

# Battle of Trafalgar

## 21 October 1805



The Battle of Trafalgar, was part of the War of the Third Coalition (Great Britain, Russia and Austria against France and Spain). It was the most significant naval battle of the Napoleonic Wars and the pivotal naval battle of the 19th century. A Royal Navy fleet of 27 ships of the line destroyed an allied French and Spanish fleet of 33 ships of the line west of Cape Trafalgar in south-west Spain. The French and Spanish lost 22 ships; the British none. The British commander Admiral Lord Nelson died late in the battle, by which time he had ensured his place as Britain's greatest naval hero.

The British victory spectacularly confirmed the naval supremacy that Britain had established through the eighteenth century. After the battle, the Royal Navy remained unchallenged as the world's foremost naval power until the rise of Imperial Germany prior to the First World War. However, by the time it was fought, Napoleon had decided to abandon his plans to invade southern England and instead was successfully conducting military operations in Germany against Britain's continental allies.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## Nelson's early years 1771 - 1784



On 1 January 1771 Nelson (aged 12) reported to the third-rate *Raisonnable* as an ordinary seaman and coxswain. His maternal uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling, commanded the vessel. Shortly after reporting aboard, Nelson was appointed a midshipman and began officer training. Ironically, Nelson found that he suffered from chronic seasickness, a complaint that dogged him for the rest of his life. Suckling became Comptroller of the Navy in 1775 and used his position to help Nelson's rapid advance. By 1777 Nelson had risen to the rank of lieutenant and was assigned to the West Indies. During his service as lieutenant he saw action on the British side in the American Revolutionary War.

In 1780 he was involved in an action against the Spanish fortress of San Juan in Nicaragua and was praised for his efforts.

In 1784 Nelson was given command of the frigate *Boreas*, and assigned to enforce the Navigation Act in the vicinity of Antigua. After seizing four American vessels off Nevis, he was sued for illegal seizure. As the merchants of Nevis supported them, Nelson was in peril of imprisonment and had to remain sequestered on *Boreas* for eight months.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## Nelson's middle years 1793 - 1797



Given command of the 64-gun Agamemnon in 1793, he was first assigned to the Mediterranean, based out of the Kingdom of Naples. In 1794 he was wounded in the face by stones and debris thrown up by a close cannon shot during a joint operation at Calvi, Corsica. As a result, Nelson lost the sight in his right eye.

In 1796 Sir John Jervis was appointed commander-in-chief of the fleet in the Mediterranean. He appointed Nelson to be commodore and to exercise independent command over the ships blockading the French coast. Agamemnon, often described as Nelson's favourite ship, was by now worn out and was sent back to England for repairs. Nelson was appointed to the 74-gun HMS Captain.

On 14 February he was largely responsible for the British victory at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent. Here he showed his flair for dramatic and bold action. Under the command of Sir John Jervis, the British fleet was ordered to "tack in line," but Nelson disobeyed these orders and gided in order to prevent the Spanish fleet from escaping. He then boarded two enemy ships in succession, an unusual and bold move which was cheered by the whole fleet. Nelson himself led the boarding parties, which was unusual for high-ranking officers.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### The San José



The San José was a three-decked Spanish first-rate battleship with 120 guns, built in 1783. In 1797, she formed part of the Spanish fleet at the Battle of Cape St Vincent, where she was in the thick of the fighting and suffered badly from the heavy British broadsides, losing over one hundred and fifty of her crew killed and wounded, including her admiral who lost both legs and was carried below to die.

At the height of the action, the San José was rammed by her next astern, the 80 gun San Nicolas and the two ships became locked together. It was at this point that Nelson led a boarding party onto the San Nicolas and capturing her by storm. Seeing the plight of their comrades, the Spanish in the San José tried to help them by firing on Nelson's men, only to find themselves assailed in their turn. This further blow was too much for an already demoralised crew and, moments later, a dazed Nelson found himself receiving the surrender of all the Spanish officers on the quarterdeck of the San José.

San José actually enjoyed a long active service in the Royal Navy as HMS San Josef - the only foreign first rate battleship ever to do so. San Josef remained in active service and, after Nelson's death, her association with him meant that she was preserved long after her useful life was over. She lasted until 1849 and, when she was finally broken up, much of her wood was made into furniture and relics.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## The Band of Brothers



Nelson used this phrase on a number of occasions to describe the remarkably close and friendly relationship that existed between him and the captains who served under his command at the Battle of the Nile on 1 August 1798

### The Band of Brothers

- Sir Alexander John Ball
- Sir Benjamin Hallowell
- Sir Thomas Foley
- Sir Samuel Hood
- Sir Thomas Troubridge
- Lord James de Saumarez
- Davidge Gould
- Ralph Willett Miller
- Sir Edward Berry
- Thomas Louis
- John Peyton
- George Westcott
- Thomas Thompson
- Thomas Hardy
- Henry Darby



## Battle of Trafalgar

### Captain Sir Thomas Hardy



Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy, RN (April 5, 1769–September 20, 1839) was a British naval officer.

In September 1798 (after the Battle of the Nile), Captain Thomas Hardy took command of the Vanguard, still under Nelson's flag. Two months later a formidable French army had invaded Naples and on December 16 Vanguard was shifted out of gunshot of the ports.

By December 21 the Sicilian Royal Family, the British Ambassador and his family, several Neapolitan nobles and most of the English gentlemen and merchants had been embarked, numbering in all about 600 persons in the ships of the squadron. Vanguard sailed on December 23 and arrived, after a stormy passage, in Palermo on the December 26.

Nelson shifted his flag from Vanguard to Foudroyant on June 6, 1799, taking with him Captain Hardy and a number of other officers.

He served as Flag Captain to Admiral Nelson, and commanded HMS Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. Nelson was shot as he paced the decks with Hardy and as he lay dying, Nelson's famous remark of "Kiss me Hardy" was directed at him (although these were not Nelson's last words, as is sometimes claimed). However, Hardy was not present at Nelson's death, as he had been called back on deck.

Hardy would later serve as First Sea Lord and Governor of Greenwich Hospital.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## Nelson's later years 1797 - 1801



Later in 1797, while commanding *Theseus* during an unsuccessful expedition to conquer Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Nelson was shot in the right arm with a musket ball, fracturing his humerus bone in multiple places.

The Battle of the Nile (also known as the Battle of Aboukir Bay) took place on 1 August 1798, was an important naval battle of the French Revolutionary Wars between the British fleet commanded by Rear-Admiral Horatio Nelson and a French fleet under Vice-Admiral François-Paul Brueys D'Aigalliers. It took place on the evening and early morning of August 1 and 2 1798. French losses have been estimated to have been as high as 1,700 dead (including Brueys) and 3,000 captured. British losses were 218 dead. The battle effectively ended Napoleon's ambition to take the war to the British in India.

The Battle of Copenhagen (2 April 1801) which was fought in order to break up the armed neutrality of Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. During the action, Nelson was ordered to cease battle by his commander, Sir Hyde Parker, who believed that the Danish fire was too strong. In a famous incident, however, Nelson claimed he could not see the signal flags conveying the order, pointedly raising his telescope to his blind eye.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## Admiral Aristide Aubert du Petit-Thouars



Aristide-Aubert du Petit-Thouars was born in 1760 at Chateau de Boumois, on the right bank of the Loire seven kilometres northwest of Saumur. He entered the French Navy in 1778, participated in the battle of Ouessant and the taking of Saint-Louis-du-Senegal, and served in the Caribbean with Admiral de Guichen in his three battles against Admiral Rodney (1780).

du Petit-Thouars, at the battle of the Nile (Aboukir) on 1 August 1798, was a Capitaine de Vaisseau in command of the 80-gun ship-of-the-line Tonnant ("Thunderer"). During the battle, Tonnant captured one British ship and destroyed another; but, in the end, Tonnant was dismasted and du Petit-Thouars, who was badly wounded, refused to surrender. He had the French flag nailed to the mast, and, at his death, his body (as he had requested) was thrown overboard to avoid being taken by the British. HMS Tonnant fought at Trafalgar.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### The Nelson Touch



On 29 September 1805, as the British Fleet had waited for the Combined Fleet to sail from Cadiz Nelson had asked his captains to come on board the Victory and had explained his plan of attack. His method was to form two columns of ships (the "lee" and "weather" columns, the latter led by Nelson in the Victory), heading towards (perpendicular to) the enemy line rather than drawing up alongside as done traditionally. Although this exposed his ships to a period of "raking", the full broadsides of the enemy fired into the bow as they approached, tearing down the full length to exit from the stern; once the enemy line was breached the British could then rake those ships either side of the point of impact in return. Nelson took this risk in part to the fact that they would be sailing directly downwind, so the time they would be exposed was minimised. Ships would then pass through the line and pair up with an enemy counterpart to exchange broadsides and boarding parties as usual. Last one sailing wins. Nelson wrote a detailed memorandum explaining his plan on the 9th October, although this was not strictly adhered to in the battle. Nelson reported that his captains were pleased with this innovative plan.

Two days later he wrote '...when I came to explain to them the Nelson touch it was like an Electric Shock, some shed tears, all approved, it was new, it was Singular, it was simple'.

