



*April 2023 Newsletter*  
*Magazine Section*

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***FRIENDSHIP, FELLOWSHIP***  
***AND FUN***

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**A Sailor's Life in Lord  
Nelson's Navy**



HMS Victory

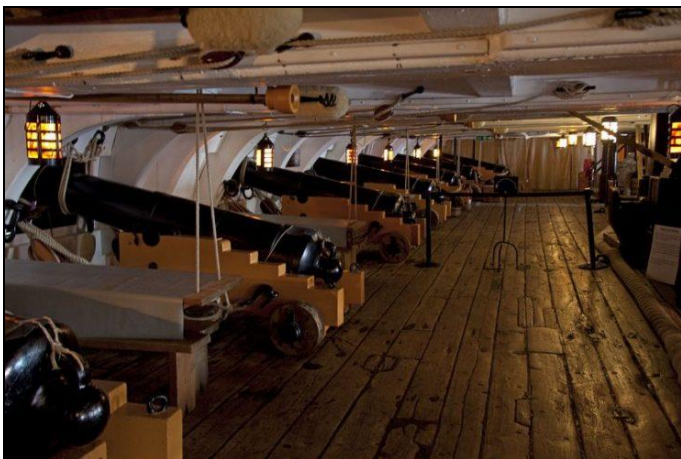
HMS *Victory* is a 104-gun first-rate ship of the line of the Royal Navy. Launched in 1765, she is best known for her role as Lord Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October 1805.

A team of 150 workmen were assigned to construct *Victory's* frame. Around 6,000 trees were used in her construction, of which 90% were oak and the remainder elm, pine and fir, together with a small quantity of lignum vitae. The wood of the hull was held in place by six-foot copper bolts, supported by treenails for the smaller fittings.

On the day of the launch, shipwright Hartly Larkin, designated "foreman afloat" for the event, suddenly realised that the ship might not fit through the dock gates. Measurements at first light confirmed his fears: the gates were at least 9½ inches too narrow. He told the news to his superior, master shipwright John Allin, who considered abandoning the launch. Larkin asked for the assistance of every available shipwright, and they hewed away enough wood from the gates with their adzes for the ship to pass safely through.

Nelson's flagship HMS *Victory* had a complement of 821 men that needed to react with precision to adjust the ship's 37 sails, fire its 104 cannons, steer its 3,500-ton frame, and navigate by means of astronomical instruments.

This required an intricate system of routine and discipline.



HMS Victory 24pdr gundeck:

### **Organization**

Sailors usually had no say in what ship they served aboard. While most were volunteers and served for patriotic or personal reasons, a good number were also pressed into service, especially as the Napoleonic Wars heated up and there was a great demand for men. In 1793, there were 15,000 men in the Royal Navy; by 1813, there were 150,000.

### **Hierarchy aboard a man of war**

At the top, commissioned officers lorded over all below, with the chief

being the captain. Next in line were warrant officers and petty officers. The petty officers were directly in charge of the seamen. The seamen in turn were divided into four classes: able, ordinary, landmen, and boys. Each man was allocated to a department with specific functions such as gunnery, sail-making, and carpentry.

Most crew were allocated to the guns in teams of up to fourteen men. Others tended the sails and a good number worked as servants for the officers, or as messengers between parts of the ship. There were almost endless tasks to which crew members could be assigned.

Somewhat outside the system was the large contingent of Royal Marines, equating in large ships to roughly 15% of the crew. Their job was to serve as sharp shooters, boarders, and soldiers. Their other jobs included suppressing mutinies and standing guard during punishments.

To run the ship, the men worked in watches. The first lieutenant assigned watchbills and quarterbills to the men. Typically, captains ran a two-watch system with the day divided into starboard and larboard watches. The 12-hour period of a starboard and larboard watch was subdivided into five, 4-hour watches and two, 2-hour watches (called dog watches). This allowed men to get increments of 4 hours of rest. The dog watches were established to create an odd number of watches per day so that every day a sailor's watchbill would change, plus it allowed for efficiency at meal times.

