

# The Trafalgar Times



Issue #1  
Jul/Aug/Sep 2019



## Gauging the Range

Hello, and welcome to the first issue of “The Trafalgar Times”, a newsletter designed to capture and share interesting stories, facts, and reviews.

We intend to focus on HMS Victory, Vice-Admiral Nelson, the Battle of Trafalgar, and events of that age, but we will share articles on anything that will hopefully be of interest to those who dream of wooden walls.



The plan is to produce this newsletter every quarter, and we are hoping it will become a tool for sharing information amongst our fellow enthusiasts. One word of caution though: if you are expecting highly detailed, thoroughly technical articles, then there are plenty of places that already exist to sate your appetite (which we will tell you about). We aim to give you snippets and tasters, all accurate, but our mission is to dangle ‘bait facts’ in front of you, which you can then take further in your own explorations and research.

So, get your marker pen ready, and hopefully by the end of this newsletter you will have highlighted at least one article that has piqued your interest and you want to investigate further.



AJN and AV

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

A Diamond in the Rough .....	1
Whatever Happened To? .....	1
Pillar Talk .....	2
Walking Trafalgar: Portsmouth..	2
Seen on YouTube .....	2
Netflix Highlights.....	3
Dockyard Wildlife .....	3
Nelson’s Blood .....	3
KS2 English/History.....	4
The Broad Arrow.....	4
Book Review: Sam Willis .....	4
Lego Trafalgar Square.....	5
Podcast Pearls .....	6
The Rogue’s Yarn .....	6
Cappabar .....	6
Submissions .....	6

### WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

**JOHN RICHARDS  
LAPENOTIÈRE (1770-1834)?**

Lapenotière, a Devon lad, is perhaps best known for his exploits as Captain of schooner HMS Pickle (10), and bringing the first news of Trafalgar to England. But what happened to him afterwards?

After much effort (and letter writing to William Marsden, first secretary of the Admiralty), he finally received a reward of £500 (roughly £30,000 today).

He was then given command of the brig HMS Orestes (16), and participated in the Battle of Copenhagen in 1807. He was promoted to Post Captain in 1811, but never received another commission and never sailed again in command of a ship.

He died in 1834 and is buried at Menheniot in Cornwall. Two of his three sons joined the Royal Navy, and he also had eight daughters (from two marriages, his first wife died in 1804).

AJN



## A Beginning and an End

It does not seem right to start our first print-run with bad news, but unfortunately we must. We have just seen that the Nelson Museum, in Great Yarmouth, is going to close sometime around the end of October this year.



It has been open for the last seventeen years, and contains over two thousand items relating to Nelson and is based around a collection owned by Ben Burgess, who set-up a trust for the items, but declining visitor numbers and a lack of funding have contributed to its demise.

As well as letters and items of Nelson’s, it has paintings relevant to his life, letters from his brother-in-law, and a huge collection of commemorative memorabilia associated with the man and his victories.

This has only just been announced, and at the time of printing we only know that the collection will go in storage until a solution is found. As it could be some time before the artefacts are displayed again, we strongly recommend finding the time to visit the museum before it closes.

It costs £4.25 for adults, £2.50 for children, but is not open on Saturdays.

We’ll be organising a trip up there soon to do a review before it closes, but as the next issue comes out at the start of October, get your road-maps and your driving gloves out for a visit to Great Yarmouth.

There are a couple of other museums in Great Yarmouth with maritime connections (the Lydia Eve Steam Drifter trawler, Caister Lifeboat Station, and the Time and Tide museum), so you have extra options to see if you visit.

<https://www.nelson-museum.co.uk/visiting.html>



## SEEN ON YOUTUBE



Want to know what the inside of a ship looks like when round-shot penetrates the hull? Well thanks to the lovely people at the Vasa Museum in Sweden, you can witness it in slow-motion!

