**[Daniel](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/352-daniel/" \o "Go to Daniel's profile)**

* Pyrate Captain
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* Member
* 652 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:McLean, VA
* Interests:History, pirates, fiction, writing, writing historical fiction about pirates, jokes, games, law.

([IP: 204.13.181.13](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=204.13.181.13)) ·

[Posted December 21, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=findComment&comment=375825) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=reportComment&comment=375825)

I have this vague impression that it was illegal to flog officers, but I don't recall where I found it.

There's at least one 19th-century account of a naval officer being flogged, in [Fraser's magazine](http://books.google.com/books?id=T1nPAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA544&lpg=PA544&dq=%22flogged+an+officer%22&source=bl&ots=bIg3Eu246E&sig=M3X_No1qYSx1QQsgXw4Ta83i5Ao&hl=en&ei=95wvS-2OLo-Wtgf0tYGUCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CBYQ6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=%22flogged%20an%20officer%22&f=false), but the circumstance is exceptional. The admiral who ordered it was impaired by alcohol and brain damage, and went to great lengths to atone for it after he recovered his senses, while the author implies that the flogging was illegal but was carried out anyway because no one dared question orders. It's not clear whether the illegality lay in the victim being an officer, or the many other irregularities surrounding the case (such as the fact that the victim wasn't even accused of any crime or offense). I also see [some evidence](http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=TS19030326.2.9&l=mi&e=-------10--1----0-all) of British Army junior officers being flogged occasionally, around 1903, but again it's not clear whether this was legal. Indeed, by the time the British Army case occurred, flogging had been outlawed altogether on British merchant vessels.

So what was the situation during the GAoP? Was it legal to flog officers, and how often (legally or illegally) was it done?

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=edit)

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
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* Moderator
* 2,565 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
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Shooting pirates.

([IP: 217.44.125.97](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=217.44.125.97)) · · 

[Posted December 21, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=findComment&comment=375833) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=reportComment&comment=375833)

On a merchantman the rules were laid down entirely by the master and/or owners (within the parameters of the law), so it was perfectly theoretically possible to flog merchant officers. I can't think of evidence, but I'm pretty sure that while midshipmen might endure a beating, and petty officers could certainly be flogged, RN officers were not in danger of a flogging - but don't necessarily take my word for it. I can't think offhand of any GAoP examples of officers being flogged in either service.

The real issue is one of practical application though. It was essential on a sailing vessel for the crew to respect their officers as their superiors in order to maintain discipline and efficiency. It would be a rash captain, therefore, who allowed his men to witness the flesh-and-blood nature of his officers by ordering them to be flogged

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=editComment&comment=375833)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/#elControls_375833_menu)

[**Capt. Bo of the WTF co.**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2748-capt-bo-of-the-wtf-co/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,339 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Spanish Louisiana - on the river Osage
* Interests:Many and varied.

([IP: 64.85.215.76](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=64.85.215.76)) · · 

[Posted December 21, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=findComment&comment=375837) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=reportComment&comment=375837)

Not sure how accurate the series was, but in Horatio Hornblower, a midshipman was flogged, but was done below decks before a selcted few officers and the master-at arms, not before the crew on the main deck. IIRC.

Bo

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=editComment&comment=375837)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/#elControls_375837_menu)

[**Captain McCool**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11102-captain-mccool/)

* Pyrate Captain
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* Member
* 530 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Golden, Colorado
* Interests:Piracy, of course. Also, skiing, fencing, graphite/charcoal drawing, writing, ren-faires, etc.

([IP: 75.166.93.166](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=75.166.93.166)) · · 

[Posted December 21, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=findComment&comment=375839) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=reportComment&comment=375839)

 On 12/21/2009 at 2:00 PM, Capt. Bo of the WTF co. said:

Not sure how accurate the series was, but in Horatio Hornblower, a midshipman was flogged, but was done below decks before a selcted few officers and the master-at arms, not before the crew on the main deck. IIRC.

