John Matthias was born in 1941 in Columbus, Ohio. For many years he taught at the University of Notre Dame, but also spent long periods of time in the UK, both at Cambridge and at his wife's childhood home in Hacheston, Suffolk. He has been a Visiting Fellow in poetry at Clare Hall, Cambridge, and is now a Life Member. Until 2012 he was poetry editor of Notre Dame Review and is now Editor at Large. Matthias has published some thirty books of poetry, translation, scholarship, and collaboration. His most recent books are New Selected Poems, (2004), Kedging (2007), Trigons (2010), Collected Shorter Poems Vol. 2 (all verse) and Who Was Cousin Alice? And Other Questions (2011) (mostly prose). In 1998 Robert Archambeau edited Word Play Place: Essays on the poetry of John Matthias, and in 2011 Joe Francis Doerr published a second volume of essays on his work, The Salt Companion to the Poetry of John Matthias. Collected Longer Poems, is the second of a projected three-volume edition from Shearsman of Matthias' complete poems.
Also by John Matthias

Poetry
Bucyrus (1970)
Turns (1975)
Crossing (1979)
Bathory & Lermontov (1980)
Northern Summer (1984)
A Gathering of Ways (1991)
Swimming at Midnight (1995)
Beltane at Aphelion (1995)
Working Progress, Working Title (2002)
Swell & Variations on the Song of Songs (2003)
Kedging (2007)
Trigons (2010)

Translations
Contemporary Swedish Poetry (1980)
  (with Göran Printz-Påhlson)
Jan Östergren: Rainmaker (1983)
  (with Göran Printz-Påhlson)
The Battle of Kosovo (1987)
  (with Vladeta Vučković)
  (with Lars-Håkan Svensson)

Editions
23 Modern British Poets (1971)
Introducing David Jones (1980)
David Jones: Man and Poet (1989)
Selected Works of David Jones (1992)
Notre Dame Review: The First Ten Years (2009)
  (with William O’Rourke)

Essays
Reading Old Friends (1992)
Who Was Cousin Alice? and Other Questions (2011)
Collected Longer Poems

John Matthias

Afterword by Mark Scroggins
Monotypes by Douglas Kinsey

Shearsman Books
In Memory of My Friend Jay Walton

(who preferred my shorter poems)
Facts from an Apocryphal Midwest

For Michael Anania and i.m. Ken Smith
I. Seven Moves Toward Embarkation on the Local River

Nous embarquâmes le troisième Decembre avec trente hommes, dans huit canots

& nous remontâmes la rivière des Miamis faisant nostre route au Sud…

—Fr. Hennepin

Overheard on Riverside cycling toward the bridge and U.S. 31:
Look, he says, if things had turned out
differently a long time back,
not just you, but everybody on this river might be speaking French
& trading otter skins or beaver pelts.

1 arpent: 160 pieds de Roi
84 arpents: say about one league
28 arpents, then, to the mile

But distances are tricky
and it often takes
you longer
than you think.

Four thin men, two white, two black
stand fishing near the Farmer’s Market
where the Amish come to sell
their vegetables and breads. It’s early afternoon in heavy, muggy August. The river’s low & stagnant for ten miles.

_Catchin’ anything? Jus’ tin cans an’ tires_  
Four thin fishermen— and no Miamis, not a Potawatomi in town.

•

Oui-oui-la-Mèche  
L’Espérance de la Brie

Père Gabriel  
Père Louis  
Père Zénobe  
René Robert Cavelier (Sieur de la Salle)

•

“There were several varieties of league; but the one that Hennepin undoubtedly meant was the ordinary league of 84 arpents. That will give 3.051 plus 5220-5280th statute miles. You need have no hesitation in assuming Hennepin’s league to be 3.052 statute or English miles.”

