

# General Whitelocke—Vanquished at Buenos Aires in 1807

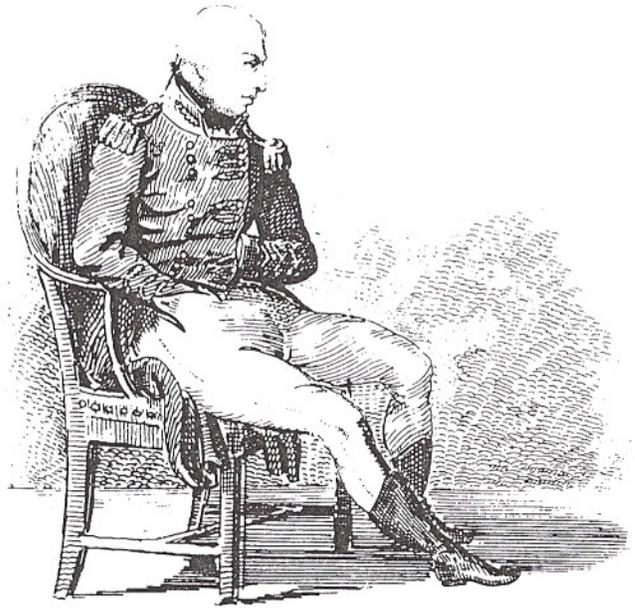
by Jeremy Archer

It was the morning of Thursday, 28 January 1808 and the Court-Martial had assembled at Chelsea Hospital to hear the charges read. The four charges on which Lieutenant General John Whitelocke was arraigned can be summarised as follows: firstly, that the people of Buenos Aires were incited to resist by excessive British demands when they seemed likely to come to terms; secondly, that the conduct of the attack on Buenos Aires had been mishandled; thirdly, that there had been no effective control or mutual support of the different columns involved; and fourthly, that the country had been evacuated when there was still a chance that the situation could be redeemed.

Lieutenant-General John Whitelocke, lately the Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's Forces in South America, pleaded "not guilty" to all four charges. The Judge Advocate, the Honourable Richard Ryder, then took the opportunity of addressing the President, General the Right Honourable Sir William Medows, and the General Officers of the Court-Martial as follows:

"Though you are met together on the most important occasion in the military history of this country, that ever called for an enquiry like the present, I shall not detain you long in opening these charges—the subject is too painful for unnecessary details, and the events are too recent and too deeply impressed upon the memory and the feelings of every man to require that I should take up much of your time in this stage of the proceeding. It is needless to tell you, that the expedition under the command of General Whitelocke, which was considered in the opinion at least of those who planned it, as more than sufficient in point of force to accomplish its object, has totally failed—that it failed with the lamentable loss of a large proportion of the gallant army engaged in it—that it failed not only in accomplishing its object, but that it ended in the absolute surrender of those valuable advantages which the valour of the British troops, under another commander, had previously acquired in the important post of Montevideo."

He continued: "By this most unfortunate event all the hopes have been defeated which had been justly and generally entertained of discovering new markets for our manufactures, of giving a wider scope to the spirit and enterprise of our merchants, of opening new sources of treasure, and new fields for exertion, in supplying either the rude wants of countries emerging from barbarism, or the artificial and increasing demands of luxury



General Whitelocke at his Court Martial.

and refinement in those remote quarters of the globe."

There is no doubt that a full examination of the circumstances surrounding the ignominious defeat at Buenos Aires was considered a matter of national importance. At least General Whitelocke had the privilege of being tried by his "peers" and no less than 20 General Officers had been summoned as members of the Court-Martial: among their number were General Viscount Lake, until the previous year the Commander-in-Chief in India, and Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, who was to lose his life at Corunna less than a year later. *The Times* provided remarkably extensive coverage of the Court Martial: there were two special supplements, concluding with the issue for

## The River Plate Estuary.



16 March 1808, which carried not a word of advertising and which was entirely devoted to the trial.

The accused, Lieutenant-General John Whitelocke, had enjoyed a relatively unconventional upbringing for a senior military officer of the period. His birth on 13 March 1758 and subsequent baptism on 22 March 1758 are recorded in the parish registers of St Catherine, Coleman Street in the City of London. He was a son of Sarah Liddiard, herself the daughter of a Hungerford maltster but, for some unknown reason, his name was originally recorded in the parish register as John Brown. He was one of four natural sons of John Whitelocke, steward to the fourth Earl of Aylesbury, by Sarah Liddiard and is said to have been a descendant of Bulstrode Whitelocke, keeper of the Great Seal, distinguished parliamentarian and prolific author.