Time was tracked by a half-hour glass that when emptied, would signal a crew to ring a bell to indicate the time. Some rare ships used a three-watch system which allowed the crew to get a full 8-hour rest period. This type of system was very popular among the crew.

Pay was doled out once per lunar month. In 1815, the lowest paid were the inexperienced "landmen" at £1.2.6 on a first-rate vessel. As a sailor gained experience, he was rated up. An ordinary seaman earned £1.5.6 and an able seaman made £1.13.6. Specialists such as a sailmaker made more at £2.5.6.

For comparison, a lieutenant of a first-rate ship of the line made £8.8.0 and the captain earned £32.4.6. Keep in mind that pay was deducted for clothing and other items. Pay was also subject to variables such as length of service and on what class of ship the sailor was serving.

### **Uniforms**

Compared to the elaborately uniformed officers or the red-coated Royal Marines, sailors had no uniform. The usual kit was a short jacket, loose trousers, and a head covering (often with a ribbon that had the ship's name written on it). If there was any uniformity among sailor dress, it was due to the insistence of the captain or because the purser was purchasing the same type of clothing in bulk.

### **Below Decks**

Sailors and petty officers berthed in the lower decks. There was little light here,

and burning flame was highly restricted due to the dangers of fire. There was no privacy. Sea chests were shared.



Each man was given a 6-foot by 3-foot hammock, and hammocks were attached with hooks in a layout devised by the first lieutenant. Each sailor had 14 inches width of space to sleep. Petty officers, as a benefit of promotion, were given 28 inches. Sailors did not sleep directly on the hammock; rather, it served as a cradle for bedding which was bought through the purser. Due to a crowd of hundreds of unwashed men (many of whom suffered from seasickness) in a cramped and unventilated space, the lower decks reeked and were a breeding ground for disease. To improve conditions, hammocks were rolled up and stowed daily on deck when the weather was fine. Some ships even used manual or sail-operated pumps to ventilate the air below. But these efforts had limited impact.

One positive of having so many bodies crammed below decks was that on a cold weather cruise, no heating was required. This, of course, was negative in the tropics.

In order to escape the discomforts of the lower deck, some sailors slung their hammocks in the orlop deck, the lowest deck in the vessel. The drawback was that this area was where rats tended to make their home.

### **Danger**

The overwhelming danger to British seamen was not enemy action (this accounts for only 6.3% of those who perished at sea), but rather disease and accidents (over 81%). Accidents were prevalent due to low headroom, slippery decks, and the potential for exploding munitions or equipment mishaps during drills.



Box of surgeon's tools

### **Food**

Mealtimes for the crew were generally respected by the officers as sacrosanct in order to maintain morale. Forty-five minutes were allowed for breakfast and 90 minutes for dinner and supper. Dinner, eaten around midday, was considered to be the main meal. Officers had the same rations as the crew, although they supplemented those rations with a mess subscription.

Meals for all were cooked in the galley using a large Admiralty-pattern stove. Cooks did not have to have culinary experience to be a ship's cook. Until 1806 they just needed to be a Greenwich chest pensioner.

Meals were predictable. Meats (typically boiled and salted pork or beef) were served from Sunday to Tuesday and also Thursday. Oatmeal and sugar, butter and cheese were common food items. Each man had a one-gallon ration of small beer with low alcohol content, which provided needed calories for their very physical jobs. A typical meal was lobsouse, which was salted and boiled meat, onions, and pepper that was combined with ship's biscuit. This mixture was then stewed. A half pint of wine or a pint of grog would wash it down



*Army and Navy hard tack*

The ship supplemented this diet by carrying its own livestock. Bumboats rushed at a ship when it entered a port, selling badly needed fresh produce.

In addition, seamen would fish, catching sharks, skates, dolphins, and turtles. Birds were shot and eaten as well. Rats were hunted for sport and eaten, which were compared by seamen to the taste of rabbit.