“We embarked on the 3rd of December with thirty men in eight canoes, and ascended the river of the Miamis, taking our course to the south-east for about twenty five leagues. We could not make out the portage which we were to take with our canoes and all our equipage in order to go and embark at the source of the river Seignelay, and as we had gone higher up in a canoe without discovering the place where we were to march by land to take the other river which runs by the Illinois, we halted to wait for the Sieur de La Salle, who had gone exploring on land; and as he did not return we did not know what course to pursue.”

—Fr. Hennepin
Northern Summer

For Joseph Buttigieg and Vincent Sherry
The flight of sentimentality through empty space. 
Through its elliptical hole 
an heraldic blackbird’s 
black wings, yellow beak, round eyes, with the yellow 
ring, which defines its inner empty space

—Göran Sonnevi

I The Castle

Occupies

a picturesque 
commanding strong position 
on the summit of a cliff some forty 
feet in height 
the base of which is covered 
up at flood tide by the waters of the Forth. 
Large, magnificent, commodious 
with rock nearby and wood and water to afford 
the eye a picture of a rare 
and charming beauty 
forming a delightful and romantic spot 
the sight of which 
could not but amply compensate et cetera

the language of a tour book 
threading aimlessly 
through sentimental empty space.

Or build on, say, an Edward’s language 
to his dear and faithful cousin 
Eymar de Valance 
like a second generation builds upon 
the ruins of a first?

finding not

in our 
Sir Michael Wemyss
good word
nor yet good service and
that he now shows himself in such a wise
that we must hold him traitor
and our enemy we do command you that ye
cause his manor where we lay
and all his other manors to be burned his lands
and goods to be destroyed
his gardens to be stripped all bare
that nothing may remain
and all
may thus take warning—

Language
moving upon consequence
Consequence
upon a language: Flight
of an heraldic bird
through space that is inhabited.

Some say Bruce had raised his standard here.

II Pied-à-terre

I live between the castle and the coal mine
in a folly. It's the truth.
They put a roof on it last year. I have
a room, a window on the sea.

Strange to say, I
haven't seen my host yet,
Captain Wemyss.
He's holed up in his castle in this awful rain.
I'm holed up in my folly with
my pads and pens.
If the sun comes out this month, maybe yet
we'll meet
a-walking in the garden O.
“Baron Wemyss of Wemyss”

all the old books call
his many forbears.
Do I just shout out *hello there*

*Wemyss of Wemyss?*

Seven centuries of purest Scottish pedigrees,
says Mr. F., the Edinburgh historian.
Twenty-seven generations.
I can offer
just one eighth of watery Kirkpatrick.

*The flight of sentimentality through empty space!*
A rhetoric, at least; (an awkward line).
The flight of Sentiment
is through a space that’s occupied.

This space is occupied, all right,
and I am guest
of both the present and the past.

The past
begins in caves,
the Gaelic *Uamh* soon enough becoming Wemyss.

James the Fifth surprised
a band of gipsies in one cave, drinking there
and making merry. Though he
could join them incognito in his famous role
as Godeman of Ballangeich
and share their mad hilarity, James the Sixth
would only shout out *treason*
when he panicked of a sudden, claustrophobic,
in a *Uamh* become a mine.

Above the caves and mines they built this house.

And put a chaplain in it! I find there was
no piper here, and worse, no bard—
But Andrew Wyntoun, a prior of St Serf,
wrote a family chronicle in verse
& praised
An honest knycht
and of good fame
Schir Jhone of Wemyss by his rycht name.

Well, if I’m the guest of absent hosts
the cost of lodging here a while
is neither waived
nor anywhere within my calculation—
(the flight of Sentiment
is not
through empty space)

Did Mynyddog Mynfawr, camped along the Forth,
feed the brave Gododdin mead and wine
a year
a year
a year?

Or did he send them sober down his mine?