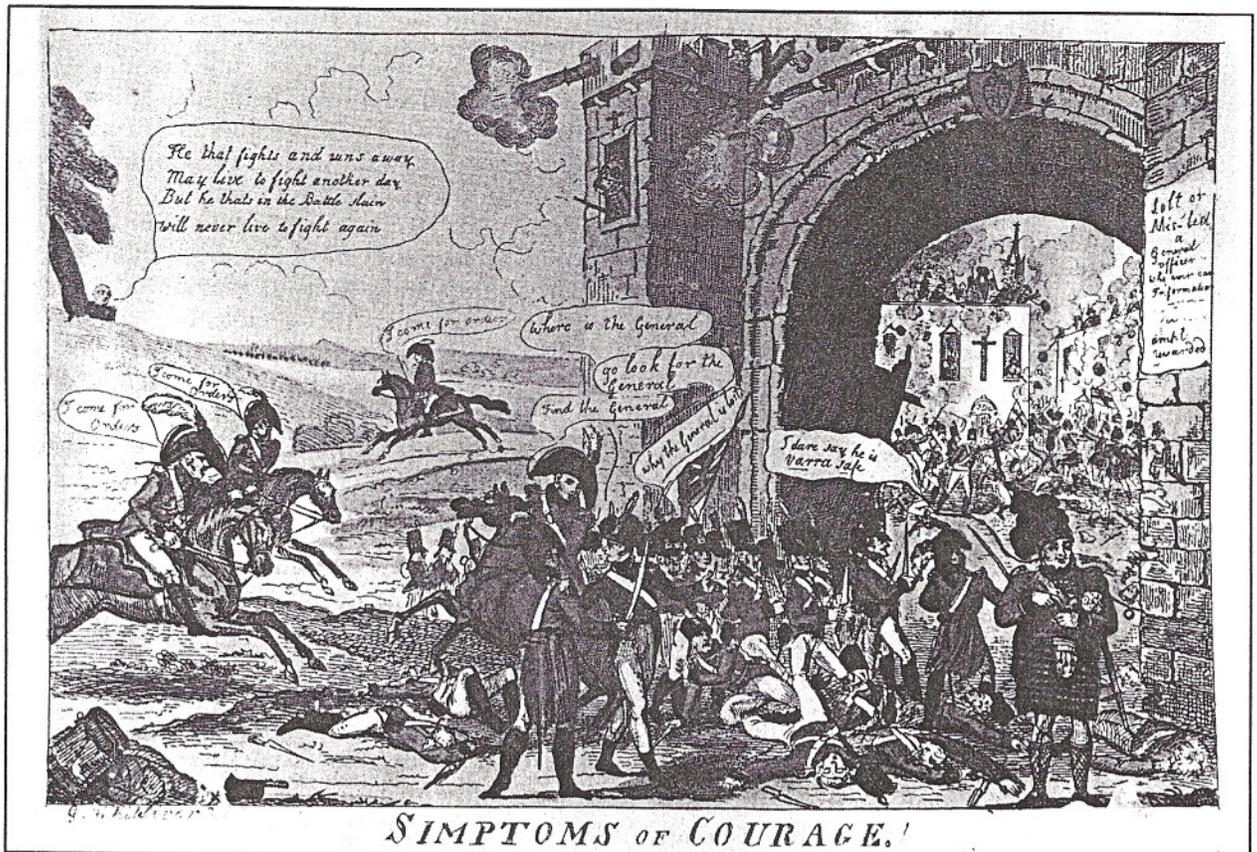
Whitelocke was educated at Marlborough Grammar School and, under the patronage of Lord Aylesbury, was subsequently found a place at Lochee's military academy at Chelsea. Through the influence of Lord Barrington, he obtained a commission as Ensign in 14th Foot on 14 December 1778. He did not squander these opportunities and his early progress was rapid.

