

*The Nelson Society of Australia Inc.
Newsletter*

July 2010



The 'Victory' in a bottle in Trafalgar Square 2010

Program of Events

All meetings begin at 7pm for a 7.30 start unless otherwise stated.
St Michael's Church, Cnr The Promenade & Gunbower Rd, Mt. Pleasant
Please bring a plate for supper.

2010

Mon. 13th Sept. 7pm	"Ladies at Sea" by Gillian Mead
Thurs. 21st Oct. 10am.	Opening of Nelson Display Swan Bell Tower
Fri. 22nd Oct. 6pm	# Batavia Lecture Maritime Museum by Mike Sargeant
Sat. 23rd Oct. 6.30pm	RNA Trafalgar Dinner, RAAFA Bull Creek
Sun. 24th Oct. 3pm	Trafalgar Memorial Service. St George's Cathedral
Fri. 12th Nov. 7pm	Pickle Night Dinner
Mon. 29th Nov. 7pm	End of Year Gathering, RAAFA Bull Creek

Bookings essential 9431 8307

THE NELSON TOUCH AVERTS TWO MUTINIES

In 1797 an incident aboard the frigate *Blanche* saw Nelson, the diplomat, intervening to settle a dispute between the newly appointed Captain Henry Hotham and his crew. Hotham had a reputation as a tough disciplinarian and the crew refused to accept him. An American sailor, Jacob Nagle, recorded the event: "Hotham came on board on 7th. January, had the officers armed on the quarterdeck and all hands turned aft to hear his commission read at the capstan head. They all cried out, 'No, no, no.' He asked what they had to say against. One of the petty officers replied that his ships company informed us that he was a damned tartar and we would not have him and we went forward and turned the two forecandle guns aft with canister shot.



He then went in his boat on board Commodore Nelson's ship and returned with the Commodore's first lieutenant. When on board he ordered all hands aft. He called all the petty officers out and paraded them in a line on the quarterdeck. 'Now, my lads, if you resist taking Captain Hotham as your captain, every third man shall be hung.'

The crew flew in a body forward to the guns with match in hand, likewise crowbars, handspikes, and all kinds of weapons they could get hold of and left him, Captain Hotham and the officers standing looking at us. They consulted for a moment and returned on board Commodore Nelson's ship. In the space of half an hour the Commodore himself came on board, called all hands aft, and enquired the reason of this disturbance. He was informed of Captain Hotham's character, which was the reason that we had refused him. 'Lads', said he, 'You have the greatest character on board the *Blanche* of any frigate's crew in the navy. You have taken two frigates superior to the frigate you are in, and now to rebel? If Captain Hotham ill treats you, give me a letter and I will support you.' Immediately, there was three cheers given and Captain Hotham shed tears, and Nelson went on board his ship."

Later in May 1797, off Cape St Vincent, Nelson was asked by Jervis to transfer to '*Theseus*' which had just joined the Mediterranean Fleet from Spithead. The Captain, John Aylmer, was frightened that her crew would mutiny and carry her into Cadiz. Jervis was concerned that Aylmer wasn't up to the task and hence the request to Nelson, who transferred together with his Flag Captain, Ralph Miller and all six lieutenants, plus seven midshipmen and a number of ratings – forty seven men in total.

Within a few weeks, Nelson and Miller had turned '*Theseus*' around and one night a note was dropped on the quarter deck: "Long live Sir Robert Calder, success attend Admiral Nelson. God Bless Captain Miller. We thank the Admiral for the officers he has placed over us. We are happy and comfortable, and will shed every drop of blood in fighting the enemies of our country and in supporting the admiral'.

The 1797 Mutinies

A Series of Talks at the General Meeting 10th May, 2010

1. INTRODUCTION by Bob Woollett

Our subject this evening represents another departure from our aim to focus in our programme of talks on the life and achievements of Nelson who was only slightly involved in the sequel to one of the events as described above. The Mutinies of 1797 particularly those at Spithead and the Nore were the most serious and damaging that have ever occurred in the Royal Navy and consequently constitute rather a bleak page in its history but paradoxically, the year for Nelson himself, apart from the failure at Santa Cruz, has been described as his 'Year of Destiny' by one biographer and as his 'First Step to Glory' by another.

