

Tributes to Simon (2006)

(page checked February 2026)

Following his exploits on the Yangtze and his subsequent fame,
Simon received large numbers of letters from well-wishers,
and many people were moved to compose poems about him.
Here is a selection of poems, and also a letter from 'Ruth', a young admirer,
age unknown (spelling as in the original).

After the poems and letters written in his honour, you'll find
an account of an unusual modern-day tribute to Simon at a British Sea Cadet unit.
And at the end a Simon souvenir brought to our attention by a reader.

Dear Captian

I hope you are well.

Have you got a job looking after Simon your black and white cat?

I like anmials very much. My cat has just died he was a jolly good rat catcher, but a big rat bit him in the paw and poisoned him, now I have no anmials to look after.

When I first saw a picture of Simon was after my teacher held it up. I said that's a beautiful cat I would not mind looking after him only of it was for a day. I told mummy about him and she said write to the captian and ask if you can be Simons' nuse-maid.

I don't think she really meant it but I do.

P.S. Did Simon get hurt by the bullets in the Yangtze river.

Love Ruth x

For Simon only x

Simon the Amethyst's Cat

There are many heroes in the world
To whom you raise your hat
But I'd like to say 'well done' to one
For he was a gallant cat.

They called the hero Simon
He was on the Honours list,
So give three cheers for the little Puss
Who belonged to the *Amethyst*.

Yes! Simon he was wounded
But he still caught mice and rats;
He never shirked his duty
Did that splendid little cat.

But alas! poor little Simon died
Like many a brave man
And his Pussy soul has passed away
To some far-off Pussy land.

Mena McAllen, N. Ireland

Kerans' Kat

(Requiescat in pace)

Come join in a sip
And I'll spin ye a dip
Of a cat that was gallant and bold, sir;
This proud son of Erin's,
This kitten of Kerans'
That earned his V.C. in a hold, sir.

She's out China-bound
When they know by the sound
That their way is disputed for certain;
They speed up the slip
Of this *Amethyst* ship:
And night falls around like a curtain.

No spirits may droop
On this fabulous sloop!
Each one to his gun or his bow, sir;
At Kerans' command
Every man takes his stand:
'Action stations!' Aye, even the mouser.

No pampered of Mason —
This cat that stays chasin'
The foe on the flood of the Yangtse:
While guns are rat-tattin'
He keeps on a-rattin' —
For honour, and not just for thanks, see?

His wounds may be sore
But he goes back for more;
No sick bay for him, that's a promise!
Is this time for stallin'?
Is he caterwauling?
Not he, sir! He's no doubtin' Thomas!

There while the plot thickens
He's earnin' the Dickin's;
Ye're leavin'? Ye really can't stay, sir?
I'll join ye in that, sir:
'The *Amethyst* cat', sir!
'Up spirits!' Good luck, and good day, sir.

NB: This tribute has been set to music and is performed by a trio of admirers at [YouTube](#).
The clip's interspersed with images of Simon from this site (although the final cat image is of Simon II).

Simon Puss, VC, AB, is coming home at last;
He's seen full many a foreign port and sailed before the mast.
The *Amethyst*'s his gallant ship,
Of him the crew are proud;
When enemy shells came whizzing round
He never even meowed!

With tail erect and whiskers trim
He stuck there at his post.
I'd like to say 'hello' to him, and to him doff my hat,
And welcome home to England's shores a truly gallant cat!

Barbara Hemmings, Lancing, Sussex

Simon of the *Amethyst*
Sailed the China Seas
Had the rats — not the Reds —
Shaking at the knees!

Brian Buckle, Hendon

Here's hoping you enjoy your leave
With all your mates ashore,
Chasing rats and mice all day,
Eating fish and milk galore.

S. Wood, Whitstable, Kent (aged 10)

Welcome home to Simon
Foolish rats beware —
The Dickin Medal demon
Is here to raise your hair!

M. Arnold, Hoath, Kent (aged 13)



(This next one is my favourite . . . Ed.)

