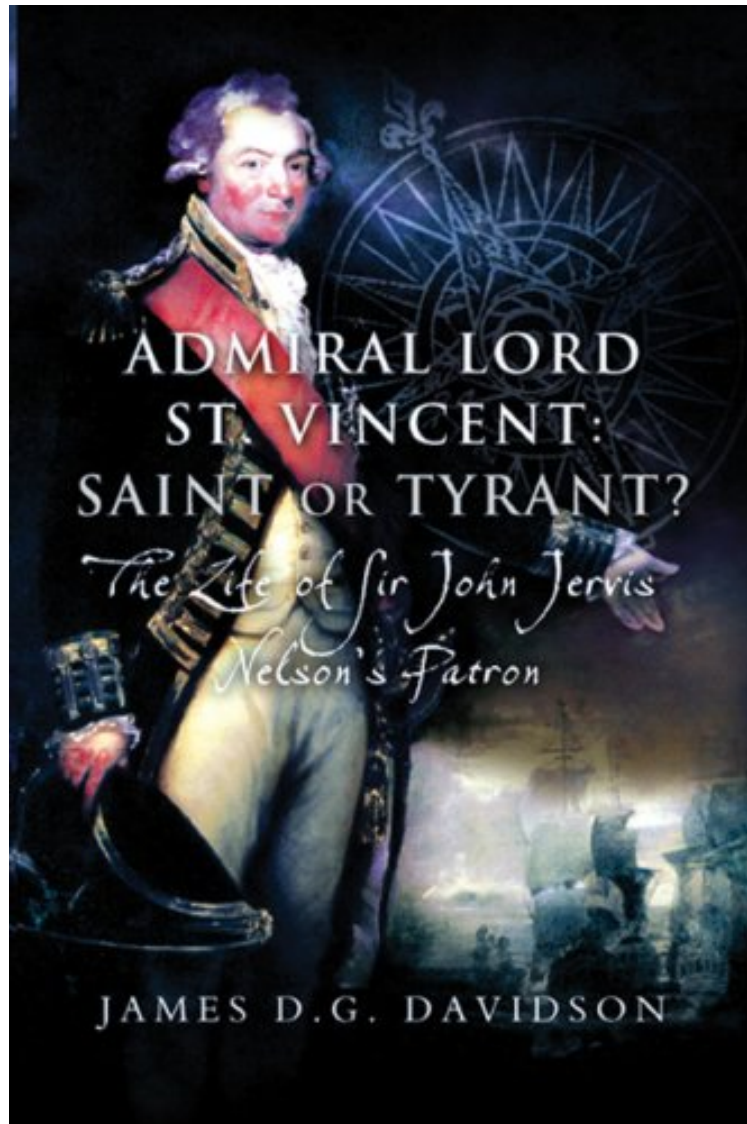


## Admiral Lord St. Vincent – Saint or Tyrant?: The Life of Sir John Jervis, Nelson's Patron

James D.G. Davidson

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**James D.G. Davidson : Admiral Lord St. Vincent – Saint or Tyrant?: The Life of Sir John Jervis, Nelson's Patron** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Admiral Lord St. Vincent – Saint or Tyrant?: The Life of Sir John Jervis, Nelson's Patron:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Complete but a bit dryBy L. VeidAs a student of the Royal Navy of the "wooden walls" era, I have encountered numerous references to John Jervis, Lord St. Vincent. Without exception,

these references paint a portrait of the uncompromising admiral who hanged men on a Sunday to make a point. I didn't know how that uncompromising admiral had come into being. After reading this biography, I understand the events of Jervis' formative years in the navy that put him on a path of such rectitude. Early in his career, Jervis got multiple tastes of the good and bad of the Royal Navy and focused his considerable abilities toward both serving the Navy and, when he had the necessary authority, changing it. The author does a good job of illustrating the complexity involved in naval command of that era and how Jervis coped with it and succeeded in all levels of command. His time as 1st Lord of the Admiralty was especially significant in that he succeeded in starting the long overdue reform of the Navy's logistics and civilian support structure. The number of high-placed enemies he acquired in the process is evidence of how well he did. He also was more concerned than most senior officers for the well-being of the common sailors, making strenuous efforts to better their lives both at sea and after their naval careers were over. The subtitle of this book invokes Jervis' role as Nelson's patron. Events related in this book make it clear that Jervis repeatedly promoted and favored younger officers whose actions demonstrated exceptional skill. He did this at every level of command and repeatedly wrote of his beliefs on this subject. My only serious complaints with the book are a tendency toward too much praise of Jervis and a fairly dry writing style. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Providing the reader with the most complete picture. By Ned Middleton This is the story of John Jervis, the first-ever British Naval officer - outside of the Royal Family, to eventually hold the rank of Admiral of the Fleet (the Naval equivalent of Field Marshall). Jervis was in command at the Battle of St. Vincent (from which he would later take his name on becoming ennobled). He recognised, however, that that victory was brought about by the actions of the young Captain Nelson who brilliantly disregarded his standing orders, broke formation and placed his ship ahead of the main Spanish Fleet - thus bringing that fleet to battle when they might otherwise have sailed on and avoided direct action. In short, had Nelson not acted as he did, then all those involved would not have had a share in both the resultant glory and prize money. From that moment onwards, Jervis became Nelson's patron - often choosing him to command squadrons and even fleets of ships over more senior officers. Not only did Nelson never fail in the field of conflict, but he also repaid that support many times over with his now-famous deeds. They did, however, eventually fall out over the subject of prize money. Jervis was a most competent naval officer, though often fastidious in the way in which he would involve himself in the minutiae of detail of running individual ships - something which he should have left to other officers. This book is a complete and very well researched account of his life - both at sea and at home, though he rarely saw the latter. All the letters and opinions expressed at the time are repeated as we re-live this man's life and career through this book. An exceedingly fascinating insight for those with an interest in the subject. NM

This biography of John Jervis, who became Admiral Lord Vincent, makes compelling reading. It throws an oblique light on Nelson's personality. St Vincent, who was born twenty-three years before Nelson, and survived for eighteen years after Trafalgar, fundamentally influenced the younger man's career despite the two men being diametrically different characters. Yet without him, Nelson's genius might have been submerged by professional jealousy or emotional fragility. It was St Vincent's strategy and preparation which positioned Nelson to win his three famous victories, but St Vincent himself made vital contributions not only to the defeat of Napoleon but to the well-being of the Royal Navy. Before he became First Lord of the Admiralty, the Navy had been severely weakened by corruption in the dockyards, nepotism in appointments and the appalling conditions under which the seamen lived and worked. St Vincent deserves the profound gratitude of the Nation; not only for enabling Nelson to exercise his tactical brilliance, but also for the role he played in preventing Napoleon from invading the British Isles.

About the Author James D G Davidson is an author and historian.