The "Nelson Touch" is also the effect that the man had on the men of his fleet due to his style of leadership. Although relatively small and timid, Nelson evoked great passion in those who fought for him. For example, he was known as "Saint Nelson" by the ordinary seamen after his death at Trafalgar.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## The Plan



Lord Nelson planned to deliberately cut the opposing line in three. His ships would break the enemy formation into three, surround one third, and force them to fight to the end. Nelson hoped specifically to cut the line just in front of the flagship; the isolated ships in front of the break would not be able to see the flagship's signals, hopefully taking them out of combat while they reformed.

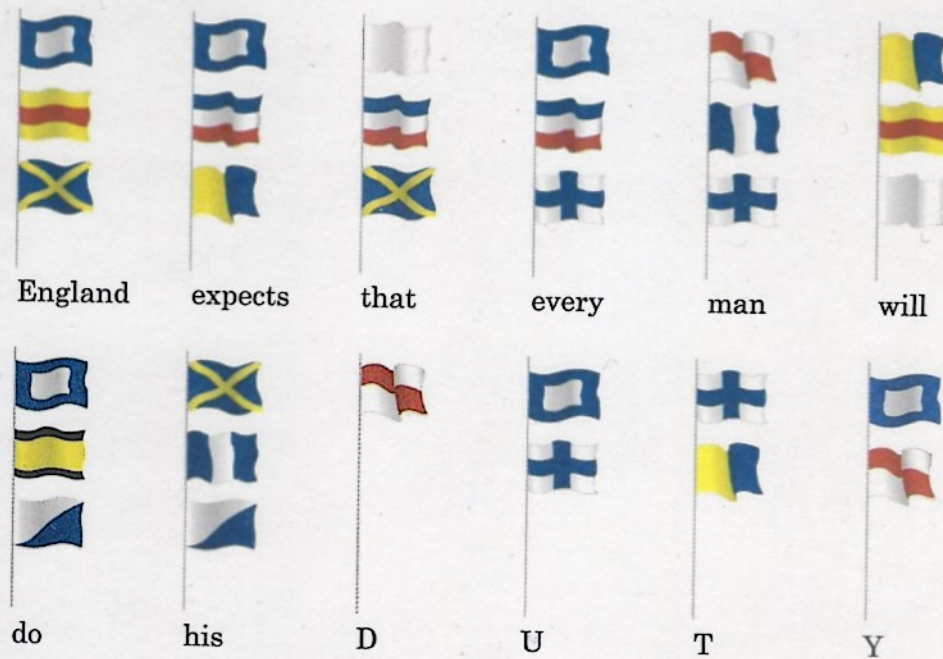
The plan had three principal advantages. First, the fleets would close as quickly as possible, reducing the chance of escape without fighting. Second, it would quickly induce a series of individual ship-to-ship actions, in which the British were likely to prevail. Nelson knew that the superior seamanship, faster gunnery and better morale of his crews were great advantages. Third, it would bring a decisive concentration on the rear of the Franco-Spanish fleet. The ships in the van of the enemy fleet would have to turn back to support the rear, which would take a long time. Additionally, once the line had been broken, their ships would be relatively defenceless against powerful broadsides from the British fleet, and it would take them a long time to reposition to return fire.

The main drawback was that as the leading ships approached, the enemy fleet would be able to direct raking broadside fire at their bows, to which they would be unable to reply. To lessen the time, Nelson had his ships make all available sail, yet another departure from the norm. He was also well aware that French and Spanish gunners were ill-trained, and would have difficulty firing accurately from a moving gun platform. The Combined Fleet was sailing across a heavy swell, causing the ships to roll heavily and exacerbating these problems. Nelson's plan was indeed a gamble, but a carefully calculated one.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## Battle Signal



EVERY TRAFALGAR DAY, 21 OCTOBER, NELSON'S SIGNAL  
'ENGLAND EXPECTS THAT EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY' IS  
RAISED ON THE MASTS OF HMS VICTORY IN PORTSMOUTH.



As the British fleet closed with the enemy, Lord Nelson signalled the battle instructions to his ships. Aware of the momentousness of events to come, he felt something extra was required. He instructed his signal officer, Lieutenant John Pasco, to signal, as quickly as possible, the message "England confides that every man will do his duty." Pasco suggested to Nelson that expects

be substituted for confides, since the former word was in the signal book, whereas confides would have to be spelt out letter-by-letter. Nelson agreed to the change.

Thus, at around 11:45 am, the most famous naval signal in history was sent. The exact time is not known (one account puts it as early as 10:30), as the message was repeated throughout the fleet and logs would have been written up after the battle, but Pasco puts it at "about a quarter to noon" and other logs also put it close to this time.

Almost immediately, the signal began to be misquoted. A number of ships in the fleet recorded the signal as "England expects every man to do his duty" (omitting "that" and replacing "will" with "to"). This version became so prevalent that it is recorded on his tomb in St. Paul's Cathedral. The word "that" is also omitted on the version around the base of Nelson's Column. However, the Victory's log and the accounts of signal officer John Pasco and Henry Blackwood (captain of the frigate Euryalus), both present at the preparation of the signal, agree on the form given here. In 1811, the tenor John Braham composed a song, "The Death of Nelson", including the words of the signal. The song became popular almost immediately and was performed throughout the British Empire during the 19th century. To make the words fit the metre, they were altered to "England expects that every man this day will do his duty". This version of the wording is also persistent.



## Battle of Trafalgar Cannons



As the ships went into action, the crews below decks snatched away the heavy restraining gear that had been secured. With the swiftness and sureness that came from constant drill, the gun ports were opened and the wooden plugs pulled from the cannon muzzles, powder and shot rammed home and the long iron snouts run out the ports. Unlike the French gunners who preferred to fire high, the British went for the enemy's hull, on the principle that the way to win a battle was to hole ships and kill men. The gunners taking a length of burning fuse and blowing on the end until it flowed, waited for the beginning of the downward roll. The the gun captain yelled "Fire" and each gunner touched off hid cannon, sending a ball roaring across the water at 1,200 feet per second.

There was not time to see what damage the ball had caused. The moment the cannon reached the end of its violent recoil, the gun crew leaped forward to clean it and load it for the next shot. Even the slowest British crew could clean, load, aim and fire in less then 2 minutes.

A first-rater could have 102 cannons, ranging from 12 to 32 pounders lined on three gun decks and two short range carronades that could fire an immense 68-pound ball. In a single devastating broadside, she could let loose half a ton of shot, propelled for more than a mile by 400 pounds of gunpowder. Even at extreme range, the round shot from a 32-pounder could smash through two feet of solid oak. In hours fighting, two ships could bombard one another with 30 tons of shot and withstand this punishment for hours on end.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### Lady Emma Hamilton



Emma, Lady Hamilton (baptized April 26, 1765 – January 16, 1815) is best remembered as the mistress of Lord Nelson. She was born Amy Lyon in Cheshire, the daughter of a blacksmith who died when she was two months old. She was brought up by her mother at Hawarden, with no formal education. She later changed her name to Emma Hart. By 1782 the 17-year-old Emma was already very well known in London society, having been taken from a brothel "into keeping" as the mistress of several men.

Sir William Hamilton was smitten with Emma, and married her on September 6, 1791. Lady Hamilton became a close friend of Queen Maria Carolina, wife of Ferdinand I of Naples. As wife of the British Envoy, she welcomed Nelson in 1793, when he came to gather reinforcements against the French. He returned to Naples five years later, a living legend, after his win at the Battle of the Nile in Aboukir. However, Nelson's adventures had prematurely aged him: he had lost an arm and most of his teeth, and was afflicted by coughing spells. Emma reportedly fainted when she saw him. Still, she nursed him under her husband's roof, and arranged a party with 1,800 guests to celebrate his 40th birthday. They soon fell in love and their affair seems to have been tolerated, and perhaps even encouraged, by the elderly Sir William, who showed nothing but admiration and respect for Nelson.

Emma gave birth to Nelson's daughter Horatia, on January 31, 1801 in London. Nelson bought Merton Place, a small ramshackle house on the outskirts of modern day Wimbledon. There he lived openly with Emma, and Sir William (along with Emma's mother) in a ménage à trois that fascinated the public.

Sir William died in 1803 and Nelson returned to sea soon after, leaving Emma pregnant with their second child who died a few weeks after her birth in early 1803. Emma reportedly distracted herself by gambling, and spending lavishly.

After Nelson's death in 1805, Emma fell into debt. In spite of Nelson's status as a national hero, the instructions he left to the government to provide for Emma and Horatia were ignored (they showered honours on his brother instead). Emma was to spend a year in debtor's prison before moving to France to try to escape her creditors. Turning to drink, she died in poverty of liver failure in Calais in 1815.



## Battle of Trafalgar Death of Lord Nelson



Nelson was shot while pacing the quarterdeck of HMS Victory with Captain Thomas Hardy, at about 1.15pm. As was his invariable custom when at sea, he was dressed in a rather shabby, workaday 'undress' uniform coat. On the left breast were sewn sequin facsimiles of his four orders of chivalry, dulled by constant exposure to the elements. In the swirl of the gunpowder smoke covering the deck, they would not have presented a particularly obvious target.

Indeed, it is even doubtful that the fatal shot was deliberately aimed at all. Striking Nelson on the left shoulder with a force that threw him onto his knees, it smashed two ribs and tore through his left lung, severing a major artery on the way. Then, having fractured his spine, it lodged beneath his right shoulder-blade. When the horrified Hardy bent over his stricken friend, he heard the rueful words, "Hardy, I believe they have done it at last. My backbone is shot through."

