though, he involved himself in radical politics and made enemies of people in power, especially in the Navy. He was intemperate and mouthy, which, allied with a burning and fatal desire to achieve better pay and conditions for his officers and men, started the downward spiral. The British Admiralty just wasn't there yet. When, inevitably, he made England too hot to hold him, he went to South America, where as, sequentially, chief of naval operations for both countries he assisted immeasurably in Chile and Brazil's wars of independence with Spain, and later and less gloriously in Greece's war of independence with Turkey. He had a keen scientific curiosity and the patience for experimentation which caused him to spend a great portion of his aforesaid prize money on experimenting with, among other things, lamps, steam engines and bitumin (aka asphalt). He was a passionate and faithful husband to his not always worthy wife, and what money he didn't spend on scientific experimentation and petitions for reinstatement in the British Navy was employed to bail their worthless children out of hock. This book is beautifully produced, with many detailed maps, marvelous cutaway illustrations of two of Cochrane's ships so you can practically walk the decks right next to him, three sections of contemporary paintings of friends and colleagues, including many portraits of Cochrane himself at

every age, ships of his time, seascapes of sea battles and ports of call and scenes of engagement. There is even a glossary at the back to teach you the difference between bombarde and bumboat, and more illustrations throughout, such as a reproduction of the recruiting poster Cochrane had made up to entice a ship's crew to the Pallas. "My lads," says the poster, "The rest of the GALLEONS with the Treasure from LA PLATA are waiting half loaded at CARTAGENA...Such a Chance perhaps will never occur again."That was appealing to their better natures, all right.Cordingly's Cochrane is a rousing tale, all the more astonishing because it's all absolutely true. A wonderful read.

Very objectively written capturing the interest especially to me who has lived in Brazil. Down here in Argentina where I live now little is said about Cochrane's conquests that were necessary for the independence of Brazil, Chile and Peru. I was at the former fort of Valdivia, Chile ignorant of what really happened there till I read this book. The detail of Cochrane's brilliance in his landward attacks on the forts is fascinating.

After getting hooked on the Aubrey/Maturin series and re-reading Hornblower, I could not resist reading the biography of Captain Lord Cochrane. Wow, it reads much like a novel, but without all the happy endings. The real Aubrey had many more problems and insecurities and failures than the fictional character. I was honestly hoping to read that his old shipmates did stand in front of the pillory to prevent the abuse, however it never came to that. Also his South American escapades are much more daring in history than represented in the novels. Overall it was hard to put down and I expect this recap of Cochrane's career will be the last. It is very comprehensive...no fluff here. I highly recommend!

This is a well written review of this naval hero's career, including his daring work for the British navy during the Napoleonic Wars, and independence revolutions in Peru, Brazil and Greece. His scientific and invention focus all throughout his career is well documented. Also well detailed - but not too detailed, leaving out a lot of the behind the scene maneuvering and escapades - is his up and down political career. Also well detailed, with plenty of examples, is how he was his own worse enemy in many of his failures. He was an amazing man, completely outspoken. He certainly did not "Go along to get along", and in the end it curtailed just how much more of a great person he could have been. The naval exploits are well documented and described, and you get a good view in to the man who inspired many fictional naval heroes, such as Patrick O'Brian's Jack Aubrey

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