On the 14th February 1797 he played a significant role in the decisive defeat of the French and Spanish fleets off Cape St Vincent which led to his promotion to Rear Admiral and his being made a Knight of the Bath. Paradoxically, too, it was a year when the general morale in the Fleet was high and when the determination to beat the accursed French and their Allies was unbounded. The victory at St Vincent was followed later in October by Admiral Duncan's defeat of the Dutch at Camperdown in the North Sea when half of the enemy's fleet was either destroyed or captured. And finally by way of an introduction, it is interesting to note the first two mutinies differed from the third in a significant way. Those at Spithead and the Nore were notable for the extraordinary restraint and humanity shown by the perpetrators and thus demonstrated some of the best qualities of the British Sailor. The events on HMS '*Hermione*' as we shall hear were a very different story.

No 2 DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT IN THE 18TH CENTURY

by Nick Bell

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Discipline in the Royal Navy of Nelson's time is often seen as a harsh and unbending code of 'starting', flogging and hanging. But to take punishment out of the context of the times is to miss the comparison between life on land and life at sea during the Georgian period.

The Georgian code of justice was known, with good reason, as the bloody code.

On land a man could be given a long jail sentence or transported for life for relatively minor offences, he could be hanged for stealing as little as a handkerchief. Newgate prison routinely kept its prisoners 20 to a cell measuring twenty feet by fifteen.

At sea the rules that the men obeyed were known as the Articles of War. A man could only be hanged for mutiny, treason or desertion. Sodomy was also a capital offence, but few men were prosecuted or hanged for it, and it seems likely that it was a rare occurrence on a warship.

The open living space of the men providing few opportunities for privacy. At sea discipline was relatively easy to maintain. The sailors knew that their lives depended on working together to stop the ship from foundering or being taken by the enemy. This may partly explain why it was possible for a 20 year old to command a ship of experienced seamen, (Nelson was not quite 21 when he was made a post captain, and he was not an exception).

As long as the captain didn't endanger their safety the crew were willing to work for him. In port the job was harder, and frequently senior officers would think twice before going below decks.

STARTING

'Starting' a man was to hit him across the back with a rattan cane or short length of rope, usually done by the bosun's mate. It was used as a quick punishment for a man not thought to be pulling his weight or moving fast enough once an order was given.

The practice of starting was greatly resented by the men, its use was arbitrary and very dependent on the captain.

The Admiralty banned its use in 1809, after the court martial of Captain Robert Corbett. In fact most captains had already ceased the practice by then.

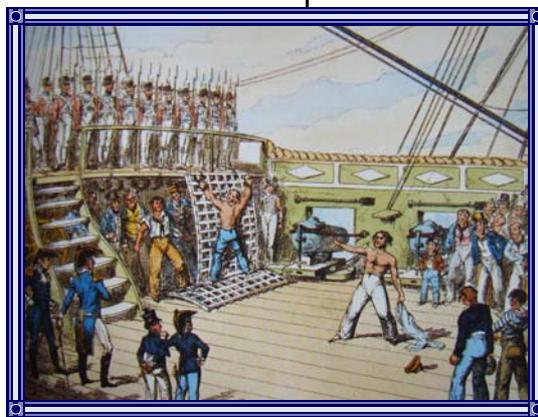
FLOGGING

In theory a captain could only order a maximum of 12 lashes, any more was supposed to be dealt with by a court martial. This rule was routinely broken quite openly, with captains writing in their journals the number of lashes awarded for each flogging. Up to 72 lashes would be unlikely to attract the attention of the Admiralty.

The men accepted this but the punishments handed out by court martial tended to be much more severe, possibly as a deterrent to asking for a court martial. George Melvin of the *Antelope* received 300 lashes

for desertion from a court martial.

The limit on a captain was removed in 1806 when new regulations stated that he was not to order punishment '*without sufficient cause, nor even with greater severity than the offence shall really deserve.*' As a punishment flogging seems to have been fairly ineffective, even as a deterrent, with the same man



frequently being flogged for the same offence time and again.

A harsh or sadistic captain could make the crew's life a misery, and such ships tended to see a rise in desertions. Flogging itself was carried out by the bosun's mate with a cat of nine tails. The punishment was generally carried out the day after the offence, and the bosun's mate made a new cat for each flogging. The cat itself was heavier than the version used in the army and was made of a rope handle about two feet long and an inch in diameter to which the nine tails of line were attached. The line was a quarter inch diameter and about two feet long. The whole thing weighed just under a pound.