First of all, he made a good marriage when, in a double wedding on 8 April 1783 at St Catherine's, Jamaica, he married Mary, daughter of William Lewis of Cornwall, Jamaica and his wife Jane, daughter of Dr Matthew Gregory. His brother-in-

law Matthew Lewis was later Deputy Secretary of War while his wife's sister, Elizabeth Catherine, married at the same ceremony, Captain Robert Brownrigg (later General Sir Robert Brownrigg), a fellow officer and the conqueror of the Kingdom of Kandy in 1815. Sir Robert Brownrigg also held at different times the important appointments of Military Secretary and Quartermaster-General. In the manner of those times and since he had no family wealth behind him, Whitelocke may have owed much of his progress to the interest and influence of these two sponsors.

Not that his service was without distinction. He saw active service in 1793-94 in the French part of the West Indian island of St Domingo (now Haiti). He helped to capture the fort at the mole at Cape St Nicholas and assisted in the successful landing at Tiberon. Subsequently his force stormed Fort L'Acul and he was allowed to lead the principal column in the attack on Port-au-Prince on 4 June 1794. In a letter from Whitehall dated 28 April 1794 the Right Honourable Henry Dundas wrote to Sir Adam Williamson, Governor of Jamaica: "I am to desire that you will not fail, on this occasion, to signify to Lieutenant-Colonel Whitelocke His Majesty's most perfect and entire approbation of his conduct, and of the gallant behaviour of his officers, and the small detachment under his command, in taking by storm the fort of L'Acul, under the great disadvantages with which that service was performed." This letter was produced by General

Lost or Mislaid—A General Officer.



Whitelocke as part of his defence at the Court-Martial. Altogether he spent ten years of his service in the West Indies and on 1 September 1795 was accorded the considerable honour of being appointed the first Colonel of the 6th West India Regiment when it was raised.

With influential supporters and a respectable military service record he enjoyed steady advancement in his chosen career. He was appointed Brigadier-General in Guernsey on 12 January 1798 and Lieutenant-Governor of Portsmouth on 29 May 1799. These were important posts in the light of the deteriorating nature of the war with France prior to the Peace of Amiens. He was promoted Major-General on 18 June 1798 and Lieutenant-General on 30 October 1805, shortly after which he became Inspector-General of Recruiting. In addition he succeeded General Sir Eyre Coote, nephew of the victor of Plassey, as Colonel of the 89th Regiment on 26 May 1806. They had much in common: Sir Eyre Coote also suffered at the hands of Sir Home Popham (see below), being captured on 18 May 1798 during the latter's expedition to cut the sluices at Ostend; more unusually, Sir Eyre Coote was also subsequently cashiered and deprived of all honours, in his case for indecent conduct, "his brain having been affected by severe wounds and service in tropical climates" according to the Dictionary of National Biography.

By 1806, although the danger of invasion of England by France appeared to have passed after Nelson's decisive victory at Trafalgar, the situation in Europe had once again deteriorated. As a result of Napoleon's successful Continental blockade, trade had become increasingly difficult and dangerous. The merchants were clamouring for new markets for their products while the public demanded further military successes. It was a vulnerable time for England and peripheral operations seemed to offer the best opportunities for thwarting Napoleon's grand design. Some of these demands were satisfied when the comprehensive defeat of the Batavian Republic at the battle of Blouberg in the Cape on 8 January 1806 regained that colony for the British.

The renewal of war between England and Spain that same year provided just the sort of opportunity which attracted Commodore Sir Home Popham, the successful Royal Naval commander at the battle of Blouberg. "Particularly in the matter of prize money, which was frequently the main object of his operations" according to Sir John Fortescue in his "History of the British Army". Substantial prize money might result from the interception of the steady flow of gold from Spanish possessions into Napoleon's treasury. On his own initiative Sir Home Popham sailed with his entire squadron of nine warships from the Cape and invaded the Spanish provinces on the Rio de

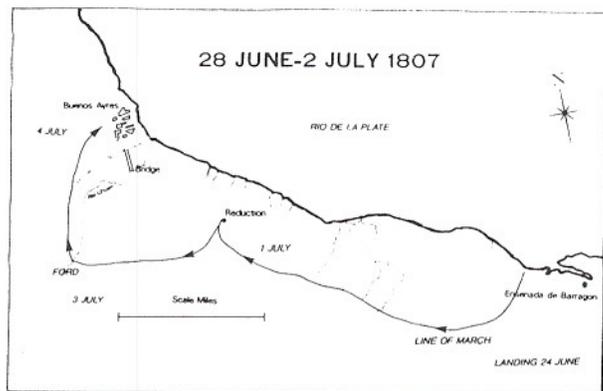
la Plata. He had embarked a military force under Brigadier-General William Carr Beresford, later 1st Viscount Beresford, consisting largely of the 71st Regiment.