Sailor

There was knocking at the Pearly Gates
And when St Peter hurried there
To view the new arrival,
He could only stand and stare.
For waiting in the Outer Court
There stood a small black cat:
White furry gaiters on his feet
And a smart white sailor hat.
'Why, bless my soul,' St Peter cried;
'The door for YOU is there:
Just up that marble staircase,
Close by the golden chair.'

The small cat's whiskers quivered;
He neither moved nor spoke a word.
Then good St Peter raised his voice —
He thought he'd not been heard.
'Now off you go to milk and fish
And cushions soft as down.
This door is only VIPs,'
He ended, with a frown.

The small, black cat just looked at him,
His topaz eyes aflame:
'I think I should explain myself —
I thought you'd know my name.
I don't need downy cushions;
I'm not like other cats;
I've won my spurs in battle
And killed off all the rats.
Please won't you let me enter?
The crew's expecting that.
VIP doors will open
To Simon, the *Amethyst* cat.'

'Come in, most gallant sailor!'
The good St Peter cried.
'Ask ANY favour of us here;
It will not be denied.'
Said Simon, 'I am grateful
For the goodness of the Lord;
I see great Nelson on his ship —
Please pipe me, sir, aboard.'

St Peter stroked the small, black cat
And fondled his whiskers and fur.
'Nelson's needing a sailor like you;
Now go and join him there.'
So with tail erect, and whiskers trim,
Simon walks the decks with him.

(author unknown)

O Simon of the *Amethyst*
Stout member of her crew,
We fill our saucers high with milk
And drink a health to you!
What though cannon roar and thunder
Your courage ne'er goes under
For England, Home and Beauty
You are steadfast in your duty
As Terror of the rats!
So here's greeting and 'congrats'
From admiring Chelsea cats.

Tillidoody

Bobbety

Tabithus

Tomkins

31 Cowley Road
Uxbridge
2/11/49

Dear Simon

As another pusscat and a great admirer of your heroic deeds, I should like to welcome you back home. I saw your photograph in this morning's paper and I wished that you were not so far away, because I would like to have given you a welcoming purr. However, I hope that you will rightly take your place when all you brave masters march through London; I shall ask my mistress to go and see you, so that she can come back and tell me all about it. I hope that you have lots of fun, plenty of good 'eats' on this leave, and return to your ship a really fit and well cat.

Purr, purr,
Jimmy Garton

In Honoured Memory

Brave Simon – Nelson of the cats
The terror of those naval rats
Trafalgar with its victory blast
Has claimed you to itself at last.

Though shot and shell did singe your fur
Your milk you greeted with a purr
And with the curling whiskers lost
You did not stop to count the cost
But true to the Navy's own traditions
Carried out those expeditions
'Gainst those communistic rats
A warrior bold amongst all cats.

Perhaps your war wounds gained a hold
Or did you mourn your shipmates bold?
And fretting thus from them apart
Did break your salty puss's heart?
I do not know; I never shall
But *Amethyst* bids to you – 'Farewell'.

T.R. Phillips, Southend, 1 December 1949

The tributes above were sent to or for Simon of HMS *Amethyst*, who was awarded the Dickin Medal in 1949 for gallantry under enemy fire. [Read Simon's story](#) for the account of the Yangtze Incident itself and how he came to receive his 'Animal VC'.

Also received were the following modern-day tributes to Simon,
which we're pleased to reproduce here.

Mary Kipps is a contemporary American poet and writer (and self-confessed ardent cat lover!).
She was inspired to write it after seeing the film *Valiant*
and then [reading about Simon](#) on this site.

Simon of the *Amethyst*

There is a badge the Brits bestow on military
mascots
For gumption, grit, and gallantry in face of
hostile gunshot.
It's called the Dickin Medal and, since nineteen
forty-three,
Has recognized the brave who've served on land,
in air, at sea:
A host of homing pigeons (a film was made of
that),
A score of dogs, three horses, and one Tuxedo
cat.

The feline's name was Simon, "Blackie" to his
mates.

Hong Kong-born, he went to sea in nineteen
forty-eight
As 'swabbie' on the *Amethyst*, a Royal Navy sloop,
Smuggled aboard by Seaman George, the
youngest of the troop.
Assigned to guard the decks below from threat
of thieving rats,
Soon Simon earned the right to sleep curled in
the captain's hat.