Once finished it was put into a red baize bag until needed. The flogging began with the order for all hands to muster aft to witness punishment. The offender was generally lashed to an upturned grating. The officers stood to one side in full dress uniform and the marines lined up aft. The captain would read out the Article of War that the offender had broken and then the order would be given to lay on the dozen lashes. If more than a dozen had been ordered then a second bosun's mate would lay on the next twelve. The force of the blows can be shown by the fact that a standard cat of nine tails was easily

capable of braking a one inch by one inch length of knot free pine in half. The effect on the victim's back was said to resemble scorched and blackened meat. The severest form of flogging was a flogging round the fleet. The number of lashes was divided by the number of ships in port and the offender was rowed between ships for each ship's company to witness the punishment.

The acceptance of flogging by the sailors to maintain discipline, is hard to measure. In the Great Mutinies at the Nore and Spithead, flogging was not mentioned in the sailors list of complaints. In fact whilst the ships were under control of the mutineers, they ordered floggings to be carried out. But Samuel Leech in his memoirs spends much time railing against the injustice of flogging.

HANGING

A seaman could only be hanged for mutiny, treason or desertion. Hangings, possibly due to the shortage of men, were rare events. A mutineer would be hanged from the yard arm of the ship. If he was well liked his crew mates might be able to haul him up

fast enough to break his neck. Occasionally a man would jump overboard to avoid the slow strangulation of the noose (Richard Parker the Nore mutineer jumped, rather than strangle)

OTHER PUNISHMENTS

For a thief the favoured punishment was to make him run the gauntlet. Thieves were particularly unpopular with the men, who had nowhere to lock up their possessions. The offender was walked slowly through two lines of men who were armed with ropes with a knot in the end. They would then beat the man as he passed down the line. Major theft was punished by flogging, and only for this offence was the cat knotted, three knots at three inch intervals. If the ship's boys were caught up to trouble they might be made to 'kiss the gunner's daughter'. They were bent over a cannon and caned on the backside. The gunner was the officer in charge of the boys welfare.

A man could also be seized up to the shrouds, that is tied up in the rigging and left to the mercy of the weather, for however long the officer who ordered the punishment decided

No 3 THE SPITHEAD MUTINY by Nick Bell

The mutiny at Spithead (an anchorage near Portsmouth) lasted from 16 April to 15 May, 1797. Sailors on 16 ships in the Channel Fleet, commanded by Admiral Lord Bridport, protested at the living conditions aboard Royal Navy vessels and demanded a pay raise. Seamen's pay rates had been established in 1658, and because of the stability of wages and prices, they had still been reasonably competitive as recently as the Seven Years' War, 40 years earlier; however, high inflation during the last decades of the 18th century severely eroded the real value of the pay. At the same time, the practice of coppering the bottoms of hulls, starting in 1761, meant that British warships no longer had to return to port frequently to have their hulls scraped, and the additional time at sea significantly altered the rhythm and difficulty of seamen's work. The Royal Navy had not yet made adjustments for any of these changes, and was slow to understand their effects on its crews. Finally, the new wartime quota system meant that there were a large number of landsmen from inshore who did not mix well with the career seamen (volunteers or pressed men) and this led to discontented ships' companies. The mutineers were led by elected delegates who tried to negotiate with the Admiralty for two weeks, focusing their demands on better pay, the abolition of the 14-ounce *purser's pound* (where the ship's purser was allowed to keep two ounces of every pound of meat as a perquisite), and the removal of a handful of unpopular officers. Neither flogging nor impressment

were mentioned in the mutineers demands. The mutineers maintained regular naval routine and discipline aboard their ships (mostly with their regular officers), allowed some ships to leave for convoy escort duty or patrols, and promised to suspend the mutiny and go to sea immediately if French ships were spotted heading for English shores.

Because of mistrust, especially over pardons for the mutineers, the negotiations broke down, and minor incidents broke out with several unpopular officers sent to shore and others treated with signs of deliberate disrespect. When the situation calmed, Admiral Lord Howe intervened to negotiate an agreement that saw a Royal pardon for all crews, reassignment of some of the unpopular officers, and a pay rise and abolition of the purser's pound. Afterwards, the mutiny was to become nicknamed "breeze at Spithead".