III The Mine

The flight through empty space of Sentiment
—mentality! There’s nothing
sentimental
within sight of this abandoned mine.
From where I stand
I’d talk about dead gods, I think.
From where I stand on this
deserted beach
between the castle and the mine
I think I’d say the legates
of the dead god Coal
had built his image here to look
exactly like a gallows made of iron & alloy
high enough
to hang a giant from—
An East Anglian Diptych

in memoriam Robert Duncan and David Jones
Ley Lines

I

... & flint by salt by clay
by sunrise and by sunset
and at equinox, by equinox,

these routes, these
lines were drawn, are drawn,
(force by source of sun)

The dowser leans by Dod-man’s
ley alignment and
against some oak by water now.

II

By flint: the tools
By salt: the meats
By clay: the rounded pots

Along the lines, by sun-
rise & by sunset
and at equinox, by equinox,

the Dod-man’s sighting staves,
one in each hand, is it,
of that scoured long chalk man?

III

Past Tom Paine’s house behind the puddingstone
and castle there aligned
strategically along the Icknield way
Beyond the Gallows Hill
beside the Thetford tracks to Brandon
down the Harling Drove

Across the Brickkiln Farm to Bromehill Cottage
& below the tumuli before
the rabbit warrens and top hats…

Some burials, some dead,
and here their flinted offerings.
Seven antler picks,

A phallus made of chalk,
a Venus (did they call her yet Epona?)
and a tallow lamp…

Beltane fire line forty miles long?
Conflagration’s law where energy’s electric
down the herepath

if Belus is spelt Bel…

•

No bronze until the Beakers.
No phosphorus lucifers until, say, 1832.
Toe holes, ropes allowed descent

for wall stone you could antler out,
shovel with a shoulder bone—
Floor stone you would crawl for…

Between the galleries, burrows
narrow as a birth canal, as dark,
where some half-blind Neolith first

nudged the Brandon Blacks & passed
those flints as far down time as Waterloo.
Weapons, tools. Ornaments as well.
Flushwork on Long Melford Church.
Flint flake Galleting on Norfolk Guildhall.
Jags by thousands of the calcined stones

for Queen Victoria's potteries.
Strike-a-lights required on Maundy Thursday still—
oldest flints ignite a young god's Pascal wick,

But first an edge to cut away the underbrush
down ley lines
long before the Beakers and their bronze.

IV

Ten days, twelve chapters, and the young man soon to die at Arras finishes his book, his thirtieth or so, on the Icknield Way. It's mostly about walking. He walks from Thetford where he thinks the Way begins coming from the Norfolk ports across the River Thet and Little Ouse. He's melancholy. The times are difficult, he's poor, he'd rather be a poet, his wife is desperate for his company, his children miss him too, a war is coming on, and, anyway, he's melancholy by nature. He has a friend who tries to show him how to turn his prose to verse. Hell have two years to do just that before he dies on Easter Monday, 1917.

But now he walks and writes. It is a job. They pay you for these nature books, these evocations, all this naming you can do along the road and through the villages and over all the dykes. They'll buy your eye even if they're deaf to all this balancing of consonants and vowels. He's melancholy. He doesn't really want to take this walk. He does it for the money. The times are difficult, he's poor, he'd rather be a poet, his wife is desperate for his company, his children miss him too, a war is coming on. Still,

It's better on a path than on a pavement.
It's better on the road than in a town.
It's better all alone to walk off melancholy
than to poison a companionable air
(or stare out of a muddy trench in France).
Home, returned on leave, exhausted,
bored by prose he’s published only months before
and talking with a friend who’ll ask:
*And what are you fighting for over there?*

hell pick a pinch of earth up off the path
they’re walking and say: *This!*
*For this,* hell say.
*This This This*

*For*

*this*

*This King Belinus was especially careful
to proclaim that cities
and the highways that led unto them*

*would have the peace*
*Dunwello had established in his time.
But no one seemed to know*

*the rules or lines whereby the boundaries
of the roads had been determined.*
Neither Geoffrey, who, saying that about

Belinus in his book then consults the works
of Gildas, nor Gildas either,
nor Nennius himself in *Historia Brittonum.*

Before Belinus paved the road to “Hamo’s Port”
with stone and mortar as he paved
Fosse Way and Watling Street, walkers who

brought flint, brought salt, brought clay,
paved the way in footprints over peat
and grasses with their animals before them
or behind. *By flint:* the tools;  
*By salt:* the meats; *by clay:* the rounded pots.  
By ley lines, flint and clay and salt

by sunrise and by sunset  
and at equinox, by equinox, these routes,  
these lines were drawn

(but no one seemed to know the rules  
whereby the boundaries  
of the roads had been determined)

force by source of sun.