Though this was filmed a few years ago, if you have not seen it yet I cannot recommend it enough :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxMEv9g8lsE>

(Search: 'firing the Vasa cannon')

And should, somehow, you have missed this one, a rolling broadside (pyrotechnics only) on HMS Victory from 2013:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnomDilySlA>

(Search: 'Victory broadside')

All these videos can be found on our YouTube playlist at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMC7mtMvzX294Tjmbjfk6pA>



## PILLAR TALK

In the early hours of the 8th March, 1966, an explosion rocked Sackville Street, Dublin. When the dust had settled, a seventy-foot high granite protrusion now stood where there had once been a one-hundred-and-twenty feet pillar with a statue of Nelson on top.

Unlike Nelson's Column, the Pillar had an internal spiral staircase which led to a viewing platform below the statue (and yet was still cheaper to build than Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square), and had stood since its completion in 1809. The statue was sculpted from Portland stone by Thomas Kirk, and there were references to Nelson's battles etched into the base of the Pillar.

The edifice survived the Easter Uprising in 1916 intact, despite British artillery fire targeting the area, and after the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) calls came for either its destruction or relocation, and by 1966 there were serious doubts about its in-situ future.

Its' bombing, responsibility for which was claimed by a former IRA member in 2000, scrapped any chance of it being moved, and on the 14th March the remains of the pillar were destroyed in a controlled explosion by the Irish Army.

The site remained empty for many years, until in 2003 the Spire of Dublin, designed by Ian Ritchie, opened. The sculpture is a three-hundred-and-ninety-foot stainless steel spire, looking much like a colossal pin.

When the army destroyed the remains of the Pillar, onlookers rushed to grab souvenirs, and luckily the head of Nelson eventually made it to the Gilbert Museum in Dublin.

I think the biggest loss for Dublin is the Pillar itself. Though it may not have had the greatest architecture (thanks to the builders keeping the costs down), having a viewing platform some one-hundred-and-sixty-eight steps up was a major tourist draw and, I feel, still would be.

AJN

(For some good images and detail see: <https://www.olddublintown.com/nelson-pillar.html> )

## WALKING TRAFALGAR: PORTSMOUTH

Portsmouth City Council have a walk called 'The Nelson Trail' which takes you past key buildings and sites associated with Nelson prior to his leaving to re-join the fleet before Trafalgar.

There are fifteen points highlighted on the walk, but it is important to note that the walk is less than a mile in length, so is more akin to a trip to the shops. Starting from the Landport Gate, where Nelson would have entered Portsmouth, the path heads along the High Street and down to the Spur Redoubt, which is close to where Nelson's barge would have been waiting to return him to HMS Victory. You finish the tour by passing one of HMS Victory's anchors on the promenade.

If you are in Portsmouth, it is a must do, and maybe if you incorporate the Millennium Promenade Trail you can add some extra interest, and just enough distance, to justify a pint or an ice-cream at the end of it. The Millennium Trail starts by the main gates to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and is marked by a chain etched into the pavement. This trail takes you down through the old Gunwharf (now a shopping centre but it retains some of the historic buildings you can view from the outside), and down to the Spur Redoubt (as found in the Nelson Trail). You will get a good view of the harbour movements, the old fortifications, and also the tower where the artist WL Wylie had his studio in Tower House along the way.

AJN

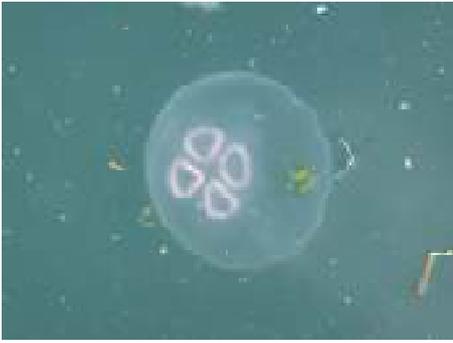


The Nelson Trail:

[https://www.visitportsmouth.co.uk/downloads/dmsimsgs/Nelson\\_Trail\\_leaflet\\_956402279.pdf](https://www.visitportsmouth.co.uk/downloads/dmsimsgs/Nelson_Trail_leaflet_956402279.pdf)

The Millennium Promenade Trail:

<https://www.visitportsmouth.co.uk/things-to-do/millennium-promenade-p276841>



## WILDLIFE: BASIN NO. 1

If you have visited HMS Victory in the warmer months in the last few years, you may have noticed the wildlife that thrives in the relatively contained environment behind the ship that is Basin No. 1.