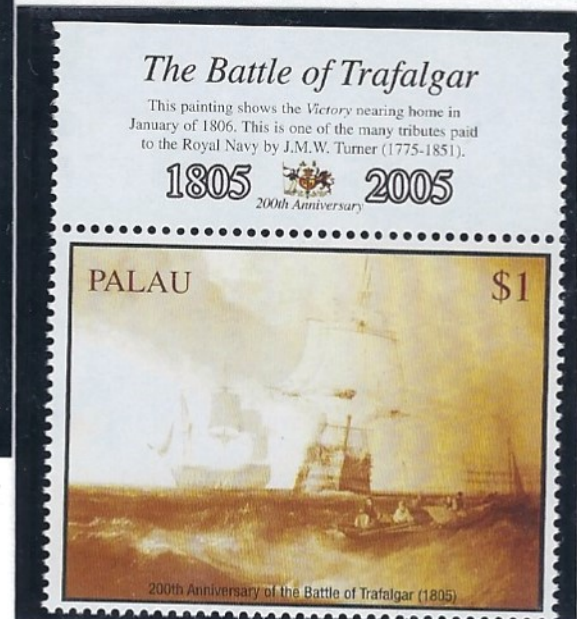
Hardy ordered him to be carried gently down to the orlop deck, situated below the waterline, where the surgeons carried out their operations in battle. He was laid against the ship's side and Surgeon Beatty began an examination that quickly revealed that the case was hopeless. In fact, he survived for almost three hours and for most of that time he was in very great pain. But he clung tenaciously to life, waiting impatiently to hear news of the battle. Finally, at about 3.30pm, Hardy was able to assure him that the British had achieved a great victory and, satisfied, he composed himself for death.

In his dying moments, he uttered his last words, "Thank God I have done my duty." He slipped away so quietly that no-one knew exactly when he died. His death became the central event of the Battle of Trafalgar.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### The damaged Victory



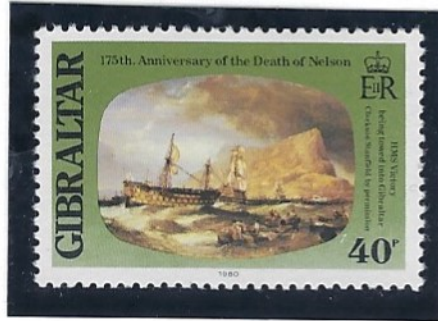
HMS VICTORY was badly damaged at the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October. The hull is much damaged by shot in a number of different places, particularly in the wales, strings and spirketting, several beams knees and riders, shot through and broke; the starboard cathead shot away; the rails and timbers of the head and stem cut by shot; several of the ports damaged and port timbers cut off; the channels and chain-plate damaged by shot and falling of the mizzen mast which was shot away about nine feet above the deck; the main mast shot through and sprung; the main yard gone; main top-mast and cap shot in different places and is at present supported by a topmast and a part of the topsail and crossjack yards; the fore yard shot away; the bowsprit jib boom and cap shot, and the spritsail, spritsail yards and flying boom are gone; the fore and main tops damaged; the whole of the spare topmast yards, hand mast and fishes shot in different places and converted into jury gear.

It was known that the ship was taking on 12 inches of water per hour and the pumps had to be worked constantly until her arrival in Gibraltar where temporary repairs were made. Still carrying Nelson's body, she was about to be relieved of this duty, but there was a huge outcry from the crew. She left December 1805 she arrived in England carrying the body of Lord Nelson, preserved in a barrel of Brandy, 6 weeks after his death at the Battle of Trafalgar.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Victory after Trafalgar



The Victory took Nelson's body to England where, after lying in state at Greenwich, he was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral on January 6, 1806.

The Victory sailed on numerous expeditions, including 2 Baltic campaigns under Admiral Sir James Saumarez. Her active career ended on November 1812, when she was moored in Portsmouth Harbour off Gosport and used as a depot ship.

It is said that when Thomas Hardy was First Sea Lord, he told his wife on returning home, that he had just signed an order for Victory to be broken up. She burst into tears and sent him straight back to his office to rescind the order. Though this story may be apocryphal, the page of the duty log containing the orders for that day is missing, having been torn out.

In 1889, Victory was fitted up as a Naval School of Telegraphy and became a proper Signal School. The School remained on Victory until 1904.

As the years passed by, Victory slowly deteriorated at her moorings. A campaign to save her was started in 1921 with the Save the Victory Fund under the aegis of the Society for Nautical Research, by which time she was in very poor condition. The outcome of the campaign was that British Government agreed to restore and preserve her to commemorate Nelson, the Battle of Trafalgar and the Royal Navy's supremacy during and after the Napoleonic period.

On 12 January 1922 she was moved into the oldest dry-dock in the world: No. 2 dock at Portsmouth for restoration. In 1928 King George V was able to unveil a tablet celebrating the completion of the work, although restoration and maintenance still continued under the supervision of the Society for Nautical Research. Over the last few years the ship has undergone another very extensive restoration to bring her appearance to as close as possible to that which she had at Trafalgar for the bicentenary of the battle in October 2005. Victory attracts around 350,000 visitors per year in her role as a museum ship.



## Battle of Trafalgar Bucentaure



Bucentaure was an 80-gun ship of the line of the French Navy, and the lead ship of her class. She was the flagship of Vice-Admiral Latouche Tréville, who died on board on 18 August 1804. Vice-Admiral Villeneuve hoisted his flag on 6 November 1804.

At the Battle of Trafalgar, on 21 October 1805, she was commanded by Captain Jean-Jacques Magendie. Admiral Nelson's HMS Victory, leading the weather column of the British fleet, broke the French line just astern of Bucentaure and just ahead of Redoubtable. Victory raked her less protected stern and the vessel lost 197 men and 85 were wounded (including Captain Magendie); Admiral Villeneuve was lucky to survive, but this effectively put Bucentaure out of most of the fight. After three hours of fighting, she surrendered to Captain James Atcherly of the Marines from HMS Conqueror.

Villeneuve is supposed to have asked to whom he was surrendering. On being told it was Captain Pellew, he replied, 'There is no shame in surrendering to the gallant Sir Edward Pellew.' When he was informed that the Conqueror's captain (Israel Pellew) was Sir Edward's brother, he said, 'England is fortunate to have two such brothers.'

In the following days, Bucentaure's crew rose up against the British prize crew, and recaptured the ship. However, she was wrecked in the gale-force storm of 23 October 1805.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### French ship Formidable



Formidable was an 80-gun third-rate ship of the line of the French navy. She was launched at Toulon in 1795. In 1801 she fought in the Battle of Algeciras and was badly damaged. In 1802 and 1803, she served in Toulon under Admiral Latouche Tréville.

On 22 June 1805, the returning Franco-Spanish fleet was intercepted by a British fleet under Sir Robert Calder, resulting in the Battle of Cape Finisterre. After a violent artillery exchange and the capture of two of the Spanish ships, the fleets were separated in the fog. Exhausted after six months at sea, the fleet anchored in Cádiz to rest and refit. With his command under question and planning to meet the British fleet to gain a decisive victory, Villeneuve left Cádiz and met the British fleet near Cape Trafalgar.

Formidable was the flagship of vice-admiral Pierre Dumanoir le Pelley, who commanded the six-ship vanguard of the French fleet, along with Formidable, Scipion, Duguay-Trouin, Mont-Blanc, Intrépide and Neptune. The vanguard was kept as a reserve, and joined the battle around 16:00. They only sailed close to the battle and fired a few shots.

On 3 November 1805, British Admiral Sir Richard Strachan, with Caesar, Hero, Courageux, Namur and four frigates, defeated and captured what remained of the squadron. Formidable was taken and commissioned in the Royal Navy as HMS Brave.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### French Ship Redoubtable



Captain Lucas, of the French battleship Redoubtable described the horrors of the action as his ship was engaged by the 'Fighting' Temeraire. "All the guns were shattered or dismounted. An 18-pounder and a 36-pounder carronade on the forecastle having burst, killed and wounded many of our people. The two sides of the ship were utterly cut to pieces. All our decks were covered with dead, buried beneath the debris and splinters from different parts of the ship. He who has not seen the Redoubtable in this state can never have any conception of her destruction. I do not know of anything on board which was not cut up by shot."

The Victory, dismasted and largely out of control, ran its bowsprit into the rigging of the oncoming 74-gun French warship Redoubtable. The two ships pounded away at one another from a scant few yards' distance. Superior British firepower (by 26-guns) and rate of fire gave Victory a decided edge and soon Redoubtable's gun decks were awash in blood. The French marines swarmed into the rigging and poured musket fire and at least 200 hand grenades down on Victory's exposed decks. This resulted in 57 killed and 102 wounded. A single solid shot had smashed into the Royal Marine contingent on the poop deck, killing eight and wounding a dozen. Mr. Scott, Nelson's personal secretary, standing by the admiral's elbow, was whipped away by a cannon ball in the chest. According to a French officer, Victory's "decks were strewn with dead and wounded." Valiantly, Lucas twice rallied his men and tried to board, aware that his own ship, seams sprung by repeated hits from heavy British guns, was settling in the water. The Royal Marines aboard Victory decimated the would-be boarders and boarding nets impeded their movements. Lucas, seriously wounded, called off both suicidal attempts. When he finally struck his colours at about 1:40 p.m., his vessel was more a shattered hulk than a warship, with 522 of his 670 men dead or wounded.