V

They leaned into the journey,  
east to west,  
beyond Grimes Graves and through

the place that would be Thetford.  
For every dragon heard to have been slain,  
they found a standing stone….

Beside the Hill of Helith and then  
along the river Lark  
they left their weapons and their coins,

wondered at the headless rider  
riding on the muddy banks. Cautious, curious  
at the Swales tumulus, at

barrows north of Chippenham, they guessed  
fine Wessex bronze lay gleaming  
in the buried dagger there… and aged (grew young),

passed by Burwell church, passed by  
Burwell castle too, spoke  
of Anna and of Etheldreda, queen and saint,
at Exing, saw the horses race along
by Devil's Ditch to Reach, gallop through
the sainfoin which they gathered

in their hands as stone aligned with stone,
church with church, holy well
with holy well, pylon (in the end) with pylon.

Counting one five four: four seven four:
four eight six at Whittlesford,
brides among them turned their heads
to gaze at Golliwog, Sheela-na-gig.
Whose giggle, then, this
gog-eyed goggle goddess ogling back

above the portal near the Wandlebury
Gogmagog? By air: the zodiac;
By fire: the dragon path; by earth:

the tumulus, the barrow and the grave.
East to west
they leaned into the journey where

the dowser leans by Dod-man's
ley alignment and
against some oak by water now.
A Compostela Diptych

*For John Peck and i.m. Guy Davenport*
Part I: France

I

Via Tolosona, Via Podiensis.
There among the tall and narrow cypresses,
the white sarcophagi of Arles

worn by centuries of wind & sun,
where Charlemagne’s lieutenants it was said
lay beside Servilius & Flavius

and coffins drifted down the Rhône
on narrow rafts to be unloaded by St. Victor’s monks,
they walked: Via Tolosona.

Via Podiensis: They walked as well from
Burgundy through the Auvergne,
slogged along volcanic downland up into Aubrac

and on through Languedoc to Conques
and gazed into the yellow morning light falling
from above the central axis through

the abbey’s lantern tower
and praised St. Foy, and praised as well
with Aimery Picaud their guide

the names of certain travelers
who had long before secured the safety of their way
and also other ways: Via Podiensis,

Via Lemosina, Via Turonensis.
They crossed the Loire at Tours and at Nevers,
walking toward Bordeaux or

from St. Leonard and St. Martial of Limoges
to Périgord and to Chalosse.
At Tours beside the sandy, wide & braided river
they would rest a while and bathe
or seek the narrow shoals nearby & shallow streams
that ran between. Here St. Martin's

shrine had outfaced Abd-al-Rahman
and they prayed at his basilica remembering
the ninety thousand Moors

beaten back to Cordoba before Almansor
took the bells of Santiago
for his candle-sticks, hung them highly

in his elegant great mosque & upside down.
His singers sang of it.
These walking also sang: Via Lemosina,

Via Turonensis: they sang the way along the ways.
They sang the king: Charles li reis,
ad estet en Espaigne... Tresqu'en la mer

conquiste la terre altaigne. Trouvères, jongleurs,
langue d'oïl, langue d'oc: of love
& war, the Matamoros & the concubine at Maubergeon.

