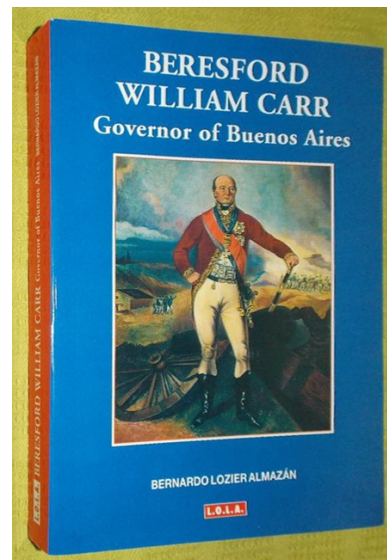
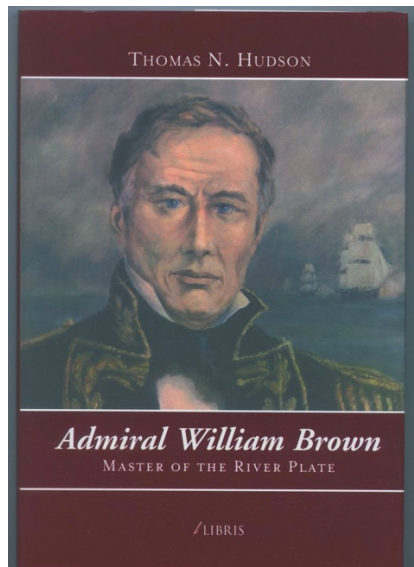


## The In & Out Club Library

15 October 2020

Since the Club is affiliated to a great number of clubs in South America, and to two Argentinian clubs in particular – The Jockey Club Argentino and the Circulo Militar, both in Buenos Aires - and since today is the anniversary of the day in 1809 when the port of Buenos Aires was opened to world trade, it seems appropriate to look at two of the Library's quite substantial collection of books on the Argentine.



The first is Thomas Hudson's biography, *Admiral William Brown: Master of the River Plate* (Brown lived from 1777 to 1857); and the second is the English translation of Bernardo Lozier Almazán's book on another William – William Carr Beresford (1768-1854). These two men were both very near contemporaries, both Irish, and both have a slight confusion over their names, Brown possibly being the son of a man called Gannon, and having a mysterious youth about which no author agrees; and Beresford being the illegitimate child of one or other (or both) of his parents, Lord George de La Poer Beresford and Lady Elizabeth Monk of Charleville.



Beresford was a friend of the Duke of Wellington, or Wellesley as he was then, and by 1801 had been promoted to colonel. Shortly afterwards, in 1804, Britain, whose navy had captured four

Spanish ships bearing a substantial treasure from their Argentine colonies, found itself at war with Spain; it allied with the revolutionary Francisco de Miranda, who was trying to liberate his country, Venezuela, from the toils of Spanish rule. As an auxiliary plan to this collaboration, Britain, under the second premiership of William Pitt, also aimed at capturing Buenos Aires and the Rio de la Plata, which would bring in its wake great wealth and fertile lands. Beresford sailed in the expedition set up to achieve this, under Rear Admiral Sir Home Popham, playing a part on the way in liberating the Cape of Good Hope into British control. He was then put by Popham in charge of the force designed to capture Buenos Aires, and was to be its Governor when it fell.



Buenos Aires in 1809

In the meantime Pitt had died, leaving his country in political turmoil, and the fleet with no cut-and-dried orders. It also needed provisions and back-up, so Beresford advised that it should capture Montevideo first, allowing it to remain in a defensible stronghold whilst waiting for reinforcements. Popham, however, wanted booty, and an easy victory to impress Parliament, and insisted on Buenos Aires, so Beresford led his troops there, and (in spite of landing in a swamp, and having the main bridge burned down before him) took possession on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1806 of the city - the Viceroy, Sobre Monte, having fled with most of his army.



Charles Fouqueray (1869-1956), *La Reconquista de Buenos Aires*, 1909 (Beresford surrenders to Santiago de Liniers)



Unfortunately Beresford was only governor of Buenos Aires for a month before it was recaptured by the much braver Santiago de Liniers, who took many of the British prisoner. But the news of the English victory reached home before the news of Beresford's surrender, resulting in the production of commemorative books, handkerchiefs, fans and medals extolling his triumph, and elevating him into a hero, alongside Popham, George Washington, and Miranda.



William Brown as a young man, and just before his death in 1857, at the age of eighty

William Brown's adventures had a later fruition. He had been pressed into the Navy in the 1790s, and by 1812 was living in Buenos Aires with his wife and baby son. The Argentinian governor offered him command of the local fleet against the Spanish, against whom the population had been in revolt (a state which the British had earlier hoped to capitalize on). Brown defeated the Spanish, both in the bay above Buenos Aires, and outside Montevideo; after which he became a corsair licenced by the Argentinian government to attack the Spanish. By 1826 he was Admiral of the Argentine fleet, and defeated the Brazilian fleet in a number of battles, and later on the Uruguayans. He was 68 when he finally retired, and is regarded as a hero in Argentina, having a vast number of streets named after him, and commemorative stamps issued by the Irish government, and at various times from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> in Argentina.

Both books cast a fascinating light on British ventures outside Europe at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the country was still embroiled in the Napoleonic wars. Their protagonists are also engaging characters; Brown was cast in the mould of Raleigh and Marlborough; a brilliant soldier with a hint of the piratical. Beresford was expert at military organization; he redeemed his reputation by taking charge of the Portuguese army, reforming it and leading it against the French General Soult, chasing him out of Portugal. He took part in all the major battles in Portugal and Spain against Napoleon's forces, as well as at Bordeaux and Toulouse, and then spent thirty-three years as Governor of Jersey. His adventures and Brown's are thoroughly worth exploring further.



William Brown's tomb in Buenos Aires