### **Discipline**

To maintain order, strict discipline was employed. The Articles of War were read at the commissioning of the ship and once a month thereafter. These laid out the regulations for a crew's behaviour. In 1757 there were 35 articles, and any disciplinary infractions not specifically named in the first 34 were covered by number 35—which gave the captain leeway to punish seamen “by the laws and customs in such cases used at sea.”

The methods of punishment were diverse. An officer or petty officer could hit a seaman with a cane called a “starter.” Victims could be tied spread-eagled to the shrouds for periods of time.

Serious offenses were dealt with by the captain, with the very worst going to court-martial in which a man would be tried by a group of officers. Punishments might be disrating a seaman, stopping their grog, or flogging (the maximum was 12 lashes but this was ignored by some). In some cases, a sailor might be “flogged around the fleet” which was to have the punished man rowed to every ship in the harbor and flogged on each vessel. Then there was the ultimate punishment, hanging.

### **Sea Shanties**

Shanties were sung by those sailing the seas before the era of steam-powered ships. They are simple songs with a strong rhythm, which makes them catchy and memorable. They are really easy to sing, spanning a small vocal range and focusing on rhythm meaning you don't have to be a great singer to make it sound good. Shanties were sung to help with the manual tasks on ship – pulling (hauling), pushing (heaving), and pumping. The different tasks were matched with different style of songs.

Short drag (short haul) shanties were for tasks that required short bursts of energy and a quick pull as when unfurling or shortening a sail. Example: Haul Away Joe

Long drag or halyard shanties have a pull-and-relax rhythm for jobs such as hoisting sail. This type of shanty has a chorus at the end of each line. Example: – Blow the Man Down.

Capstan shanties were primarily to relieve boredom and promote morale – with the crew trudging round and round in step, continually pushing the capstan bars to wind up the anchor chain. Example – Drunken Sailor.

All wooden ships leak – and it's much worse in stormy seas. Lifting the water from the bilges (the lowest part of the ship) was gruelling work so singing pump shanties kept up the sailors' spirits. Example – Rio Grande.

When the work was done, then the off-watch crew enjoyed forebitters, also known as forecastle (fo'c'sle) songs. These are ballads of home, adventure, misadventure, love and loss, and humour. Example: Old Maui.