And there was other song—song sung inwardly
to a percussion of the jangling
manacles and fetters hanging on the branded

heretics who crawled the roads
on hands and knees and slept with lepers under
dark facades of abbeys

& the west portals of cathedrals with their zodiacs.
These also sang: as had
the stern young men, their sheep or cattle

following behind, when up
to high summer pasture they would carry
from the scoria-red waste
a wooden image of their black and chthonic mother
burned in her ascent up out of
smoking Puy-de-Dôme (or her descent
from very heaven: Polestar’s daughter urging
them to Finisterre…..

Whichever way they came they sang,
Whatever song they sang they came.
Whichever way they came, whatever song they sang.

ten sang and walked together on the
common roads: Via Lemosina,
Via Turonensis; Via Tolosona, Via Podiensis.

II

Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian
modes in diatonic sequence which would order
the response & antiphon at Cluny:

authentic, plagal; plagal and authentic—
hypodorian, hypomixolydian—
Magnificat! Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

And canticles in stone carved in capitals
to honor every mode
in which the honor of this Lady might

be chanted, melismatic even,
graced the choir itself in St. Hugh’s hall
where someone wrote the book

sending walkers down the roads to Santiago.
Whose creation Aimery Picaud?
Whose persona Turpin? The Codex Calixtinus!
Book that wrought a miracle of power?
or book that answered it and echoed it, reflected
power trans-Pyrenean and uncanny,
causality determined by no human hand?
Did Santiago draw his pilgrims to his shrine,
or did the Monks of Cluny push?
Far from the basilica, far from
the corona with its hundred lamps & more lighted
there to brighten Pentecost or Easter, far
from the twelve arcades of double pillars,
the goldsmith’s workshop & the bearded lutenist beside
the dancing girl celebrating in their frozen
artistry the artistry of monophonic provenance
which answered every gesture
of the vestured celebrant—and far, far before
the carving of a single capital,
the scribbling of a single line of Latin in a single book,
the hammering of gold, the glazing
of an ornament, the singing of the kyrie or gloria,
the censing of the host,
a strange boat arrived off Finisterre….
(Or so they say. Or so they said
who made the book.) The boat came from Jerusalem
without a sail, without a rudder,
without oars. It bore his head beside his body
who had caught it when the sword
of Herod dropped it in his open hands.
It bore his two disciples. As they neared
the land beneath the campus stellae
where the lord of every geste would heave his
spear into the surf, drawn across the Pyrenees
by virtue of this other who would lie down now
for some eight hundred years—son of Zebedee

and Salomé, brother of St. John, son of Thunder
born into Galicia—
a bridegroom riding to his wedding reined

his horse in, stared a moment at the little boat,
galloped straight into the tranquil sea.
When horse and rider rose, both were covered with

the scallop shells that were his sign, his
awaiting Cluny and his cult
(the carving of the capitals, the canticles in stone,

the singing of the antiphons,
the scribbling of the Latin in his lenten book)
but also hers—

Magnificat! Magnificat anima mea Dominam—
who rose up on a scallop shell
to dazzle any bridegroom staring at whatever sea.

So it began. So they said it had begun.
A phase (a phrase (a moment in
the spin of some ephemeride (a change

not even in the modes of music
from the Greek
to the Gregorian….

(And chiefly with an aim to rid the south of Moors, to rid it of the
Mozarabic taint in liturgies and chants, to blast the peasant heretics
following the Gnostic light of Ávila’s Priscillian. And then? Then the
castigations of Bernard, the smashings of the Huguenots, the marshals of
Napoleon on the mountain trails, the slow dismantling of the abbey for
its stone, the twists of floral patterns on the broken columns standing in
the ruined granary, the Shell Oil station on the highway through the pass.
And at the restaurant by the river in St-Jean-Pied-de-Port (Michelin: 2
stars), good coquilles St. Jacques…
Pages