The leader of the mutiny remained anonymous even after its resolution. Rumours during the time placed Valentine Joyce as the mastermind. Joyce was a quartermaster's mate aboard Lord Bridport's HMS Royal George.

In early May, the Spithead mutiny had been active for around three weeks, but remained subdued; the commanders had not yet brought matters to a head by a forcible confrontation with the sailors. On Sunday 7th, a boat of delegates pulled around

various ships of the fleet, urging them to overthrow their officers and set sail; on coming to the *London*, it was refused permission to come aboard. The atmosphere grew tense — the seamen of the *London* were clearly in favour of receiving the delegates — and a group of men on the forecandle began to move a gun to point at the quarterdeck, where the ship's officers stood.

Bover, on deck as the first lieutenant, ordered them to stop and threatened to fire on them; all but one did so. The remaining seaman, however, dared Bover to fire and carried on; Bover fired a moment later, killing the sailor. This sparked a riot, with men storming up from below decks; in the ensuing violence, several men on both

sides were wounded (three sailors fatally) and the Marines defected to the mutineers. On seeing this, Admiral Colpoys immediately surrendered to avert further bloodshed.

Bover was quickly seized by a group of sailors, who dragged him to the foremast and were intending to hang him summarily, before being released through the intercession of Valentine Joyce, one of the delegates, who embraced him and — according to a witness — cried out "If you hang this young man you shall hang me, for I shall never quit him". In the moment of confusion, during which some more of the crew shouted in support of the "brave boy", Admiral Colpoys ran forward and insisted that the responsibility was his own.

The two found themselves on the forecandle, stood among seven or eight hundred angry (and armed) seamen. The situation was defused, and further violence averted, in "the most paradoxical thing in this paradoxical mutiny" A voice from the mob yelled that the Admiral was "a damned bloody scoundrel"; the seamen immediately lowered their guns and began to rebuke the speaker with cries of "How dare you speak to the Admiral in that manner!" In the ensuing lull, the ship's surgeon, who was popular among the men, argued that they should let the Admiral speak in Bover's defence Colpoys promptly announced that Bover had been following orders — recent Admiralty orders insisting that any signs of mutiny be handled strongly. Eventually Bover was released, through the intercession of Joyce and another of the delegates,

Mark Turner, a midshipman from *Terrible*, and helped by his previous status as a favourite among the crew.

Colpoys, Bover, and Griffith, the captain of the *London*, were kept on board as prisoners whilst the other officers of the fleet were turned ashore.

On the 8th they were tried for murder by a court of

the sailors, with Colpoys found guilty but released some days later.

Bover himself was saved through an enthusiastic speech given by John Fleming, an able seaman of the *London* who sat on the court as a delegate, in which he pleaded with the court not



to seek revenge for revenge's sake.

Speaking for the crew of the *London*, he described Bover as "...a deserving worthy gentleman, who is an ornament to his profession in every respect", and stated that before he would sign his name to Bover's death warrant he would insist on being killed with him.

The speech was decisive, but it is unclear if he delivered it personally or if it was read, coming as it did via the comrades of the man who had been killed originally. Bover was released by order of the delegates on the evening of the 9th, and allowed to remain on the *London*.

On the 11th he, Colpoys, and Griffiths were taken ashore to be tried by a civil court for the death of a seaman who had died in hospital at Haslar; a verdict of justifiable homicide was returned.

The crew had been unwilling to let Bover leave the ship, but he promised to return; despite the urging of many of his colleagues he did so, being greeted with three cheers when he came back aboard and requested not to leave again.

He recorded afterwards that his standing with the ship's company was greatly increased by the whole event, not only through being cleared by the court but through being the only officer to remain on ship during the mutiny — all others had been sent ashore and not permitted to return. He continued to serve aboard the *London* until promoted in February 1798, with no negative effects to his career from having remained with the mutineers.

No 4 THE NORE MUTINY by John Caskey

Trouble Brews

As the Spithead event ended, trouble at the Nore was just getting underway. A group of four delegates reached Spithead only to be advised that the arrangements which had been reached there, also applied at the Nore. good for one, good for all! In the event, only two of the four returned, with the news to the waiting rebels who in spite of everything, most didn't really know why they were on strike. Nevertheless it was decided to keep the drama going.

The date was May 12 1797, and involved three ships of the line (*Inflexible*, *Director* and *Sandwich*) as well as three frigates. Of these, '*Sandwich*', formerly Admiral Rodney's flagship in better days, will figure most prominently throughout this account.