## Battle of Trafalgar Swiftsure



HMS Swiftsure was a 74-gun third-rate ship of the line of the Royal Navy. She spent most of her career serving with the British, except for a brief period when the French captured her during the Napoleonic Wars in the Action of 24 June 1801. She fought in several of the most famous engagements of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, fighting for the British at the Battle of the Nile, and the French at the Battle of Trafalgar.

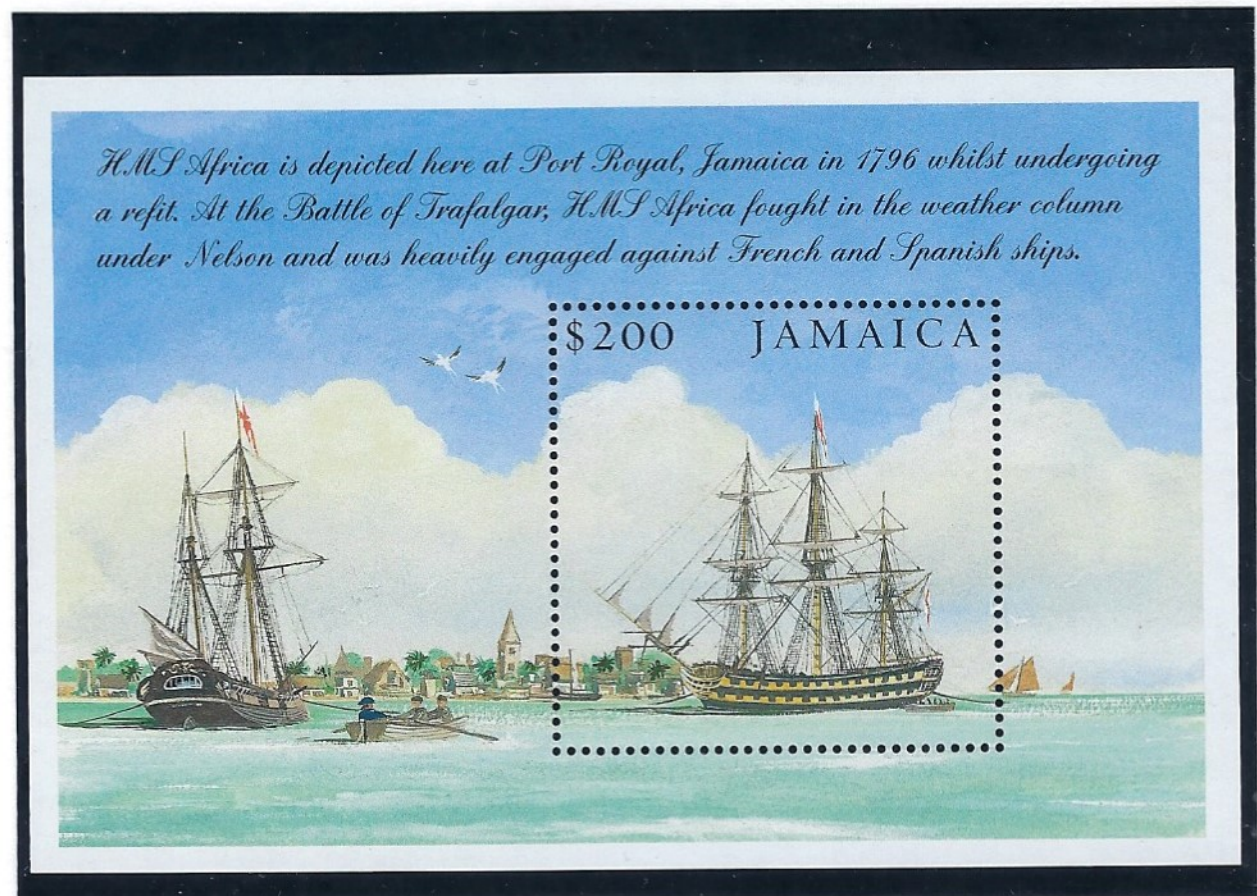
She only spent four years with the French, before forming part of the fleet at Cadiz, under Captain Villemadrin. On 21 October 1805 she sailed out with the combined Franco-Spanish fleets to engage in the Battle of Trafalgar. During the battle she formed part of the rear of the line, astern of Aigle and ahead of Argonaute. She was fired upon by HMS Colossus, and after an exchange of fire, lost her main topmast and had her guns silenced. She began to drift away, while the Colossus opened fire on the Bahama. Her crew regained control, and returned to fire on the Colossus, but at that moment Edward Codrington's HMS Orion came through the smoke, slipped under Swiftsure's stern and discharged several devastating broadsides. The Swiftsure had her mainmast, Taff rail and wheel shot away, and most of the guns on the main gun-deck were dismounted. Villemadrin attempted to fight on, but eventually struck, having suffered 68 dead and 123 wounded during the battle.

After the battle HMS Dreadnought took her in tow. The subsequent storm caused the line to break, and by 23 October she was drifting towards Cadiz. The frigate HMS Phoebe was however able to reattach a tow line, and also put several of her own carpenters aboard to stop up the leaks. The worsening weather again caused her to break free, but the party of men landed by the Phoebe succeeded in keeping control of the vessel and brought her to anchor on 26 October. HMS Polyphemus took her into tow again and brought her into Gibraltar.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## HMS Africa



HMS Africa was the name of the ship Captain Henry Digby commanded at Trafalgar. The ship was a 3rd Rate Ship of the Line having 64 guns on two decks. It was one of the smallest to take part in the battle.

When the battle commenced, the Africa was way out of position so engaged the headmost ship of the enemies van, a Spanish 2 decker (Neptuno, 80 guns) bearing the flag of an Admiral and engaged the whole of the enemies van line. Passing down the enemy line trading broadsides with every ship he passed, all carrying far more guns the Africa.

He then bore down to the assistance of the Neptune (English 98 guns), which had commenced an engagement with the Santissima Trinidad (Spanish 130 guns), thought to be the world's largest ship. Letting fly a broadside into the Santissima Trinidad he joined in the mêlée of ships around the Victory.

The Santissima Trinidad was severely damaged, with rigging and sails hanging over its side. The fighting ceased and she was reported to have struck her colours (the signal of surrender). Captain Digby then sent Lieutenant Smith with a party to take charge of her. He was courteously received by the Spanish who pointed out they had not surrendered, had no intention of doing so, and had merely paused in firing to supply more powder to the guns. Lieutenant Smith returned to the Africa. In fact the Santissima Trinidad took no further part in the battle.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Ajax



HMS Ajax, launched in 1798, was a 74-gun third-rate ship of the line of the Royal Navy. At Trafalgar, Ajax was commanded by her First Lieutenant, John Pilfold, since Captain William Brown had been left behind in England to attend as a witness at a court martial.

She sailed from Plymouth on the 18th September, 1805, in company with HMS Victory and HMS Thunderer and went into action as seventh in the line. Soon after 1 p.m. Pilfold took the Ajax into action firing on the French Bucentaure (74 guns) and the Spanish Santissima Trinidad (136 guns) before sailing on to engage other ships. She assisted Orion in forcing the surrender of the French seventy-four Intrépide. Casualties during the battle were 2 dead and 9 wounded, and during the storm that followed the crew of Ajax helped to rescue the men of ships in danger of sinking.

The Ajax was destroyed in an accidental fire while serving in the Dardanelles in 1807 as part of a squadron under Admiral Sir John Duckworth.



## Battle of Trafalgar HMS Belleisle



Initially named *Lion* was a *Téméraire* class 74-gun third-rate ship of the line of the French Navy, which, she later served in the Royal Navy. She was built at Rochefort. She was later renamed *Marat* and then *Formidable*, with the changing fortunes of the French Revolution. She took part in the Action of 6 November 1793, managing to rake *HMS Alexander*.

Fighting under captain Linois on 23 June 1795 at the Battle of Groix, she was captured by *HMS Barfleur* near the French port of Lorient. She was taken into service in the Royal Navy, but because the Navy already had a *Formidable*, she was renamed *Belleisle*, apparently in the mistaken belief that she had been captured off Belle Île, rather than the Île de Groix.

Captained by William Hargood, she was the second ship in the British lee column at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and as such was engaged by the Franco-Spanish ships *Achille*, *Aigle*, *Neptune*, *Fougueux*, *Santa Ana*, *Monarca* and *San Juan Nepomuceno*. She was soon completely dismasted (the only British ship which suffered that fate), unable to manoeuvre and largely unable to fight, as her sails blinded her batteries, but kept flying her flag for 45 minutes until the British ships behind her in the column came to her rescue. With 33 dead and 93 wounded, she was then towed to Gibraltar after the battle by the frigate *HMS Naiad*.

Following the concern in Britain that neutral Denmark was entering an alliance with Napoleon, the *Belleisle* sailed as the flagship of Rear-Admiral Alexander Cochrane, who commanded the squadron of ships that was sent to occupy the Danish West Indies. The squadron, which included *HMS Prince George*, *HMS Northumberland*, *HMS Canada*, *HMS Ramillies* and *HMS Cerberus*, captured the *Telemaco*, *Carvalho* and *Master* on 17 April 1807. From 1811 she was in Portsmouth harbour, and in 1814 the decision was taken to have her broken up.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Bellerophon



HMS Bellerophon was launched in 1786 so that by the battle of Trafalgar she was almost twenty years old.

At Trafalgar Bellerophon was fifth in the column led by Admiral Collingwood, between the Tonnant and the Achille and eventually broke into the enemy line astern of the Spanish Montanes (74 guns), discharging two broadsides as she steadily sailed through.