My particular favourites are the two types of jellyfish: the Moon jellyfish (*Aurelia aurita*), and the Compass jellyfish (*Chrysaora hysoscella*). They can be seen in the sea as well, particular in the sheltered area between HMS Warrior and its' jetty, but Basin No.1 appears to be most acceptable to them.

Moon jellyfish can grow up to 40cm in diameter and are very common in the UK, and the four circles in the centre (upper left picture) are their reproductive organs. They have very short tentacles and the sting from them is mild (though not welcome).

Unlike the Moon jellyfish, the Compass jellyfish (upper right picture) visits the UK in the summer to feed, but be warned as these critters sting.

A couple of us swear we have also seen the flashing blue of a kingfisher heading towards the far wall of Basin No.1 (near where the PFC logo has been sprayed). We know they nest in a similar environment in Chichester, Emsworth and Poole harbours, so hopefully we will have some definitive sightings in the future.

AJN

## A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

So, it is 1803, and you have a five-hundred-and-seventy-foot tall lump of basalt just outside one of the main routes into Martinique that is of no use except for foraging whilst blockading Fort Royal Bay and Saint Pierre Bay. Unless you can think of a better use for it.

Commander Sir Samuel Hood (1762-1814) did, and he had his men haul two 18 pound guns to the top, a 24 pounder into a cave near the middle, and a couple more 24 pounders at the base. Then they built fortifications, stashed supplies, and topped it up with a garrison of one-hundred-and-twenty men. The only thing needed was a name, so he commissioned it as the sloop HMS Diamond Rock, what is affectionately known as a 'stone frigate'.

Lieutenant James Maurice was placed in charge, and for seventeen months he happily used HMS Diamond to disrupt trade in and out of Fort-de-France until the end of May 1805, when one Admiral Villeneuve and his allied fleet happened to be in the area.

Villeneuve had orders to capture Diamond Rock, and after a two-week siege he finally landed troops on May 31st. The British troops, low on supplies and out of water, finally surrendered on June 3rd, with two killed and one wounded, though they took out three gunboats.

The prisoners were repatriated to Barbados, and Lt. Maurice had to go through the indignity of a court-martial for losing his 'ship'. The court-martial cleared the British of any wrong-doing, and Maurice went on to command an actual ship, rather than a rocky outcrop.

It is said the Royal Navy still salute Diamond Rock if they pass, but I have not managed to verify this yet.

AJN

NETFLIX:

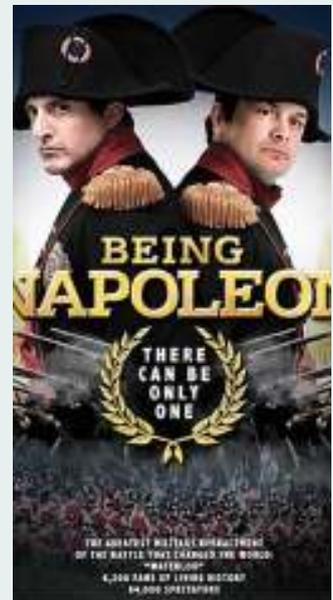
WHAT TO WATCH

N

Netflix is very poor at the moment for suggestions that may interest you, luckily this is their fault and not ours!

The list for Amazon Prime is far better, but that content is planned for the next issue so there is not much to highlight here.

There is 'Being Napoleon', a documentary on two individuals vying to be the re-enactor who gets to be Napoleon for the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. This is surprisingly watchable, and you do wonder



what drives these men in their quest to be Napoleon, and at just under an hour and a half in length you get a chance to be drawn into their worlds looking for an answer to that question.