Admiral Buckner's flag now flew in '*Sandwich*' acting as depot ship--but he was to have little or no influence over the mutineers.

Conditions on board were it seems bad enough on their own to have precipitated a mutiny.

Badly in need of refit., its general state of cleanliness and godliness had slipped off the scale. Gangs continually arrived with more and more pressed landsmen swelling her complement to 1500 -(double the normal limit). Her own surgeon had often reported the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions below deck. Men presented with boils sores, scalds etc. which degenerated into bad ulcers incurable in the foul conditions.

The mutineers while insisting they remained loyal to the King also signed an oath to 'be true in the cause we are embarked in' even though most weren't quite sure of the 'cause'!

Mr President

A leader emerged in the person of Mr. Richard Parker, elected 'President of the delegates of the fleet'. He had joined the navy with the sole purpose of promoting mutiny and unrest. He was the son of a prosperous Exeter baker. He was educated at the local Grammar school and eventually went to sea in a trading vessel. Among other misdemeanors was the occasion when he is believed to have challenged his captain to a duel!

He joined the Navy and as a Petty Officer was court martialled for insubordination, disgraced and later invalided out with rheumatism. In the meantime he had married a Scottish lass and set himself up as a schoolteacher, spent time in debtors' prison and later rejoined the service. That's how he managed to arrive in HMS '*Sammige*'. However the fact that he was 'an educated man who

could put his thoughts into words and write a respectable letter' qualified him as leader. Parker was never born to lead anything, much less a mutiny.

The two men who returned from Spithead brought the news that the final whistle had been blown, a pardon had been granted and it was time to move on.

However the delegates, under Mr Parker felt that such a soft ending would leave them looking rather foolish. Admiral Buckner, who had done nothing to stem the mutiny to this point, now sent a message to the delegates in '*Sandwich*' that he would shortly bring the King's pardon onboard.

'A jog of claims'

The Admiralty assumed the Nore mutiny, an offshoot from Spithead, would see reason and

do the right thing but the delegates were having none of that and set about preparing their own 'Jog of claims' such as:

1. Pay scares
2. Extra shore leave
3. All officers to be subject to approval by crews
4. Cash advances
5. Deserters returning automatically pardoned
6. Greater share of prize money for crews,
- 7 Articles of war modified to encourage volunteers.

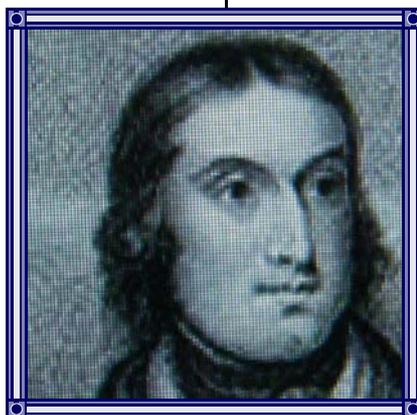
It was the inclusion of this list that could have tipped the mutiny either way. Admiral Buckner was greeted aboard '*Sandwich*' with courtesy but a lack of ceremony and was handed the conditions. In addition Parker also insisted that a board of their lordships also attend, as had been the case at Spithead.

Funnily enough, their lordships refused and insisted that the men accept the pardon and get on with the job. To back up its decision they sent two regiments of Militia to keep the peace. Master Parker and his followers were not amused. They replaced Admiral Bockner's flag with a bright red one and moved all the ships at the Nore into a defensive double crescent.

Loosing momentum

At about this time as events would soon show, many of the crews in the small ships were either against the mutiny or at best (worst) - neutral.

Even Parker seemed to be guided by what has been described as 'the wilder spirit below decks'.



Richard Parker



Parker negotiating with the Admiralty

There followed much to-ing and fro-ing between the parties and eventually the mutineers returned to their ships and the Board members returned to London — both in high dudgeon! The Board, convinced that the mutiny was close to a conclusion, took steps to hasten the end. They decided to:

1. Restrict movement from the ships by the mutineers
2. Withhold necessary stores from the ships
3. Give command of the port to the Army in the person of General Sir Charles Grey.