The Bellerophon was then engaged by the French L'Aigle (74 guns) so that for a time she was fighting on both sides. L'Aigle had embarked troops to enlarge her crew, and they poured in a heavy fire from the deck and mast tops, as well as tossing grenades and firebrands on to the deck of Bellerophon. Captain Cooke was killed by musket fire and on assuming command, the First Lieutenant ordered men below to save casualties, while also directing the resistance to L'Aigle's attempt to board. This was beaten off and L'Aigle moved away, but Bellerophon had suffered severely since she had also been fired on by other ships. Almost a quarter of the crew were casualties and she was severely damaged in the rigging, but was still able to take the Spanish Monaca before the close of the battle.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Britannia



At Trafalgar HMS Britannia was the oldest ship in the British fleet, having been launched in 1762 at Portsmouth dockyard. Despite her age, however, her size, strength and heavy armament made her an important asset in any fleet even if her sailing qualities did not match other ships.

Britannia was stationed in the column led by Nelson at Trafalgar, sailing slightly out of line abreast HMS Neptune when the battle commenced. She opened fire at long range on several ships of the French and Spanish fleets at 1 p.m., but it was 3 p.m. before she had sailed into a position where she could break through the enemy line. Britannia remained in the action until the end of the battle sustaining 52 casualties, 10 killed and 42 wounded, and was slightly damaged compared to other British ships. She was therefore able to escort prizes back to England from Gibraltar.

Britannia was laid up in 1813 and hulked as a prison ship at Plymouth, where she remained until broken up in 1826.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## HMS Colossus



HMS Colossus was a large two decker, and with 76 guns which were 24 pounders rather than 18 pounders. She was an almost new ship commissioned in 1804 by Captain Morris, under whom she sailed to join the British blockade off Brest.

At Trafalgar, her first encounter was with the French Swiftsure (74 guns), aiming to cross her stern and deliver a killing blow, but Swiftsure anticipated this and turned to met broadside to broadside as they fired. Passing on, Colossus engaged the Spanish Argonaut (74 guns), and was then fired at on her opposite side by the Spanish Bahamas (74 guns) and the Swiftsure again. After 10 minutes Colossus succeeded in silencing the Argonaut, although the Swiftsure now returned so that she had 3 opponents. As the Argonaut moved away, the Bahamas sailed in front of the Swiftsure, masking her fire and was completely dismasted and surrendered. Fire was then returned to the Swiftsure bringing down her mizzenmast, and HMS Orion, also engaged her and sent her main mast overboard.

Casualties were higher than other British ships, 40 dead and 160 wounded, but her heavy guns wrought even greater damage. The Bahamas suffered over 400 casualties and the Swiftsure 250, both these ships being taken as prizes.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Conqueror



At the battle of Trafalgar reached the enemy fleet at 1.15 pm, where she passed under the stern of the French flagship, Bucentaure (80 guns) discharging a deadly broadside into her stern before drawing up alongside her. The fierce musket fire from the mast tops of Bucentaure at this point drove the Conqueror's crew off the forecastle and quarterdeck. The Bucentaure soon lost her mizzen and main masts, and trying to break away collided with the Santissima Trinidad, losing her foremast in the process. Bucentaure surrendered and the Captain of Marines was sent over by boat to take possession. He refused to accept the swords of the Admiral Villeneuve and other officers regarding this as more proper for his captain and tried to return to the Conqueror with the captive officers. Conqueror however had moved on to fight with other ships and the Captain of Marines was forced to take temporary refuge with his prisoners on HMS Mars.

The Conqueror sustained only light casualties, 3 killed and 9 wounded, most of the damage being to the rigging, masts and bow where her figurehead was damaged. When it was repaired, the crew obtained the agreement of the Admiralty to replace the original figurehead with one of Nelson. Conqueror was broken up in 1822.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Defence



HMS Defence was over forty years old by the time of the Battle of Trafalgar and was one of the smaller two deck 74-gun ships.

Being almost last in the line it was after 2 pm, before Defence joined the battle, and engaged the French Berwick (74 guns) previously a British ship captured by the French in 1795. It was recorded how in less than an hour 'her mizzen mast was over the side, her main and foremasts faltering and her fire had become very languid'. Berwick broke off the engagement and Defence then took on the Spanish San Ildefonso (74 guns), which had already been damaged in fighting with other ships. After a fierce action lasting less than an hour the Spanish ship struck her flag and boats were sent to take possession and bring back her commander - a Spanish Commodore, Don Jose de Varga. Defence suffered damage to her masts and rigging but only 34 casualties, and anchored after the battle to ride out the storm. Berwick was wrecked during the gale but San Ildefonso was successfully brought into Gibraltar.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Defiance



Captain Durham claimed that HMS Defiance was the fastest 74-gun ship in the British fleet. Nonetheless, she was placed at the rear of Admiral Collingwood's line and the battle was well advanced before she fired her first broadside at the Spanish Principe de Asturias (112 guns). Defiance engaged the French L'Aigle, already badly damaged by HMS Bellerophon.

After silencing her, Defiance drifted away, and her Master's Mate James Spratt offered to lead a boarding party, which would have to swim across because all the boats had been destroyed. Spratt was well known on Defiance as an excellent swimmer, who had saved two men from drowning, and a fighter of some reputation. Armed only with a cutlass, Spratt climbed the rudder chain, entered through the stern ports, and was engaged in cutting down the French ensign on the stern before the crew of L'Aigle realised who he was. There was a short sharp fight but Defiance managed to draw alongside and L'Aigle surrendered, though not before Spratt was severely wounded in one leg. A full prize crew was now put aboard, but in the storm that followed on the 22nd October, L'Aigle drifted away from her captor, who had not been able to take her in tow, and the French crew regained control and managed to take her into Cadiz.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Entreprenante



The Entreprenante was a cutter of the type used for communications and carrying dispatches, being lightly built and armed only with eight 4-pounder guns. Her role at Trafalgar was to lie to windward of the British fleet and render assistance if needed, since she was incapable of taking part in the fighting. Entreprenante therefore assisted in tasks such as rescuing survivors, and closed the battle to assist in the rescue of the crew of the burning French Achille (74 guns), when she picked up 150 men from the sea.

Under a different commander, Lieutenant Peter Young, Entreprenante fought a distinguished action later in the war, when in 1810 she was attacked by four French privateers carrying a total of 18 guns and 150 crew. At the time, Entreprenante was becalmed off the castle of Faro between Malaga and Almeria, when the four French privateers were observed at anchor under the protection of the fort. At 9 am, they were observed to weigh anchor and at 10.30 attacked the Entreprenante, lying off her bow and stern out of range of her guns. Action closed to pistol shot range at 11 am, but the small crew fought off three attempts to board by the larger crews of the privateers, despite having her topmast shot away and two of her starboard guns disabled. Although running short of ammunition Entreprenante drove off the boarding parties and inflicted severe losses to the crews and damage to the ships in an action lasting for over four hours.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Royal Sovereign



Royal Sovereign joined Nelson's fleet off Cadiz on the 8th October, and Collingwood and Rotherham transferred to her before the battle, when she led the leeward column, outdistancing the others so that she was a mile ahead when she broke the French and Spanish line. As the French and Spanish opened fire during the approach, Collingwood and Rotherham remained on the poop, but ordered the crew to lie on the deck to save casualties while they could not return fire.

After half an hour at 12.15 Royal Sovereign broke into the French and Spanish line to Collingwood's delight at the honour of opening the battle. He remarked 'What would Nelson give to be here at the moment', not knowing that at almost the same time Nelson, who had observed the Royal Sovereign from Victory, exclaimed 'Look how that gallant fellow Collingwood takes his ship into action'.

Without support from other British ships Collingwood took Royal Sovereign between the stern of the black hulled Spanish Santa Ana (112 guns) and the bow of the French Fougex (74 guns), discharging into each a double shotted broadside. In the Santa Ana this wreaked enormous damage, dismounting 14 guns and killing or wounding 400 men, but as Royal Sovereign swung around to engage the Santa Ana yardarm to yardarm, she attracted the attention of other French and Spanish ships and sustained severe damage while unprotected until the arrival of the other British ships. The Santa Ana surrendered at 2.15 with her starboard side entirely beaten in, while the Royal Sovereign was extensively damaged aloft and suffered casualties of 47 killed and 94 wounded.



## Battle of Trafalgar 'The Fighting Temeraire'



The 98-gun ship 'Temeraire' played a distinguished role in Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, after which she was known as the 'Fighting Temeraire'. The ship remained in service until 1838 when she was decommissioned and towed from Sheerness to Rotherhithe to be broken up.

The painting was thought to represent the decline of Britain's naval power. The 'Temeraire' is shown travelling east, away from the sunset, even though Rotherhithe is west of Sheerness, but Turner's main concern was to evoke a sense of loss, rather than to give an exact recording of the event. The spectacularly colourful setting of the sun draws a parallel with the passing of the old warship. By contrast the new steam-powered tug is smaller and more prosaic.

Turner was in his sixties when he painted 'The Fighting Temeraire'. It shows his mastery of painting techniques to suggest sea and sky. Paint laid on thickly is used to render the sun's rays striking the clouds. By contrast, the ship's rigging is meticulously painted.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Thunderer



HMS Thunderer was built on the Thames and launched in 1784. She was one of a class of eight, two of which were later wrecked, Culloden off Long Island (New York) and Venerable in Tor Bay. Thunderer served with the fleet at the battle of the Glorious First of June and at other engagements in the Mediterranean and West Indies, before taking part in Admiral Calder's action with the French on the 22nd July, 1805. Her Captain, John Lechmore, then had to return with Thunderer to England to attend a court martial as a witness, and his First Lieutenant therefore took command at the Battle of Trafalgar.