The only other option we can find currently on Netflix is 'World War II in Colour', which has a couple of episodes focussing on naval battles, otherwise you are better off on the iPlayer or 4OD if you are searching for relevant content to watch.

AJN



## EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE—KS2 ENGLISH AND HISTORY

The National Maritime Museum (Greenwich) has a teacher resource pack available online that covers the Battle of Trafalgar.

Coming in at nearly thirty pages, it covers KS2 History and English, and is primarily aimed at school groups attending the museum, but it has some interesting details and there is no reason why it could not be easily adapted for visiting HMS Victory, or even for giving some extra details and inspiration when you are taking your family to either of these attractions.

It covers the experience of an individual (John Franklin on the Bellerophon), the battle of Trafalgar, and a brief bit about women onboard ships at the time.

Anyone taking KS2 students to either Greenwich or Portsmouth should peruse this beforehand.

You can find the resource here:

[https://www.rmg.co.uk/sites/default/files/Trafalgar\\_Tales\\_resource.pdf](https://www.rmg.co.uk/sites/default/files/Trafalgar_Tales_resource.pdf)

## CORRECTIONS

As this is the first issue, there are no corrections or retractions to tell you about (and long may this continue).

If you do spot something that is incorrect, or you feels needs clarifying, then please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

[traftimes@gmail.com](mailto:traftimes@gmail.com)



## THE BROAD ARROW

From weapons and ammunition to food, stores and supplies, the broad arrow could be found on hundreds of items onboard a Royal Navy vessel throughout the age of sail. Also known as the 'crow's foot', usage of the mark can be traced back as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, being largely adopted by the 16<sup>th</sup> century to mark property owned by the government. It is said that the symbol was used in order to identify the origin of goods that were likely to be stolen. It is well known for featuring prominently on the uniforms of prisoners in Britain from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.



The broad arrow was also adopted by colonies across the British Empire, namely in America and later Australia. It was used both to denote exiting property of the crown, but also to earmark potential property seized by the British. This even included marking trees intended for use in shipbuilding as masts in the American colonies.

For those wishing to identify which of the minority of HMS Victory's guns are the real deal, the broad arrow is clearly visible on top in the centre of the barrel. The mark can also be found on some of the window frames around the buildings of the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth.

AV

## THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR: SAM WILLIS

56 PAGES £8.99

One of the latest entries into the Ladybird Expert series, Sam Willis' Battle of Trafalgar joins a line-up that includes the Spanish Armada, the Battle of the Atlantic, and the Battle of the Nile. It is worth noting that, for this series, Penguin appear to rely on the same experts, so if you find one in a style you don't like, then this is likely to be repeated.

The narration starts with Napoleon crowning himself King of Italy, and finishes with the building of Nelson's Column. It does not follow a truly linear timeline, jumping around to different events in Nelson's career, Napoleon's conquests, and in the history of the Royal Navy, and because of the relatively dry telling of these events, it does not necessarily make a cohesive read at times.

The book lacks detail in places where it could really use it—shot types, women at sea, and the 'great chase', for example—but overall, it has some interesting sections. It does provide a good starting point if you are trying to get a younger reader interested in the battle and the characters involved, but as an adult (at whom these books are nominally aimed at), it falls far short.

The word selection at times is poor (the description of the final moments of Hardy and Nelson seems to be deliberately ambiguous), the swapping between Imperial and Metric measurements for no apparent reason, and the generalisation of numbers can all be frustrating for anyone who already has a basic interest in the battle.

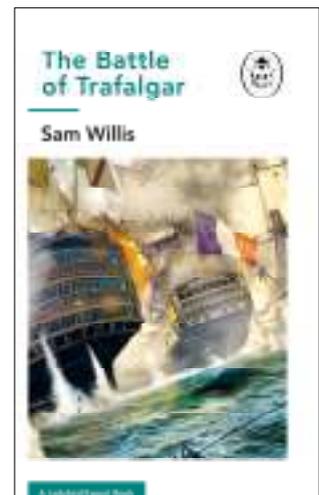
It is well produced, and has some very good artwork that should help spur the younger imagination, but I feel it lacks a few pages of details. As a stocking filler to get someone started on the path of wooden walls, it is ideal, but it does not add anything if you possess even a basic library.