Bo

And in the Patrick O'Brian novels there are several mentions of Jack Aubrey lashing the midshipmen if they misbehaved, though I don't know if it counts as a full-out "flogging" in the litteral sense. Brobably just a belt or somesuch. But I can't recall any mention in the naval fiction I have read of a full officer being flogged (I have read very little non-fiction on the subject. Something that must be remedied, but I digress).

I agree with Foxe. If it could be done, it probably wasn't, because it would destroy the moral superiority of the officer in question, likely rendering them an innefectual leader.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=editComment&comment=375839)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/#elControls_375839_menu)

[**callenish gunner**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1944-callenish-gunner/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,138 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Pennsylvania mountains north of Clarion
* Interests:The Callenish gunner has just hoved into view looking for safe anchorage in these waters... purveyor of bladed and flintlock weaponry also leather accessories ..........painter of portraits and period scenes by avocation I'm getting my armoury business underway and will be doing as many festivals as I can ...right now along the east coast or great lakes

([IP: 98.21.95.27](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=98.21.95.27)) · · 

[Posted December 21, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=findComment&comment=375846) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=reportComment&comment=375846)

The "caning" of midshipmen was permitted. It was to be witnessed by the officers and ship's surgeon, the caning was either done by the First Lieutenant or the Bosun (usually the bosun). It was supposed to be a fatherly reprimand not a torturous punishment as was depicted in Hornblower but in that episode the Captain was quite mad.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=editComment&comment=375846)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/#elControls_375846_menu)

[**Daniel**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/352-daniel/)

* Pyrate Captain
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* Member
* 652 posts
* Gender:Male
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[Posted December 21, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=findComment&comment=375864) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=reportComment&comment=375864)

Thank you for all the replies. It does make sense that flogging an officer would gneerally have been foolish and extremely rare, regardless of whether it was legal.

Was there also a distinction between officer and man when it came to inflicting capital punishment? I think of common sailors as being hanged for capital offenses, while the first example that comes to mind of an officer being executed is Admiral Byng, who was shot. Was there a general rule that officers were shot while foc'sle hands were hanged?

But I also remember Ducasse telling Benbow after their battle something along the lines of, "as for those cowardly captains who deserted you, hang them up, for by God they deserve it." So maybe officers could be hanged too, at least in the French sea services.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=editComment&comment=375864)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/#elControls_375864_menu)

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
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* Moderator
* 2,565 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
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Shooting pirates.

([IP: 217.43.82.119](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=217.43.82.119)) · · 

[Posted December 23, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=findComment&comment=375952) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=reportComment&comment=375952)

Kirby and Wade, the captains who deserted Benbow, were shot IIRC.

* [Quote](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/)
* [Edit](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=editComment&comment=375952)
* [Options](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/#elControls_375952_menu)

[**capn'rob**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10470-capnrob/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 535 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Morehead City, NC
* Interests:Cruising, power or sail. Music and Maritime History. Pilaging, Plundering and General Mayhem!

([IP: 72.144.35.65](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/modcp/ip-tools/&ip=72.144.35.65)) · · 

[Posted December 23, 2009](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=findComment&comment=376035) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16291-flogging-merchant-and-naval-officers/&do=reportComment&comment=376035)

An interesting fact that I'll throw in the mix. Commodore Uriah Leavy, USN, fought for several years to abolish flogging in the American Navy. His reasoning, that as a Nation of Free Men we were not to be beaten as slaves. As a result of this campaign and some anti-Semitism he fought and was aquitted of five or six Courts Martial. Twice with Presidential influence, Lincoln being one! He was a P.O.W. of the British.

He ran away to sea at twelve but came home for his Bar Mitzvah then went back to sea. After his Navy Career he purchased a rapidly decaying Monticello and restored it. He made it a gift to the American People. His mother is buried on the grounds.