



## **Brandy, Lace and Tobacco**

By Pat Simpson

“Good day Tom,” Jack hailed his friend. “Fare you well?”

“A good day to you,” Tom leaned closer to the table, tapping the brim of his hat with the long stem of his clay pipe in salute. “Naught ails me that a bit of ‘baccy and ale would not cure.”

Jack pointed to the opened screw of tobacco in front of Matthias. “I daresay, Matty will oblige when he stops daydreaming of a pair of enchanting brown eyes.”

Tom winked, lowering his voice to a growling whisper. “Mebbe, a gift of fancy French lace will give our Matty more than a **face** to dream on.”

“God’s Blood! Tom have you no sense?” Matthias growled embarrassed and angry. “Here! Fill your pipe if it will keep your mouth shut. Our business is not for strangers’ ears”. Matthias nodded at the table where two travellers were being served by the innkeeper. “The Preventives drink here as oft as we, on the hunt for information.” Jack caught the innkeeper’s attention and signalled for

a jug of ale and another tankard which arrived quickly. The jug placed, handle towards Jack in the 'safe' signal.

"Tonight there is no moon and high tide's at 2 o'clock. Will you all be ready?"

It's a bigger cargo this time, brandy, lace, tea and tobacco."

"Thirty ponies and as many landsmen. We'll be there just after high tide at the marsh edge." Tom said rubbing his hands together as if the coins were already in his grasp. "Matty?"

"The Tithe Barn, Farmer Astley's barn and the tunnel between the church and the manor house are cleared and ready."

Tom raised a toast, "Food for the babbies' bellies."

Jack drained his tankard in one go, then he and Tom left for the fields.

Matthias sighed, *What the hell did the country expect with the duties so high.*

*Dear God he did not blame them, food for the children it was, but the information and guineas the smugglers supplied to Napoleon's France could destroy them all.*

With a heavy heart Captain Ellesmere left to make his report.

350 words without the title.