AJN

History Extra interviewed Sam Willis about this book:

<https://player.fm/series/history-extra-podcast/the-battle-of-traffic>

*It is interesting (in this interview) how much the author appreciates the efforts of Collingwood over Nelson during the battle, but as the battle had been raging for some time before he received word of Nelson's death, how much influence did Collingwood have over the fighting?*



## DID YOU MISS? ADMIRAL (2015) 128 MINS



Available on both DVD and Amazon Prime—and originally entitled *Michiel de Ruyter—'Admiral'* brings to life the 17th Century Dutch Admiral, the key moments in his life, and the events leading to his death.

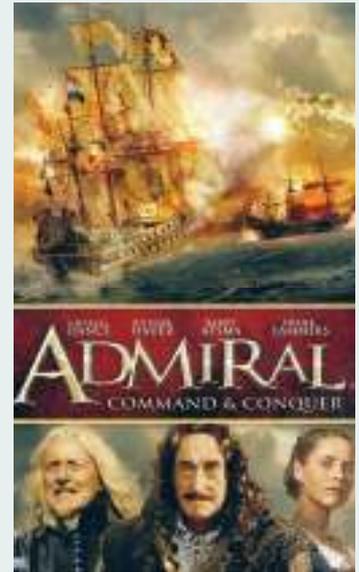
The sea battles are the highlight of the film, and though they may not explain his tactics clearly (which may be lost in translation, and is nothing which a bit of internet searching cannot resolve), they are engaging to watch. The scenes of his life and the politics that shadowed him throughout his career can be a bit tedious and not necessarily conveyed clearly enough to someone who is not a Dutch history master, but we do get appearances from both Charles Dance and Rutger Hauer to help bring some gravitas to the scenes.

Frank Lammers plays the Dutch hero, who is engaging enough to watch, and Roel Reiné, with a career rich in episodic tv, directs.

Though not a Napoleonic piece, anyone with an interest in wooden walls might enjoy this—just don't mention the Medway and the Royal Charles!

Be warned, as this is subtitled so it will need your full attention if your language skills are lacking.

AJN



### *Admiral – Just don't mention the Royal Charles!*

## LEGO TRAFALGAR SQUARE #21045 £79.99

Lego have a new release in their Architecture series, and this time it is Trafalgar Square (21045). The set has 1,197 pieces and retails at £79.99 (though it can be found cheaper with a bit of internet searching).

The set contains features including the front of the National Gallery, Nelson's Column, a representation of the fountain and the lions, and two London busses and a black cab. Be aware though, if you are not familiar with the Architecture series these are all microscale representations, with the London Bus being five studs high and three studs long.

It is a satisfying build, and it has some clever touches, such as the stairs in the square, and the trees. The rear of the Gallery has three removable panels so you can see some 'artworks' inside, but the set is let down by the lack of detail for the four panels at the base of Nelson's Column, and for the lions themselves (and Nelson has two arms, see the picture on the right). To build, it took just under two-and-a-half hours, but I do build a lot of Lego so you may take a more leisurely approach construction.

Overall, it is a clever set and looks good when displayed, but maybe wait for a price drop rather than pay the full eighty pounds.

NB: Nelson's Column also appears in the Lego London Skyline set (#21034, £44.99, 468 pieces). This set has far less detail (see the picture bottom right), but can be picked up for less. The skyline sets are quick builds, averaging an hour to do, and do not take up as much shelf space as the larger models such as Trafalgar Square.

AJN



## PODCAST PEARLS

There are a number of podcasts available online covering Nelson, Trafalgar and the wider Napoleonic period.

For those who prefer listening to reading, various volumes of recordings of Nelson's letters to Lady Hamilton can be downloaded from iTunes. Be warned however, as we found that the voiceover at times does not make for the most enjoyable listening experience!