Once again the British met with only slight resistance and Buenos Aires was taken. As Fortescue noted: "Sir Home Popham, for his part, took the extraordinary step of sending a circular round to the leading merchants of London, reporting that he had opened a gigantic market for their goods and inviting them to take advantage of it." He wrote, inviting participation, to the Master of Lloyd's Coffee House and further tempted doubters by despatching home large amounts of money and treasure, which were then paraded round the City of London. Subsequently Sir Home Popham was tried by Court-Martial for his reckless actions but, unlike General Whitelocke, he escaped with a severe reprimand and was almost immediately given further employment.

News of Sir Home Popham's victory only reached England on 13 September 1806, by which time Buenos Aires had already been regained by the Spanish. However, El Dorado beckoned and dreams of great riches as well as the exotic lifestyle described by the conqueror led to the despatch of a second expedition from England. This included many merchants, speculators and opportunists as well as a force of 4,000 men, under the command of Brigadier-General Sir Samuel Auchmuty.

Initially the local population had been welcoming to the British but the unscrupulous practices of the English merchants as well as the quality and price of the goods offered soon alienated them. Before Sir Samuel Auchmuty's fleet had even sailed, General Beresford's small force had been routed by the Spaniards led by General Santiago Liniers and Sr Puemdon, one of the municipal officers of Buenos Aires. On 12 August 1806 General Beresford and his men were taken prisoner and, despite an agreement concerning repatriation, were removed some hundreds of miles into the interior of the country. On 16 January 1807, with Buenos Aires lost, the second fleet was obliged to anchor on the other side of the estuary close to Montevideo.

There were preliminary skirmishes but Montevideo was eventually captured after a fierce action on 3 February 1807. Over 6,000 English subjects, of whom around one third were traders and bounty hunters, were now stranded there. Despite the essentially speculative nature of such an expedition far from home, it was decided to send more reinforcements from England in an attempt to regain Buenos Aires. There was considerable dissent in the Cabinet over who should command the expedition. Sir Samuel Auchmuty had already achieved considerable success against the same enemy; the popular hero of Maida, Sir John Stuart, was another strong contender but, after



#### Whitelocke's Line of March.

much discussion, General Whitelocke was appointed to that command on 4 February 1807. It was a fateful decision. On 6 March he was given the additional responsibility of Civil Governor "in the event of His Majesty's authority being established in the southern provinces of South America".

Whitelocke sailed in the frigate "Thisbe" at the end of March 1807 and reached Montevideo on 10 May. To augment the garrison of Montevideo and the very modest total of 1,800 reinforcements sent with him, he was given the more substantial group of 4,000 men under the command of Brigadier-General Robert Craufurd. This force, a substantial part of which had by then been at sea for over nine months, had originally been allocated the task of establishing a military presence on the west coast of South America.

It is perhaps worth remarking that there are some striking similarities between this campaign and the struggle to recover the Falklands Islands by the British Task Force almost exactly 175 years later. The enemy, the size of the forces involved, the logistics problems, the prevailing weather conditions, the problems involved in inter-Service co-operation, the nature of the terrain and the security and intelligence inadequacies offer scope for the type of detailed analysis which is, however, inappropriate for this article.

At his disposal Whitelocke had around 9,000 combatants although, as the seriousness of the situation finally dawned on Whitehall, further reinforcements totalling over 2,000 were sent from England. The recapture of Buenos Aires was Whitelocke's first responsibility and, due to the difficulties of victualling such a large a force at Montevideo during winter and also because of the approaching rains, he decided to move as soon as possible.

This decision was taken despite many unresolved difficulties, some of which should be mentioned now because of the considerable influence they were to exert on the subsequent campaign. His force was short of food, particularly flour, and, although plenty of wheat was to be found in abandoned farmhouses during the march, the men

were ordered to travel light and leave their camp kettles behind so it could not be prepared. It was intended to catch sheep and bullocks on the march but there were far too few "lasso men", specialist trappers, to serve all the marching troops. Difficulties were also encountered in procuring horses, which meant that only two squadrons of cavalry could be mounted. Pack transport was limited and consequently each man would have to carry three day's rations on his back. Only half a dozen small mule carts were available to move supplies from the water's edge to any depot.