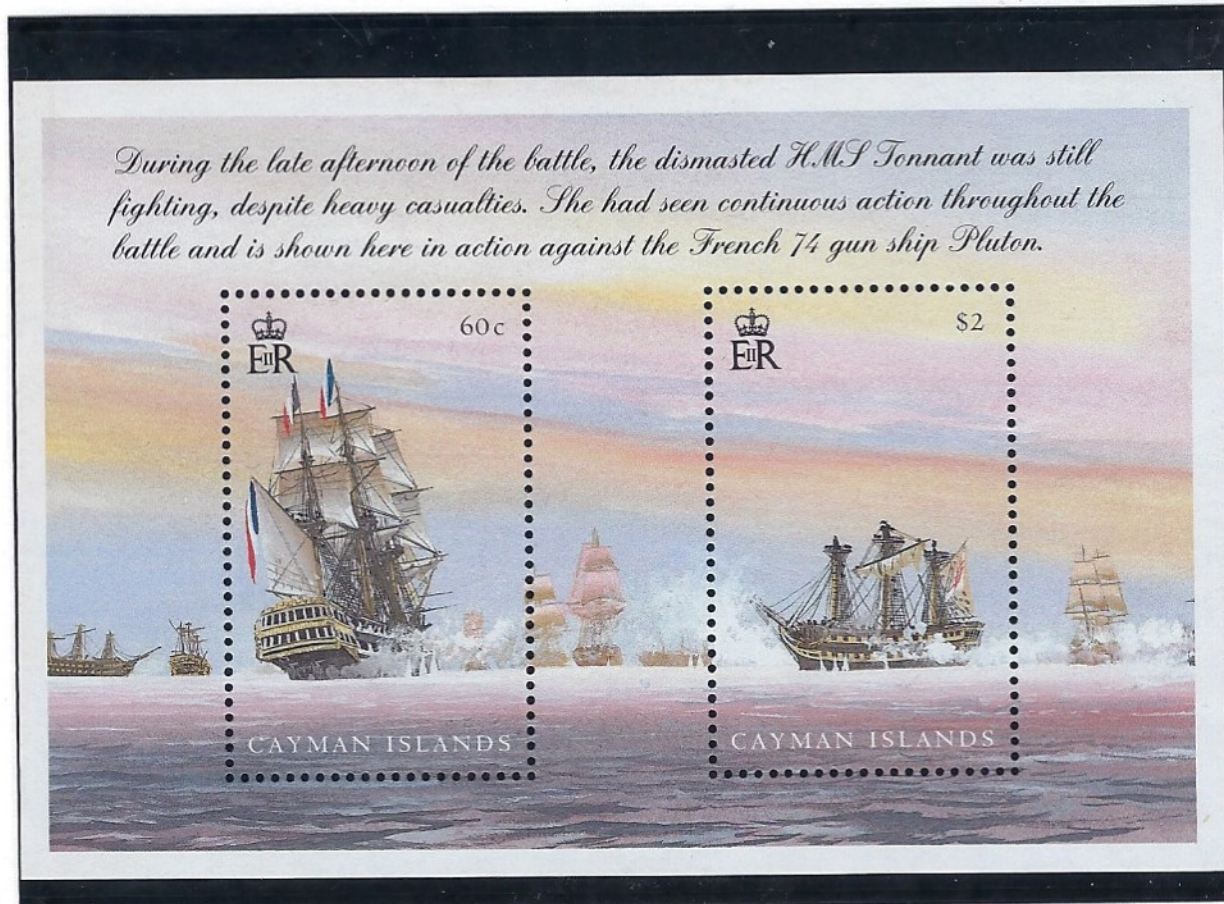
On the 18th September Thunderer joined HMS Victory and Nelson off Plymouth and with HMS Ajax sailed to join the British fleet off Cadiz. At the battle, Thunderer was last but one in Admiral Collingwood's line, between Defence and Defiance so she was late into action, when she joined HMS Dreadnought in relieving HMS Revenge, which was holding off four enemy ships at once. She placed herself across the bow of the Spanish Principe de Asturias (112 guns) and drove her off, and also engaged the French Neptune (80 guns), which also withdrew. Thunderer then went on to engage other enemy ships, but was fortunate in suffering light damage to her bow and masts, and only received 16 casualties, 4 killed and 12 wounded.

After the battle Thunderer helped to tow the Spanish Santa Ana, and reached Gibraltar on the 28th October where she was able to repair her rigging. She then sailed with Collingwood to blockade the surviving Spanish fleet at Cartagena.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## HMS Tennant and Pluton



HMS Tonnant (French language: "Thundering") was an 80-gun ship of the line of the Royal Navy. She had previously been the Tonnant of the French Navy and the lead ship of the Tonnant class. Rear-Admiral Horatio Nelson captured her at Aboukir Bay off the coast of Egypt at the Battle of the Nile on 1 August 1798. She was taken into British service as HMS Tonnant. She went on to fight at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, during the Napoleonic Wars.

During the Battle of Trafalgar she captured the 74-gun French ship Algésiras. Tonnant lost 26 officers and men killed and 50 officers and men wounded in the battle, with Tyler being among the wounded.

Pluton was a Téméraire class 74-gun French ship of the line built at Toulon. She was one of two prototypes for a derivative sub-class of the original design; this sub-class (somewhat smaller than the primary design) was specially intended for construction in some of the shipyards in states occupied by the French, where there was less depth of water than in the main French shipyards.

The Pluton took part in the Battle of Trafalgar under Captain Julien Cosmao, and escaped to Cádiz with other ships. Two days later, on 23 October 1805, she was the flagship of the counter-attack from Cádiz, together with Indomptable, Neptune, Rayo and San Francisco de Asis. They managed to recapture the Santa Ana and Algésiras. To prevent their recapture, the British scuttled the Intrépide and Neptuno. Rayo and San Francisco de Asis were wrecked on their journey back.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## Santa Ana and HMS Royal Sovereign



Santa Ana was a 112-gun three-decker ship of the line of the Spanish Navy, built to plans by Romero Landa. She was the prototype and lead ship of the Santa Ana class, which were built during the following years at Ferrol and Havana and which formed the backbone of the Spanish Navy. Her dimensions were 213.4 Burgos feet long, 58 feet in the beam and a total tonnage of 2,112 tonnes.

She was launched on 28 September 1784. She was tested at sea on 28 February 1785 under the captaincy of Félix de Tejada, who reported the test to his commanding officer that the ship "kept the battery in good use even in a fresh wind and heavy seas". The success of the trials led to a royal order that subsequent three-deckers would be built to the same plans.

From 1803 to 1804 she was captained by Dionisio Alcalá Galiano. At Trafalgar she was the flagship of Alava and battled the HMS Royal Sovereign. The Santa Ana suffered 97 killed and 141 wounded, with Alava himself seriously wounded, and was captured by the British. However, two days later, a squadron under the command of Commodore Cosmao-Kerjulien succeeded in recapturing her and getting her back to Cadiz.

At the start of the Peninsular War in 1808 she was undergoing repairs at the Arsenal and so could not participate in the capture of the French squadron under Admiral Rosily. She and Príncipe de Asturias moved to Havana in 1810 to avoid capture by the French and sank in its Arsenal in 1816.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## The Spanish ship Santísima Trinidad



The Spanish ship Santísima Trinidad was a first-rate ship of the line of 144 guns on four decks. For many years she was the biggest warship in the world. In July 1779, Spain declared war on Great Britain, Santísima Trinidad became the flagship of the Spanish fleet, taking part in the Franco-Spanish operations in the English Channel. In 1780 she took part in the capture of an English convoy of 51 ships. In 1782 she was incorporated into the Mediterranean Squadron, participating in the second siege of Gibraltar and she fought in the brief and indecisive Battle of Cape Spartel.

In 1797, she was at Battle of Cape St Vincent on 14 February 1797, where she was badly damaged and nearly captured by the British fleet. She was first in action with HMS Captain (74) commanded by Commodore Nelson and 5 other ships. By now she was severely damaged, having lost all her masts and with half of her crew killed or wounded. She struck her colours (surrendered), but the British failed to take possession and she eventually returned to Cadiz for repairs.

At the Battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805, her great size and position immediately ahead of the fleet flagship Bucentaure made her a target for the British fleet, and she came under concentrated attack by several ships. She lost her mast and eventually surrendered to the Neptune, commanded by Captain Thomas Fremantle. She was taken in tow by the Prince, but sank in a storm the day after the battle.



## Battle of Trafalgar HMS Euryalus



In 1805 HMS Euryalus led a squadron of four other frigates in watching Cádiz to report the movements of the combined French and Spanish fleets anchored there. The combined fleet sailed from Cádiz on 20 October, shadowed through the night by the Euryalus and the others that reported its position to the Royal Navy fleet on the horizon.

With battle imminent the following morning, Captain Blackwood suggested that Admiral Horatio Nelson transfer from Victory to the faster Euryalus, the better to observe and control the engagement. Nelson declined the offer. Euryalus - too small to play a major role - stood off until the late afternoon when she took the badly damaged Royal Sovereign in tow and turned her to engage the French ship Formidable.