<https://podcasts.apple.com/tn/podcast/letters-lord-nelson-to-lady-hamilton-volume-i-by-nelson/id417893744>

BBC Radio Solent's H2O podcast featured HMS Victory in an episode originally published in 2015, in anticipation of the ships' 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is 45 minutes well worth listening to, providing copious amounts of history and information on Nelson's flagship.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02pkf28>

There is an episode from 2004 from the BBC Four 'Great Lives' series that focuses on Nelson. It features Terry Coleman, author of *Nelson: The Man and the Legend*, and covers Nelson's childhood up to his death at Trafalgar. Bear in mind that new scholarship has been unearthed and new debates surfaced since this was originally recorded fifteen years ago.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007618p>

AV

## THE TRAFALGAR TIMES

The Trafalgar Times is a publication put together to share information primarily focusing on the Royal Navy around the time of the Battle of Trafalgar. This scope, however, is not limited, and we aim to cover media and events that may appeal to anyone who has an interest in the age of sail.

If you have any suggestions, article submissions, or corrections then please email us:

[traftimes@gmail.com](mailto:traftimes@gmail.com)



@traftimes



## THREADING THE ROPES

*You're on deck, there is a storm lashing the ship, and you and your shipmates are hard at work hauling in the bowline. A shout from above carries over the storm and the men in front of you reflexively drop to the deck.*

*You follow their lead, and you hear the whip-crack of a rope somewhere overhead as it gives way under the strain. The officer-of-the-watch shouts at you to grab the loose end that is dangling just above you, and you reach up and grab it, realising just how close it came to taking your head off. Peering at the rope, and despite the driving rain, you can clearly see the rogue's yarn running through the middle. It is a red thread and you curse under your breath at the journeyman roper from Plymouth dockyard who had made this piece, threatening your life with his poor work.*

Okay, so the rogue's yarn was as much for detecting theft as it was for allowing defects to be tracked, but by 1780 all Navy cordage had a white thread laid through it so anyone caught with the rope could be identified as a thief. This was then refined to have a colour that signified the maker: Devonport dockyard used red, Chatham used a yellow thread, and Portsmouth used a blue thread. Is this related to the Portsmouth Football Club home colours you ask? Probably not as their first home shirts were pink and white!

There are records that show the Venetian Navy were adding coloured markers to their ropes as far back as the 14th Century. In the 20th Century the use of colours and patterns to identify cordage, continued and there are now European standards to harmonise this. For example: blue for Polyester and orange for Polyethylene, as well as manufacturer's patterns incorporating these colours.

The rogue's yarn is also known as the "thief mark."

AJN

*"My dog is a good dog, delights in the ship and swims after me when I go in the boat." July 1790, Cuthbert Collingwood (1748-1810)*

## 'MONEY FOR OLD ROPE' AND 'CAPPABAR'

Two phrases that are linked, but one is problematic:

'Money for old rope' has long been said to have derived from the activity of breaking down old rope into oakum, which could then be used for caulking or sold when a sailor was on land. Picking apart ropes was also used as a punishment, and a task performed in Victorian workhouses, where overseers and owners would profit from selling the oakum made from old rope, thus giving us the saying...

Except: there is no written record of this phrase until the 1930's, yet one would expect to find this phrase somewhere in print in 'The Sailor's Word Book' of 1867 and onwards—but there is no sign of it anywhere.

So, for the moment, we have to use caution when relating this word back to the sailing navy. It is more than likely it was in oral use before being first written down, but for how many years?

'Cappabar' is the misappropriation of government property, and as most navy assets were marked with the broad arrow (see above for the identification of ropes), being caught selling on property would result in a severe punishment. 'Capabarre', an earlier form of the word, is mentioned in 1818, and is in 'The Sailor's Word' book. It also has a variant of 'capper-bar' and if anyone has some linguistic feedback as to the origins of these three variants then we would love to hear from you.

*(Please note, 'cappabar' in any spelling format is not a valid Scrabble word should you try and play it!)*

AJN