The Commissary, Joseph Bullock, had always anticipated that "the landing would not be more than five or six miles" from Buenos Aires. He had also been led to believe "that the British forces would be in possession of the town of Buenos Aires in the course of the second, or at furthest the third, day after landing". According to the subsequent testimony, Whitelocke did not see the Commissary more than once before leaving Montevideo. These, and many other factors, did not augur well for the coming campaign and give some indication of the general lack of communication, preparation and planning.

Declining to wait for the reinforcements from England, and leaving 1,350 men to garrison Montevideo, Whitelocke proceeded with a landing on the other side of the Rio de la Plata estuary. Little useful intelligence was available in Montevideo but, due to the depth of water and desirability of naval protection for the landing as well as recent defensive moves by the Spaniards, the chosen landing place was Ensenada de Barragón. Although it was nearly 30 miles from Buenos Aires, Ensenada, which means harbour, was chosen in preference to Point Quilmes after a naval survey by Captain Thomson of the "Fly" accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Richard Bourke of the Quartermaster-General's Department.

No land survey was possible but, since Whitelocke was informed that Ensenada was the common place of embarkation for the inhabitants of Buenos Aires, it was presumed to have good communications with the city. This proved to be quite inaccurate. The alternative landing place of Point Quilmes was less than half the distance from Buenos Aires. However, intelligence had been received that Quilmes was dominated by an enemy battery on the high ground. The choice of Ensenada was debated at some length at the subsequent Court-Martial. It was extremely significant that, due to the swampy terrain, Ensenada proved to be almost 50 miles from Buenos Aires by the route chosen.

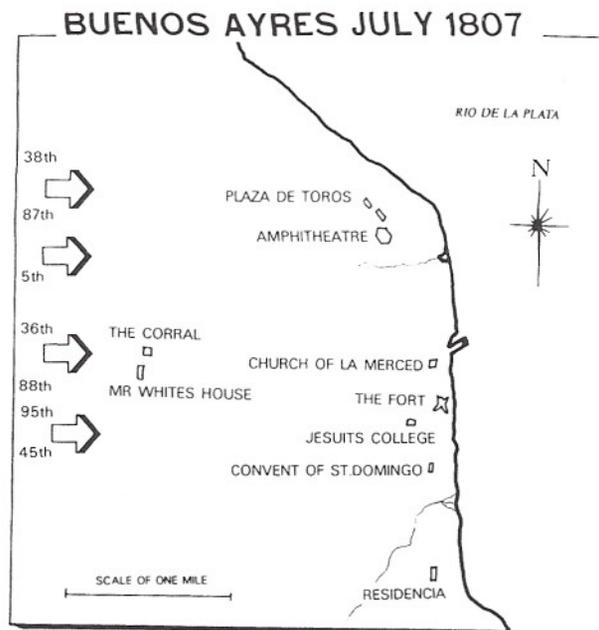
On 28 June 1807 Whitelocke landed at Ensenada de Barragón with his army of 7,822 rank and file. This force consisted of nine battalions of infantry (5th Regiment, 36th Regiment,

38th Regiment, 40th Regiment, 45th Regiment, 87th Regiment, 88th Regiment, 95th Regiment and 9 companies of light infantry); two and a half regiments of cavalry (6th Dragoon Guards, 9th Light Dragoons and 17th Light Dragoons), of which only 150 men of the 17th Light Dragoons were mounted. Only 16 field guns of the 28 pieces of ordnance available were landed due to shortage of horses to pull them and also because of the desire to maintain an artillery reserve. Somewhat surprisingly, some of the acclimatised and experienced troops, such as two companies of the 38th Regiment, were left to garrison Montevideo while unseasoned soldiers were pressed into action straight from their seemingly interminable voyage.

After landing Whitelocke's army was organised into four brigades under Brigadier-Generals Sir Samuel Auchmuty, Robert Craufurd, The Honourable William Lumley and Colonel Mahon. The landing itself was unopposed and most of the troops were able to reach the shore without getting wet but then the want of good intelligence told against them. In advancing from the shore they encountered a swamp that was two miles wide and nowhere less than 2 ft deep. Needless to say, the failings of the commissariat were also cruelly exposed and the men were soon tired and dirty. After getting stuck in the morass, five of the field guns, four-pounders originally been captured from the Spaniards, were spiked and abandoned as the most inefficient pieces available to the force. In the event, the transport arrangements were quite inadequate and it did not prove possible to provide sufficient for the army after it had advanced from the interim position at Reduction. There were only 40 horses available for carrying provisions or sick and wounded personnel. Around 17,000 pounds of biscuits were left on the ground at Ensenada, having been destroyed by the kicking of the horses or lost in the swamp.