Then came the word to set their course up river
to Nanking
To aid the British Embassy should Reds come
pillaging.
When midway there they ran aground, besieged
by coastal guns,
Though Simon suffered burn and wound, he did
not turn and run,
But carried on against the rats, ship's stores in
short supply,
And offered purrs to those in pain, which kept
their spirits high.

That's the tale of the Dickin cat, how Simon came
to be
First mascot in the fleet to win the Animals' VC.

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Amethyst your home
Heroic your life
Seamen your companions
A nation your admirers.

You still walk the deck
That is how I see you
For ever, Blackie.

*Mariano Barcelo. A great admirer from Lisbon,
Portugal*

Sea Cadet unit honours Simon

The Sea Cadet Corps unit of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield in England is called TS *Amethyst* and has close links to the famous ship of that name; in fact, Lt Cdr Stewart Hett, formerly of the ship, was their unit president.

In summer 2006 the unit moved into new accommodation and then set about enhancing their associations with *Amethyst* and her story. This initiative included proposed visits by cadets to all the *Amethyst*-related sites in the UK.

Naturally the renowned ship's cat has his place in the scheme of things, and a replica of Simon has pride of place sleeping on a bollard in a corner of the 'quarter-deck'. In the photo he can be seen at the right, which is the First Lieutenant's side of the deck; the left side is the Commanding Officer's (maybe he upset Simon). The bollards are 'real Admiralty cast iron' and very heavy, but it isn't known whether they are actually from the ship herself.



All the rooms in the new unit are named and have their own signboard on the door; the galley is called 'Simon's Place', as no doubt he would have frequented it a fair amount when not in the captain's cabin (which is known as 'Kerans place'). The IA1 designation refers to the galley's position in the ship using 1950s Admiralty convention — it means a forward compartment on the port side of the bows.

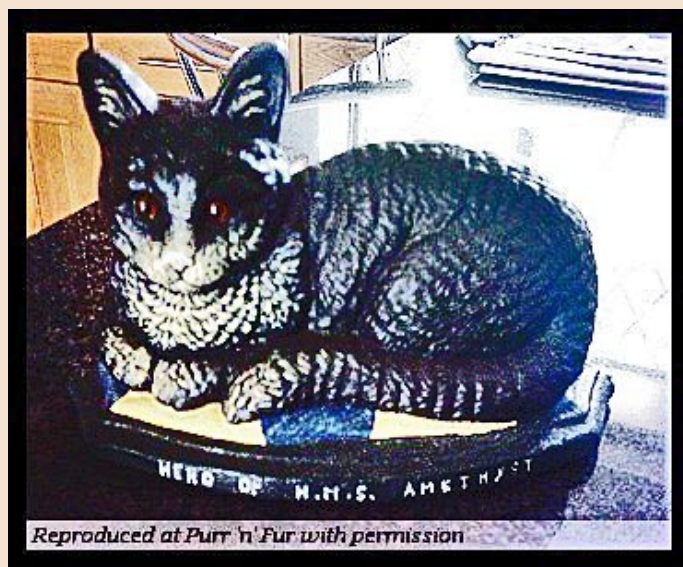


'Simon' is checked each night to see all is well with him, and is always introduced to new cadets and their parents — many think a real cat is asleep there! All cadets are taught to treat him with respect (more than accorded the staff, some say), and they know any 'messaging about' with him is likely to result in an appearance before the Officer in Charge.

Many thanks to CI (Civilian Instructor) Dave Hart for bringing this unusual tribute to Simon to our attention, and for supplying the photos.

A souvenir of Simon

We're grateful to Elaine Fowler for telling us about this cast-iron doorstop that she came across. Although it isn't a great likeness of Simon, the base clearly says 'Hero of H.M.S. Amethyst'. We know nothing about it, except that Elaine says it's 'quite large and very, very heavy', so we think perhaps it was produced at the time of Simon's return to England in 1949, after the Yangtze Incident. Does anyone know anything about this remarkable object?



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