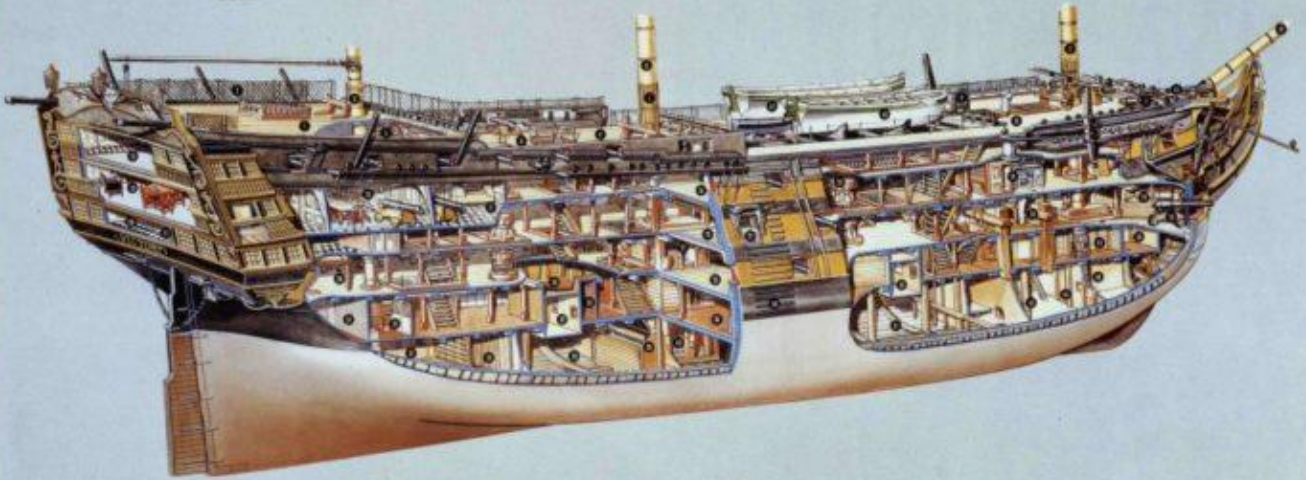
# H.M.S. VICTORY

## Particulars

Length on Gun Deck	186 0"
Length of Keel	151 3"
Moulded Breadth	50 6"
Extreme Breadth	51 10"
Depth in Hold	25 6"
Displacement (Approx)	3500 tons
Burthen	2862 tons

## Armament - 1805

Lower Deck	30 32-pounders
Middle Deck	28 24-pounders
Upper Deck	30 12-pounders
Quarto Deck	12 12-pounders
Forecastle	2 68-pounders (Cannonades)



- |                       |                                      |                          |  |                     |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|---------------------|
| 1. Rooft Deck         | 12. Foremast                         | 23. Captain              | 34. Middlemast Berth - i.e. Nelson's bed | 45. Mainmast Wall   |
| 2. Hancock's Nerting  | 13. Captain's Cabin                  | 24. Galley and Store     | 35. Forward Hanging Magazine             | 46. Admiral's Barge |
| 3. Mizzenmast         | 14. Upper Gun Deck                   | 25. Lower Gun Deck       | 36. Powder Store                         | 47. Ship's Launch   |
| 4. Quarter Deck       | 15. Nelson's Day Cabin               | 26. Gun Room             | 37. Powder Room                          | 48. Light Room      |
| 5. Ship's Wheel       | 16. Nelson's Dining Cabin            | 27. Elm Tree Pump        | 38. Ash Hold                             | 49. Bowling Steps   |
| 6. First Nelson's Ill | 17. Nelson's Sleeping Cabin with cot | 28. Mooring Bit          | 39. Shot Locker                          | 50. 12th Cannon     |
| 7. Pines              | 18. Bowport                          | 29. Manger               | 40. Big Pump                             | 51. Broad Room      |
| 8. Mastmast           | 19. Middle Gun Deck                  | 30. Okop                 | 41. Main Hold                            | 52. Spirit Room     |
| 9. Belly              | 20. Warboard                         | 31. Dispensary           | 42. Gunner's Store                       |                     |
| 10. Picnic            | 21. Tiller Head                      | 32. Aft Hanging Magazine | 43. Main Magazine                        |                     |
| 11. Cannonade         | 22. Entry Port                       | 33. Lamp Room            | 44. Filing Room                          |                     |



Battle of Trafalgar  
Painting by William Turner

# Turn off a light, guide a moth and save an endangered possum

Turning off your outdoor lights will save more than your electricity bill.



Bogong Moth

Residents and businesses across south-east Australia are being urged to turn off unnecessary outdoor lights in a move to stop Bogong moths from getting lost, depriving mountain-pygmy possums of a vital food source.

The critically-endangered mountain pygmy-possum, Australia's only hibernating marsupial, lives primarily in Victoria's alpine region as well as Mount Kosciuszko.



Pygmy Possum

Every year, after five to seven months of hibernation under snow, the possums emerge in spring weighing just 40 grams. They spend the next months doubling their weight to 80 grams in order to survive the next winter.

But supply of their main food source, Bogong moths, has plummeted from 4.4 billion to only a few hundred last year according to Dr Marissa Parrott, a reproductive biologist with Zoos Victoria who is leading the mission to repopulate the possums.

“There’s nothing else like them in the world. They wake up from hibernation, breed, then females need to get the right level of nutrition so they can produce milk for their babies to survive in their pouches.”

Last spring was the worst on record for the possums - 95 per cent of surveyed females lost their young, reducing the population to 2000.

Dr Parrott said the harrowing task of studying dead baby possums found “just no food in their stomachs”.

The dramatic drop-off in moths making it south appears to be due to the drought in NSW and Queensland, she said.