The ground, once they had moved out of the swamp, proved to be open but intersected every two or three miles by more swamps or creeks. Some of these were difficult to pass and all of them required the troops to wade through deep water. Insufficient guides were available to help find the easiest routes and the local population, whenever they were encountered, which was rarely, proved to be "implacably hostile". There was constant harassment from Spanish horsemen and the pace was slow in order to enable the artillery to keep up. Given such additional factors, it is perhaps unsurprising that soldiers who had spent over nine months at sea proved to be less than fit for the rigours of active service.

After prodigious labours, and at the cost of a large number of men who fell out of the march as stragglers and were picked off by the marauding horsemen, the village of Reduction was reached just before sunset on 1 July. This village was two



miles inland from Point Quilmes, where the party might originally have landed and where provisions were now awaiting them. Despite their tiredness and the fact that the prepared meal had to be discarded uneaten, Whitelocke decided to press on almost immediately. This caused considerable aggravation among both his commanders and the dispirited soldiery.

The next challenge was to cross the Rio Chuelo. This river blocked all possible approaches to Buenos Aires and the expedition's conspicuous lack of knowledge of the terrain led to indecision as to the best route to choose. In the event they had a stroke of luck when retreating Spanish horsemen led two brigades to a ford which they had previously believed to be quite impassable. These two brigades, under Whitelocke's second-in-command, Major-General John Leveson-Gower, crossed the ford late on the afternoon of 2 July. This move surprised the enemy, who had expected the British to cross the Rio Chuelo by the one bridge, where they had massed over 9,000 men and 50 guns. By a stroke of good fortune, the route across that bridge was discarded by the British after a cursory reconnaissance suggested that the wooden structure might be on fire.

An immediate British attack "succeeded so perfectly" that "the enemy's infantry were completely routed". Seven hundred prisoners and 32 pieces of cannon were taken. Unfortunately, in the gathering gloom, Leveson-Gower felt unable to press home his advantage due to uncertain dispositions, and the troops were pulled back. The Spanish defences had in fact been outflanked since they were expecting an attack from the north and not the west where this unexpected thrust had appeared. Apparently the Spanish had obtained intelligence of Whitelocke's plans and he indeed intended a formal assault from the north of the

city. According to General Craufurd's testimony: "From all that I have heard since, I am convinced that if the main division of the army under General Whitelocke had been as near as I thought they might have been, we certainly should have taken the town with ease. I have very strong doubts whether we might not have taken it with General Leveson-Gower's corps, I think we should."

Early the following morning General Leveson-Gower wrote to General Liniers and offered him terms since "our force is so considerable, that I believe, in candour, you cannot doubt of the ultimate result". A defiant retort was sent by Colonel Elio on behalf of General Liniers: "That the Spanish General has a sufficient number of brave troops, commanded by brave chiefs, full of desire to die in defence of their country, and that this is the moment to shew their patriotism." The stage was thus set for the decisive battle of the campaign.

Meanwhile Whitelocke was leading the main body slowly forward by the more northerly route. Shortly after daybreak on 3 July they found a safe but narrow ford. It was after noon before they were across and it was mid-afternoon before the entire force was united once more on the west side of the city. According to Whitelocke himself: "... the unfortunate separation of the army on the 2nd, which I must ever consider as the first origin of all my misfortunes." Needless to say, this unintended separation was later the subject of bitter recriminations.

Having finally arrived, Whitelocke conferred with Leveson-Gower, who, on the basis of his rather limited experience of Buenos Aires, recommended that the force should be divided into no less than 13 separate columns. It was proposed that these should then advance as long as many streets towards the centre. Whitelocke decided to adopt Leveson-Gower's plan although it is plain that their relationship was breaking down. On the following day, the 4 July, according to Leveson-Gower, Whitelocke said: "... he considered me as his declared enemy, and that he would supersede me in the situation that I held as a staff-officer in that army."

Lieutenant Colonel Dennis Pack, now commanding the left wing of the light brigade but previously commander of the 71st Regiment during General Beresford's expedition, stated to the Court-Martial: "General Whitelocke appeared to me then as a man intending to act contrary to what was his own judgement; and I was inclined the more to that opinion, having seen a paper that the intended mode of attack would not be resorted to under any other circumstances." It appears that Whitelocke did not consult Pack on the peculiar nature of the city or the plan, before orders had been issued—this was to tell against him subsequently.