from a book of years
Part One

I

1959. And underneath the photographs
names of people you can count

as if they numbered works and days
and years: one and one by one

become again these Davids, Joels & Fayes
and 1959’s about to flower

flame again to 1960, 1961

The flower in the flame. The fame of that. Those days. People you could
count who counted then. David, Joel and Faye; Margaret, Ann, and Mar-
garet-Ann; Sondra, Bonnie, Lisa, Lennie, Kaye. Luck (o sister life) you’d
think was little more than winning dashes, listening to the jazz at Marty’s
502, kissing Cora with your left hand up her skirt in that black and bat-
tered Studebaker Lark. Boris Pasternak, I’d say. I’ll bet not one of you has
read a word by Boris Pasternak. I didn’t mean his novel. Sister Life, I’d
say. I loved the title, hadn’t read the poems. My Sister Life. I’d run until
I felt like I could fly, then stand under ice-cold showers for an hour. The
tingle of well-being being well inside the brackets of a decade for another
several months

whose year whose yearbook opens really. On your lap.

Who’d say Nadir How Now Restless Wind or Endine Tim Tam Quil
and Gallant Man what’s Bold Ruler Oligarchy Jewel’s Reward? If horses
were wishes, what’s your wish: To winter in Kentucky, summer in Sara-
toga.

Rook-and-queen your combination in a close, coming back against the
dragon variation of a Russian’s elegant Sicilian.

Khrushchev in New York. His phrase for the occasion not a quote you’d
look up in a book by Boris P. His rook not named for Tim Tam, nor his
queen for Nadir. In the rulers’ table names decline like sentences beneath
the photographs that you could count as Dave and Joel and Faye: King
Saud is sand and Faisal backs to Franco Gamal Abdel Nasser turns to
Eisenhower Pope John Ho Chi-minh

David Goss and Pham Van-dong
Joel & Bonnie

Margaret, Ann, and Margaret-Ann
One & one by one

in time you do forget well almost all of it the whole damn thing goes
almost blank

goes wholly blank in time

for Governor-General Viscount Charles John Lyttelton Cobham, say.

II

Disasters 1959: Rio de Janeiro plane crash
Guadalajara bus and train Formosa

earthquake Istanbul a fire Western
Pakistan a flood & in the Persian Gulf typhoons

a caved-in mine in Merlebach and just
northeast of Newfoundland a sunken ship,

Blue Wave

I put my hand directly up her skirt and she did not say no don’t do it
didn’t say a thing and so I kept it there a moment just above the knee and
then began advancing slowly with my fingertips in little steps

blue wave, blue wave

And out there somewhere Viscount Charles John Lyttelton Cobham.
This year Raymond Chandler died and so did Abbott’s friend Costello. It’s hard to think of Abbott all alone his eyes upon Costello’s derby hanging on the hatrack in the hall. For days you keened in grief for Errol Flynn your only child’s Robin. General Marshall, Admiral William Halsey also on the list. And Ike in tears. Who’d say weep my love for

John Foster Dulles
Amy’s mother Florence Smith

For every day there’s death you’ve got to chronicle and someone writes the years in yearbooks puts eventually the volumes in a right and goodly order on the shelf

who loved her best friend Amy’s mother Florence Smith.

Joel and I would play this game called Scrounge. Others I’ve discovered called it Bernie-Bernie. You could lose a lot of money and a number of our friends and victims did. After dropping all his cash one night Carl Butler put his watch into the pot and then his shoes. Who the hell would want your shoes said Joel. They’re first-rate shoes said Carl. They’re ordinary Keds said Joel so what’s about them so first-rate. Anyway he lost these too and then he went home barefoot. The music that we listened to was jazz: Monk and Miles, the MJQ, Dave Brubeck. It all seemed so subversive. We’d smoke, play cards, listen to the jazz, take the watches and the shoes of our acquaintances, engage in repartee appropriating everything we could from what we dimly understood to be a demi-monde of jazzmen and hipsters.

Actapublicorist entered dictionaries. Tokodynamometer and Turbofan.