Following the death of Admiral Nelson, Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood transferred his flag from Royal Sovereign to Euryalus. She became for the next ten days the British fleet's flagship.

After the battle Euryalus took on survivors from the French ship-of-the-line Achille, as well as the captured French Admiral Pierre de Villeneuve. Blackwood also received the surrender of the Spanish ship Santa Ana, after two raking broadsides to the stern by Royal Sovereign and Belleisle had caused her to strike her colours.

Euryalus again took Royal Sovereign in tow but the two ships collided during a sudden squall, badly damaging the frigate's masts and rigging. Once repairs were completed, Euryalus went into Cádiz Harbour to allow Blackwood to negotiate an exchange of prisoners and the repatriation of French and Spanish wounded. On 31 October, Euryalus set sail for England with Admiral Villeneuve as a prisoner.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Leviathan



At Trafalgar, she was fourth in the column led by HMS Victory abreast of HMS Conqueror and astern of HMS Neptune, and cleared for action to give the guns freedom to fire. The partitions of the officers' cabins were torn down and went overboard, to be followed by tables, stools, a small desk and other gear. Animals were often kept on board ships at this time to provide fresh eggs and meat, and a sheep given to the ship by Nelson in the West Indies was kept, survived the battle and was taken home by Captain Bayntun to join his family farm.

Leviathan entered the enemy line astern of HMS Neptune and followed Conqueror, all three discharging full broadsides into the Bucentaure (50 guns), the flagship of the French Admiral Villeneuve. Passing on, Leviathan engaged the Spanish Santissima Trinidad (136 guns) and attempted to come up to the French Neptune (84 guns), but the latter stood away and Leviathan instead fired into the Spanish San Augustin (74 guns). Close action followed until at 3.30 Leviathan ran her on board and the San Augustin surrendered. While the San Augustin lay alongside her portside after being boarded, Leviathan was hotly engaged on her opposite side by the French Intrepide (74 guns), but as the Orion, Africa and other British ships moved in the Intrepide pulled away. The San Augustin was later burnt after the crew had been removed as being so badly damaged as to be useless for future service.



## Battle of Trafalgar HMS Mars



HMS Mars was more heavily armed than the standard British 74 gun ship, and carried 24lb guns on the upper deck instead of the usual 18lb.

Mars joined the fleet blockading off Spain in 1803 and was one of the supporting squadron close to Cadiz that relayed the news to HMS Victory of the sailing of French and Spanish fleets. At the battle she was in the column led by Admiral Collingwood, and was third inline between Belleisle and Tonnant. George Duff, her captain, had his young son aboard as a volunteer, age 13 and stationed him below before writing a final hasty letter to his wife.

The French and Spanish fleets opened fire at 11.50am but Mars approached in strict silence, almost falling on board the Santa Ana, as she reached the enemy line. To avoid this she turned and engaged the French Pluton (74 guns), but continuing to turn was heavily raked across her stern by the French Fougueux (74 guns) and also fired on by the Spanish Monarca (74 guns) and the French Algesiras (74 guns). The damage to Mars rendered her ungovernable with rigging shot away so that the masts would not take sails, several guns disabled and the rudder head injured. Captain Duff was killed along with 28 others of the crew and 69 were wounded. After this, Mars drifted a way while the crew concentrated on re-rigging the ship to regain control.

After the battle, Captain Duff's son had the melancholy duty of writing to his mother in Edinburgh to report his father's death while the Mars entered for repairs before returning to England. Her First Lieutenant, W. Hennah, was promoted to captain for his conduct in the battle assuming command, and the crew expressed their appreciation of their temporary commander with a rare presentation. Hennah was offered a sword but this was eventually changed to a special tea service.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Minotaur



Captain Mansfield took the Minotaur into battle with her band playing after addressing his crew and reminding them 'Be careful to take good aim, for it is to no purpose to throw shot away'.

At Trafalgar Minotaur was stationed at the rear of the line led by HMS Victory and Admiral Nelson, and by the time she approached the combined French Spanish fleets, fighting had already continued for two hours. At that time the section of the French and Spanish fleet at the head of their line had turned and was endeavouring to join the battle, when they were opposed by the Minotaur and Spartiate. Together the British ships met and fought the four approaching enemy ships severely damaging the French Formidable (80 guns) and holding off the others until more British ships came up. The Spanish Neptune (80 guns) lowered her flag after losing her mizzen mast, but Minotaur, although damaged in her rigging, suffered only 25 casualties compared to Neptune's 86. The Neptune was later retaken by her Spanish crew as the ships drifted apart in the storm that followed the battle.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Neptune



At Trafalgar she was third in the line commanded by Lord Nelson, following Temeraire and HMS Victory. Neptune did not join close action until 1.45 pm, when she passed through the enemy line and discharged her port broadside into the stem of the French Bucentaure (80 guns), which was the flagship of the French Admiral Villeneuve. She sailed on and discharged her guns at other ships, before Captain Fremantle laid Neptune alongside the Spanish Santissima Trinidad, the (then) largest warship in the world carrying 140 guns on four decks. As a three decker carrying 98 guns herself, Neptune was strong enough to engage such a formidable opponent, and maintained close action until the Santissima Trinidad was disabled. The Neptune then drew ahead and exchanged fire with other enemy ships until the end of the battle, in which she suffered 44 casualties, 10 killed and 34 wounded.

As one of the less damaged ships Neptune assisted other vessels during the storm that followed the battle, first towing the Royal Sovereign and then the Victory, which she led into Gibraltar on the 28th October.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Phoebe



HMS Phoebe was built at Dudman's yard in Deptford on the river Thames and launched in 1795. As a frigate she was neither strong enough nor sufficiently well armed to take part in a fleet action with larger warships, and was one of the squadron of four frigates that shadowed the combined French and Spanish fleets in Cadiz. Phoebe remained an observer of the battle and was called on after the battle to assist the damaged French Swiftsure and the Spanish Bahamas during the storm that followed the battle.

In single ship actions against vessels of similar size and armament frigates often proved doughty fighters. In 1797 Phoebe captured the French Nereide (36 guns) in the Bay of Biscay after a running fight ending in a close action fought out at a range of 300 yards. Another foe was the French privateer Heureux (22 guns) which in March 1800 mistook Phoebe for a civilian East Indiaman, and was easily taken before she could escape after closing in the hope of a rich British prize.

In 1801 Phoebe was on patrol east of Gibraltar when a large French frigate the Africaine (40 guns) was seen creeping along the Moroccan coast. Africaine was carrying ordnance, stores and 400 troops to reinforce Napoleon's army in Egypt. Encumbered by stores and troops the Africaine was overhauled by Phoebe and engaged at close range in a ferocious fight that lasted for two hours. The French troops insisted on staying on deck in an effort to add their musket fire to their defence, but Phoebe's heavy guns, wrought dreadful damage dismounting guns, holing the hull and inflicting terrible casualties among those on deck. When Africaine surrendered at 9.30 pm, she had over 340 casualties despite her larger size, and was added to the Royal Navy as a valuable prize.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Pickle



HMS Pickle was a 8-gun topsail schooner that was built privately in Bermuda and purchased for the Royal Navy in 1800. She served in the fleet as a despatch vessel and was never expected to take part in a fleet battle. For this reason, she was attached to the frigates that kept watch on the French and Spanish fleets before the Battle of Trafalgar.