The layout and general construction of Buenos

Aires provided unusual challenges for any assaulting force. The city was laid out as a grid of 140 yard-long squares with an overall size of around two square miles: thus there were many access roads from which to choose. The tightly-packed houses were built of soft brick with no wood used in their construction: therefore they did not burn and the artillery fire was of limited effect. With their flat roofs and parapets, the houses were ideally adapted for defensive purposes and the limited number of pick-axes issued to the troops proved to be useless in breaking open the strong doors and windows. No scaling ladders were available so it proved impossible to assault the fort. The Spanish were already known to be formidable street-fighters, particularly in defending their own territory. Perhaps realising the many advantages held by the defenders of the city, the British made some effort, through the sudden withdrawal of pickets in contact with the enemy, to entice them into the open. However, these were unsuccessful.

Four gunboats and two schooners were available to offer naval support for the attack. However, Whitelocke did not consult Rear-Admiral George Moore, the senior Royal Naval officer, or even inform him of his plans. Any chance of an effective combined operation, thought by Admiral Moore to have been "practicable", was thereby lost. The ships might even have been able to provide "iron crows" to help force entry into the houses but no such request was made.

However, this is anticipating some of the problems facing the attackers. Due to the complications of briefing the officers of the different columns on the complex plan, it was decided to delay the attack by a further 24 hours until daylight on 5 July. A total of 4,500 British soldiers were now facing approximately 9,000 Spanish regulars and militia supplemented by around 6,000 irregulars determined to defend their property.

The 13 columns advanced along the chosen routes at 6.30 a.m. but they soon discovered that the Spanish had been given more than adequate time to regroup. After a period of deceptive calm, the fighting began in earnest. On the extreme left Sir Samuel Auchmuty's brigade was deflected from its course but eventually reached the river, occupied a group of houses and raised the union flag. The Plaza de Toros in the northern suburbs was captured after a bloody battle between the Spaniards and the 38th and 87th Regiments.

Further south Lumley's brigade suffered a major disaster: both wings of the 88th Regiment were trapped in the vicinity of the Church of La Mercad, forced to surrender and were escorted into the fort. Lumley eventually extricated what was left of the 36th Regiment and joined Sir Samuel Auchmuty to the north but the bulk of his brigade had been sacrificed and nothing had been gained.

On the extreme right good progress was made: the 45th Regiment seized a strong position on the south eastern flank of the city where it would have been easy to communicate with the fleet. However, further north there was another debacle. Crauford and Pack led their forces through the streets to a position just south of the fort. An extremely bloody battle ensued, centred on the Jesuit's College and the Church of San Domingo. After suffering losses amounting to over half their strength, this brigade also surrendered to General Liniers .

Whitelocke had situated his headquarters at Mr White's house about 250 yards outside the city and separated from it by orchards and gardens. He stayed either there, or at the neighbouring Corralis de Miserere, a larger open space, for the entire day while the drama unfolded. The hedges surrounding both places severely limited the view of the battlefield and consequently he remained unaware of the seriousness of the situation or the extent of his losses.

Matters were not helped by the fact that his staff proved to be less than zealous in attending to their duties and keeping their commander informed of events on the battlefield. At the Court-Martial much was made of Whitelocke's lack of "personal exertion" in trying to understand or control the situation. It was not until soon after daylight on 6 July that Whitelocke clearly understand the situation when he received a proposal offering terms for his own withdrawal from a confident General Liniers.

Whitelocke was not in a strong position. His downhearted force had suffered nearly 3,000 casualties including over 400 killed and nearly 2,000 taken prisoner. Although some successes had been gained and there still remained over 6,000 effectives, it was clear that these troops had lost confidence in their commander and their stomach for further fighting. Even if Buenos Aires could be captured it was evident that, at this time of crisis, England could not spare sufficient additional troops to provide an adequate garrison. Terms for a withdrawal were agreed on 7 July and as Fortescue wrote: "Beyond all question the decision of Whitelocke was wise, the one instance indeed of wisdom that he had manifested during the campaign." The troops withdrew from Buenos Aires on 12 July and from Montevideo on 9 September.