When I got my hand inside her pants she said You know I never did let anybody do that and I’m pretty sure you shouldn’t be the first. She stares out of her photograph. Going on eighteen and still a virgin just like all the rest of us and everyone we knew.
Kedging in Time

[Kedge, v. intr. A. To warp a ship, or move it from one position to another by winding in a hawser attached to a small anchor dropped at some distance; also trans. To warp. B. Of a ship: To move by means of kedging.] Poets, too, may cast an anchor well before them, pulling forward when attached to something solid, only then to cast their anchor once again.

For some of the families involved:

Drury-Lowe, Adams, Bonham-Carter, Hilton-Young, Young
Part I

Thirty-Nine Among the Sands, His Steps
or riddle there:

who may have sailed the Alde, and out into the sea, but still was not the helmsman,
she was he, the captain’s daughter, child too of children’s strategies on tidal rivers
where the toy wooden soldiers rose in marshmist reeds and tipped their Bismarck helmets to the girls, Achtung!

Cousin Erskine had preceded by some leagues
and even Uncle Win. Sons of Lord Anchises, prophesying war, sang
of arms and men who had come back again by whom the bundled fasces were restored…
or sailed in the channel all alone, the narrow sea
and north. Or with a friend to crew,
his maps about him and his nerves in perfect
order but his thoughts preoccupied
in case the Hun would launch those lighters full of infantry
from waters around Frisian islands or between
the unmapped sands and point them
toward the Wash or Suffolk shingle where no yachtsman
out of Orford, Harwich, Woodbridge or along
the Essex flats would come at them
like Jellicoe out of some dispatch he read at Scapa Flow…
or sat there with a romance, *Zenda* say, just as she had done, and Winston doubtless too whose own *Savrola* marked a pause between the Bores and bells of a pugnacious dreadnaught caught in shore fire steaming up the Dardanelles…

*Fortune* had to sail up the narrow channel between heavy guns in batteries on either side. The harbor city of Laurania could be bombarded from the port, but only if the ships survived their passage. *Petrarch* and *Sorato* followed, turrets slowly turning, firing at embrasures and the barbette mounted canons on the rocky banks. Black smoke poured from stricken ships and water jetted from the scuppers as emplacements pounded the returning Admiral and his sailors who had come from Port Said to quell rebellions in this Ruritanian romance. He paced the quarter deck like Nelson while Savrola waited for him with subaltern and Antonio Molara’s widow whom he loved, dreams of a Republic in his brain…
Or simply dreams of power, he thinks, and puts aside his pen to pour himself a gin. It is 1897. He'll publish this in 1900 and become First Lord in time to send his ships into another well-defended strait. Does in fact do this and thinks of Xerxes' bridge across the narrows and Leander's swim from Sestos, Byron too aspiring to the Hellespont, Troy on the Asian side and Schliemann's archaeologists in search of Bronze Age towers now become the Kaiser's gunners when in 1915 ships steam out of romance up the channel toward The Marmora, Agamemnon and Inflexible bombarding Turkish forts at Kilid Bahr, mines and shore fire blasting Irresistible into a drifting and abandoned hulk…
Or an abandoned plan: evacuation scuttles the agenda which had confidently hoped to open the Aegean once again to Russian ships and drive the Turks beyond Constantinople by a landing from the barges which were built on orders to attack—not Gallipoli—but points along the German Baltic coast. Only Richard Hannay knew that Wilhelm gave it out he was a secret Muslim and proclaimed a Jihad in Islamic lands against the Brits. Davies & Carruthers sailed the *Dulcibella* through the Kiel Canal early in the century. What they saw might well preoccupy the Admiralty in these contentious weeks, Sea Lord Fisher hiding at a Charing Cross hotel from Lloyd George. Someone sends out copies of *The Riddle of the Sands* to sailors at the Firth of Forth and Scapa Flow where only fiction saw as early as ’03 the dangers lurking in the Frisians for the eastern coast. The real skipper of that prophecy is executed by a firing squad for having in his pocket such a little gun it might as well have been a toy.