The moths can also become trapped by city lights, distracting them from visual cues on the horizon.

From September 1 to late October, Zoos Victoria will spread awareness of its *Lights off for Moths* campaign. It says every unnecessary outdoor light switched off from southern Queensland, through NSW and in northern Victoria will help the moths complete their sometimes thousand-kilometre migration.

"Every single moth is precious. The female moth can lay 2000 eggs," said Dr Parrott.

"Unfortunately in the last two years, what used to be a huge, amazing swarm of these moths has turned into a trickle. This year we're going to be facing another extremely dire situation, so we're trying to work to avert that crisis".

Zoos Victoria chief executive Dr Jenny Gray said she was in discussions with the government to get buildings like Canberra's Parliament House on board with the campaign.

"We'll be asking all the big museums, town halls, anywhere where outdoor lighting is not important for security - because we don't want to compromise people's safety - all the way down to your domestic homes."

*This article first appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald in August 2019*

## Death in paradise From "The Times" of London

Those of us who have watched the TV series may have wondered how an island in the Caribbean has so many deaths. Is it just for the story?

Not so.

A senior London murder squad detective, Superintendent Hamish Campbell retired 10 years ago and took up a job in Jamaica

He was leaving a city of 9 million people with an astonishingly low murder rate – 109 homicides in 2022 – for an island with a population of 2.8 million, where the body count last year was 1,498.

What's more, Campbell's new post required investigating the most difficult and controversial killings – those perpetrated by police officers. In 2013, the year he arrived in Jamaica, police and security forces shot dead 258 people.

Violent crime is commonplace in urban Jamaica. Poorer communities, where gangs hold sway, bear the brunt. There are feud killings over drugs, money and territory, meaningless killings for perceived disrespect and as yet unexplained killings – a few weeks ago, a well-known architect was shot by motorcycle assassins as he drove in Friday night traffic.

Despite the bloodshed and the litany of murders, Campbell has embraced Jamaica. Yes, he investigates brutal crimes but he also drives his car to the reggae rhythms of lovers' rock,



devours local history, paints in oils and explores little used mountain tracks.

There is death, way too much violent death, but there is also paradise. It is quite a small island really but when you're walking through the forest it can seem enormous. There are vast tracts I wander through on my own or with friends – we go miles and never meet anything but politeness and courtesy for the traveller abroad. I've missed trails, then come across a farmer and he'll spend the next two hours showing me the way.

"There is paradise here. There are two Jamaicas"

With thanks to Geoff Jones



**Dear Benefits Manager**

Can you please help me.

Many years ago, I married a widow out of love who had an 18-year-old daughter. After the wedding, my father, a widower, came to visit a number of times, and he fell in love with my step-daughter. My father eventually married her without my permission. As a result, my step-daughter legally became my step-mother and my father my son-in-law.

My father's wife (also my step-daughter) and my step-mother, gave birth to a son who is my grandchild because I am the husband of my step-daughter's mother. This boy is also my brother, as the son of my father.

As you can see, my wife became a grandmother, because she is the mother of my father's wife. Therefore, it appears that I am also my wife's grandchild.

A short time after these events, my wife gave birth to a son, who became my father's brother-in-law, the step-son of my father's wife, and my uncle. My son is also my step-mother's brother, and through my step-mother, my wife has become a grandmother and I have become my own grandfather.

In light of the above mentioned, I would like to know the following: Does my son, who is also my uncle, my father's son-in-law, and my step-mother's brother fulfil the requirements for receiving childcare benefits?

Sincerely yours,



Never look down on anyone unless you are helping them up.



Treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to you, not because they are nice but because you are.



Today I bent the truth to be kind, and I have no regret,  
For I am far surer of what is kind than I am of what is true  
~Robert Brault~



Carry a heart that never hates,  
a smile that never fades,  
And a touch that never hurts.



Compassion is language the deaf can hear and the blind can see.  
~Mark Twain~



Kindness is in our power even when fondness is not.  
~Henry James~