"General Whitelocke is either a traitor or a coward or both" was written up at the corners of the streets of Montevideo. "Success to grey hairs, but bad luck to white locks" became a favourite toast among the men. As far as the merchants still waiting in Montevideo were concerned, the thought that the long voyage, discomfort and waiting had all been in vain, quite apart from the financial losses they had suffered, was almost too much. Eventually Whitelocke was forced to issue a stern proclamation in which he "warned all English resi-

dents to have their property ready for embarkation, as such as would not be prepared to sail out of the harbour on the 6th of September should be considered out of the protection of the British force".

General Whitelocke finally reached England on 7 November 1807 to face the professional consequences of his failure. The Court-Martial was empowered to summon before it "every officer who from his rank in that army, from his station, from the peculiar nature of his duties, or from any other circumstance appeared likely to be able to throw any light upon this subject".

As we heard earlier, General Whitelocke pleaded "not guilty" to all four charges. There was considerable public interest in the Court-Martial and comprehensive proceedings, based on shorthand notes, were published by two different publishers that same year. The trial itself last for seven weeks and, on 18 March 1808, Whitelocke was found "guilty" on all four counts. With the exception of part of the second charge, which related to the prohibition of loaded muskets during the assault on Buenos Aires.

On 24 March the Commander-in-Chief confirmed the findings of the Court-Martial and the sentence that "Lieutenant General Whitelocke be cashiered, and declared totally unfit, and unworthy, to serve His Majesty in any Military Capacity whatever".

The King also commanded that this sentence was in addition "to be read at the head of every Regiment in His service, and inserted in all Regimental Orderly Books, with a view of its becoming a lasting memorial of the fatal consequences to which Officers expose themselves, who, in the discharge of the important duties confided to them, are deficient in that zeal, judgement and personal exertion, which their Sovereign and their Country have a right to expect from Officers entrusted with high command".

*The Times* thundered indignantly: "But still the country is, and must be dissatisfied. Two thousand five hundred of its bravest troops have been lost—a whole army disgraced and defeated by a herd of mechanics; and what is the ample vengeance which has been afforded us for such misfortunes? one General has been cashiered!"

Military failure has always demanded scapegoats. It may be of some interest that General Leopoldo Galtieri, who took the decision, as Head of the Argentine Military Junta, to invade the Falkland Islands on 2 April 1982, was tried and sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment for "mismanagement of the war". However, Galtieri spent only six years in jail and, according to *The Times*, is now living in the Villa Devoto district of Buenos Aires on a military pension of US\$1,600 per month.

John Whitelocke spent the rest of his life in retirement, mostly at Clifton, near Bristol. His wife



WINGING a SLY COCK

Mary died on 19 November 1832, aged 73, and by her he had one son and three daughters. Their son was Rev William Spencer Whitlocke, Vicar of Gedney, Lincolnshire and Foston, near York, who died on 23 July 1855, aged 60. Their eldest daughter, Harriet Georgina, married Sir Gore Ouseley, and their only son Rev Sir Frederick Ouseley, was a musical prodigy, who founded the well-known choral music college at Tenbury, Worcestershire. Their second daughter, Mary Jane, married Captain George Burdett RN, at St Thomas, Portsmouth on 14 August 1802 and died not long afterwards.

John Whitlocke, Esquire, as he was by then known, died on 23 October 1833 at Han Barn, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, the seat of Sir Gore Ouseley. Both he and his wife were buried in Bristol Cathedral where a memorial still exists on the north wall of the north cloister. Perhaps Whitlocke may have been familiar with the lines written by the poet Edmund Waller (1606–87), a former owner of Hall Barn:

The Soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decayed  
 Lets in new light through chinks that time has made;

Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,  
 As they draw near to their eternal home.  
 Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,  
 That stand upon the threshold of the new.

The epitaph should perhaps be left to Fortescue who wrote: "It is not easy, after the misfortunes that subsequently befell the man, to form an opinion as to Whitlocke's ability; but he had certainly done good service in the West Indies and was not without knowledge of his profession. His most objectionable characteristic seems to have been arrogant but spasmodic self-confidence, with an affectation of coarse speech and manners which he conceived to be soldier-like bluntness, but which often degenerated into mere rudeness towards some of his inferiors and familiar obscenity of language towards others. He stooped to court the favour of the rank and file by affected use of their phrases, with the inevitable result that he earned only their thorough contempt. The inference is that he sought popularity with the lower ranks of the Army because he was unable to gain the respect of the higher. Such an officer is wholly unfit for any command."