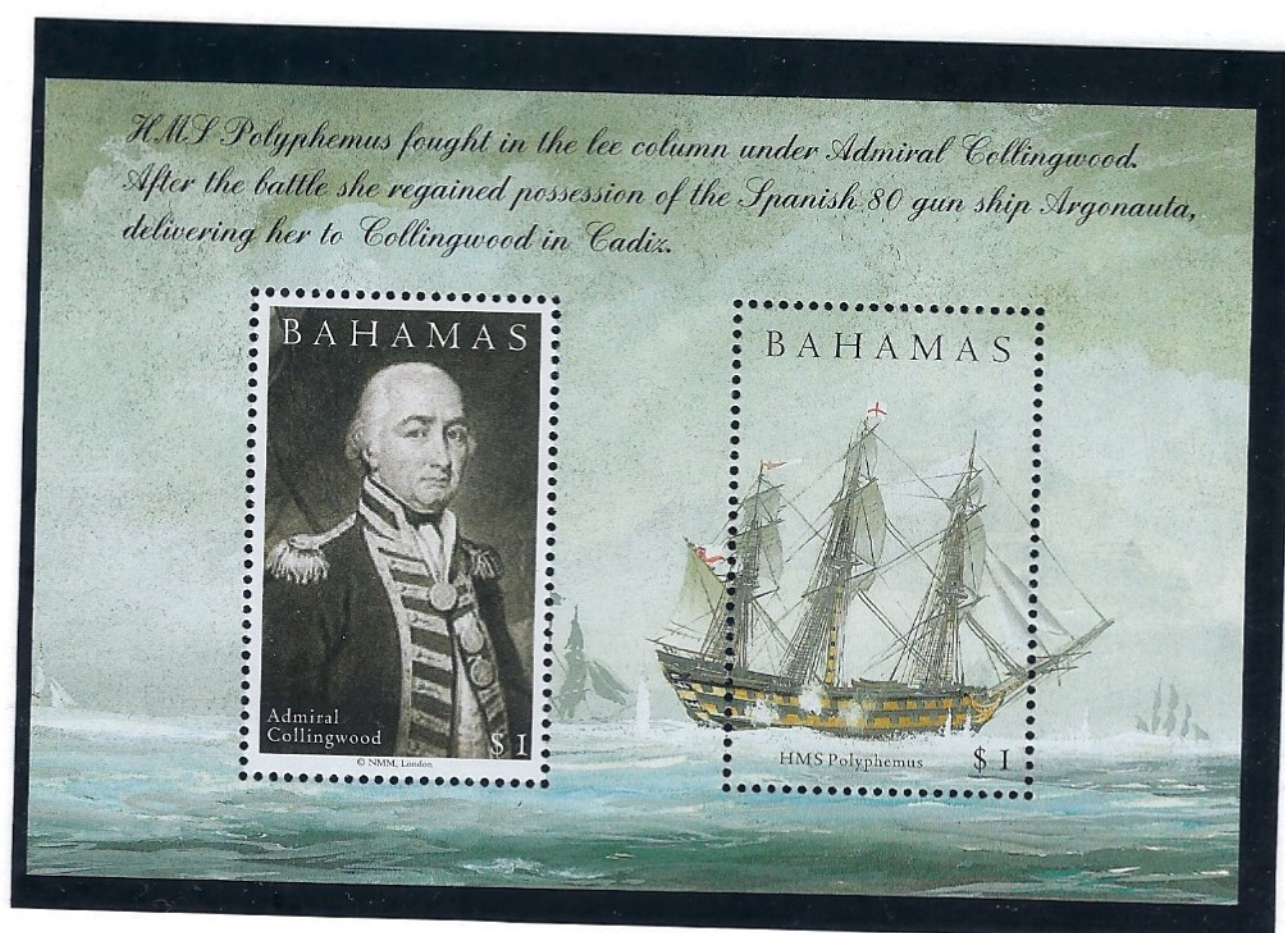
HMS Pickle was stationed to windward of the British line until required to assist in rescuing survivors, principally those from the French Achille. HMS Pickle rescued 50 of French crew from the sea, including one woman. She had concealed herself aboard the Achille but her identity became known when she was forced to strip off her clothes and jump into the sea. She and the other prisoners were transferred to HMS Revenge, which took them to Gibraltar, where she rejoined her husband who had been picked up by another British ship.

She was entrusted with conveying the message about the victory and the death of Lord Nelson to England. She landed in Falmouth, Cornwall, setting Captain John Richard Lapenotiere on his historic 36-hour journey by post chaise to the Admiralty in London. She was wrecked in 1808 off Cádiz.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Polyphemus



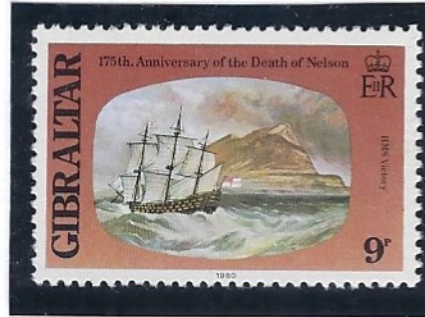
Polyphemus was built at Sheerness and launched in 1782, being smaller and more lightly armed than the majority of British ships present at Trafalgar on the 21st October. She had a distinguished record before that battle having fought in several actions, including that at Copenhagen in 1801 when she sustained 31 casualties.

At Trafalgar Polyphemus was in the line led by Admiral Collingwood and was stationed at the rear between HMS Achilles and HMS Revenge. Her efforts to join the battle were twice impeded when she had to give way to larger British ships also charging down on the combined French and Spanish fleets, but at 3.15 she came to the relief of the beleaguered Belleisle and moved between her and the French Neptune (84 guns). She next engaged the French Achille (74 guns) until an officer was seen waving a Union Jack from the bow to signify surrender. In the battle Polyphemus only suffered light casualties, 6 killed and wounded, and helped to tow HMS Victory to Gibraltar. When she rejoined the fleet after the battle she served in South America, the West Indies and on blockade until she was paid off in 1812. She was used as a powder magazine at Chatham and was broken up 1827.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Victory - Construction



The keel was laid on 23 July 1759 and the name was finally chosen in October 1760. It was to commemorate the Year of Victories, of 1759. In that year of the Seven Years' War, land victories had been won at Quebec, Minden and naval battles had been won at Lagos and Quiberon Bay. There were some doubts whether this was a suitable name since the previous first-rate Victory had been lost with all on board in 1744.

Once the frame had been constructed it was normal to cover the ship up and leave it for several months to season. However, the end of the Seven Years' War meant that she remained in this condition for nearly three years, which helped her subsequent longevity. Work restarted in autumn 1763 and she was finally launched on 7 May 1765 having cost £63,176 and 3 shillings (present day £50 million) and used around 6000 trees, 90% of which were oak and the remainder elm, pine and fir. In March 1780 the hull below the waterline was sheathed with 3,923 sheets of copper to protect it against shipworm.

In December 1798, HMS Victory was deemed, unfit for service as a warship, she was ordered to be converted to a hospital ship to hold wounded French and Spanish prisoners of war.

However on 8 October 1799 HMS Impregnable was lost off Chichester, having run aground on her way back to Portsmouth after escorting a convoy to Lisbon. She could not be refloated and so was stripped and dismantled. Consequently, now short of a first rate, the Admiralty decided to recondition the Victory. Work started in 1800 but as it proceeded an increasing number of defects were found and the repairs developed into a very extensive reconstruction. The original estimate was £23,500 but the final cost was £70,933.



# Battle of Trafalgar

## The Victory into battle.



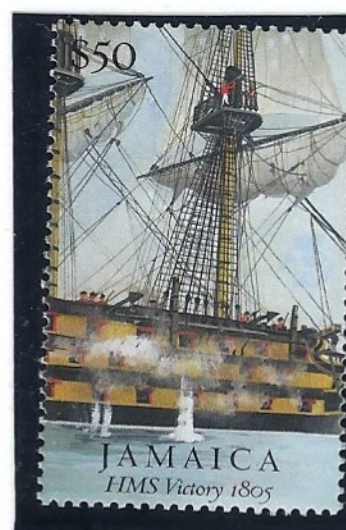
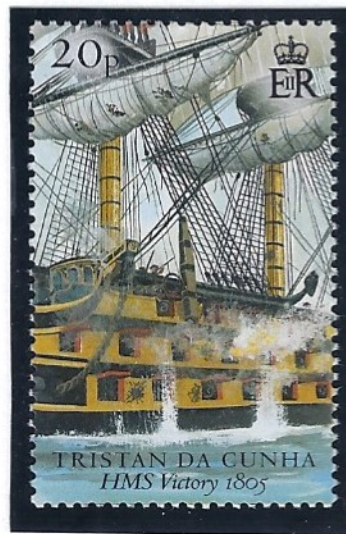
For 40 minutes, the Victory was under fire from the Héros, Santísima Trinidad, Redoubtable and Neptune; although many shots went astray others killed and wounded a number of her crew and shot away her wheel so that she had to be steered from her tiller below decks. The Victory could not respond.

At 12:45, Victory cut the enemy line between Villeneuve's flagship Bucentaure and Redoubtable. The Victory came close to the Bucentaure, firing a devastating raking broadside through her stern which killed and wounded many on her gun decks. Villeneuve thought that boarding would take place, and with the Eagle of his ship in hand, told his men: "I will throw it onto the enemy ship, and we will take it back there!" However Captain Hardy of the Victory engaged the 74 gun Redoubtable. The Bucentaure was left to be dealt with by the next three ships of the British windward column Temeraire, Conqueror and the Neptune.



## Battle of Trafalgar

### HMS Victory - Statistics



Ordered:	1758
Laid down:	23 July 1759
Launched:	7 May 1765
Commissioned:	1778
Displacement:	3,500 tons (3,556 tonnes)
Length:	186 ft (56.7 m) gun deck, 227 ft 6 in (69.3 m) overall
Beam:	51 ft 10 in (15.8 m)
Draught:	28 ft 9 in (8.8 m)
Propulsion	sails-6,510 yd <sup>2</sup> (5440 m <sup>2</sup> )
Speed:	8 to 9 knots (15 to 17 km/h) maximum
Complement:	around 850
Armament:	Forecastle: 2 × medium 12 pounder (5 kg), 2 × 68 pounder (31 kg) carronade Quarter deck: 12 × 1.7 ton short 12 pounder (5 kg) Upper gun deck: 30 × 1.7 ton short 12 pounders (5 kg) Middle gun deck: 28 × 2.5 ton long 24 pounders (11 kg) Lower gun deck: 30 × 2.75 ton long pattern Blomefield 32 pounders (15 kg) Marines armed with muskets aloft
Armour:	none, although oak hull thickness at waterline 2 ft (0.6 m)



## Battle of Trafalgar Thermography



The above stamps show HMS Victory leading Nelson's column of ships into the battle. Painted by famous maritime artist Francis Smitheman, the hull, mast and spars have been overprinted by the thermographic process that uses real wood from HMS Victory. The wood is finely grounded and then applied to the stamps in powder form that is then heated. The result is a stamp that has real 'Victory wood' as part of its composition.

Thermography printing is a post print process done inline with the printing. Thermography powder is sprayed on a sheet of paper after it leaves an offset printing press. It is then vacuumed off the sheet. The powder is left only where there was an image, or printed ink. The sheet then travels through a heat tunnel; there the heat causes the powder to melt and leave behind a raised image.