Also Lord Spencer asked Admiral Duncan to send other ships from Yarmouth to force the rebels into submission. Some of the rebel ships at the Nore, having opposed the mutiny from the start now made a bid to escape, HMS 'Clyde' 'San Fiorenz' and 'Director' being the main group. And even within 'Sandwich' many were arguing for a dignified return to duty.

As these three ships left the Nore they encountered three others entering the area flying the red flag! This was the group Admiral Duncan had sent from Yarmouth — joining the push! They were joined a few days later by five others which also had deserted Admiral Duncan, this time from his group which was on its way to become the Texet blockade.

All this reinforcement gave the rebels fresh hope and they decided to show the bosses who was boss. They would blockade the Thames. And they did!

After two or three days they had up to 100 ships corraled outside the river mouth. But the biter was bitten because their Lordships prevented others in the river from leaving

lest they might be carrying cargoes such as food, ammunition etc. which could benefit the mutineers.

STALEMATE!

By now, popular opinion, at first sympathetic towards the rebels, began to waver. The merchants didn't think it was very funny and they organised a fund to attract loyal mercenaries to resist the mutineers. Added support came from the East India Company whose ships were made available to the government. Parliament joined in with new laws which threatened the death penalty for various activities related to Mutiny.

Throughout the whole event Parker's mutineers remained fiercely loyal to the King, so that on his birthday the Royal Standard was flown from *Sandwich's* foremast all other ships were dressed and a salute was fired! The King, (while he had no power to do so), was petitioned by the mutineers to intercede on their behalf.

In their manifesto addressed to H.M., they hint at their only solution. If he refused their wishes they would 'repose in another country if we are denounced as outlaws in our own'. In the event, the majority of rebels favoured that idea and this became the cause of a good deal of aggro within the ranks, because nobody could come up with a suitable destination. Some even suggested surrendering to France. This was not very well received. Ultimately the motley fleet decided on Texel as their best bet, but to leave the estuary it would be necessary for them to navigate out to the open sea without buoys or lights. These had previously been removed by order from Trinity House making any departure nothing if not hazardous.

At the appointed time for departure, Parker gave the order to sail and while all the ships answered his signal, none made a move.

THE TURNING POINT

Later that same day ships began to abandon the mutiny and make a dash for the open sea. The first two of these ran aground and were fired upon by some of the others. The action lasted for about an hour, by which time the tide had risen and enabled the two, although badly damaged, to float off and make good their escape. The mutiny was falling to bits as one by one the ships surrendered or escaped, some to France, others to Holland,. As soon as 'Sandwich' surrendered, Mr. Parker was taken into custody and confined below. On arrival at Sheerness, he was taken to Maidstone prison.

IT'S ALL OVER ROVER!

More surrenders followed. In all 412 men were arrested, of whom 59 were condemned to death

Of those 29 were hanged and the sentences of the remainder were commuted to terms of imprisonment. Nine were flogged, receiving from 40 to 380 lashes. Parker was tried within days of his arrest and of course, condemned to hang. He was calm in his acceptance of the result and acknowledged the fairness of his trial.

The execution was scheduled for 0930 on 30 June aboard HMS *Sandwich*. He was dignified, he prayed with the Chaplain, shook hands with his captain and drank a glass of wine. Then, having said a few words in support of his fellow mutineers and with the noose in place, he put his hands in his jacket pockets and jumped off the scaffold.

His body was buried in the prison grounds, but his wife, who had tried to see him on several occasions that day without success, later with the help of three other women, dug him

up and transported him on a dung cart to London where she hoped for a Christian burial. The authorities tracked her down however and left Parker's body on public display in a tavern for a week. Eventually, she was allowed to claim the body and Richard Parker was laid to rest in peace.

HMS *Sandwich* was broken up. Of the other ships involved, seven were included in the fleet which fought a decisive battle against the Dutch at Camperdown four months later. Lord Nelson would obviously have been pleased to know that *Agamemnon* at least, remained in British hands and was available for selection for the 'away game' at Cadiz eight years later.

Written by the wife of Richard Parker the leader of the Mutiny

Ye gods above protect the widow, and with pity look on me.
Oh help me, help me out of trouble and out of all calamity,
For by the death of my dear Parker fate to me has proved unkind;
Though doomed by law he was to suffer I couldn't erase him from my mind.

Brave Parker was my lawful husband, my bosom friend I loved so dear;
And at the moment he was to suffer I was not allowed to come near.
In vain I asked in vain I strove, ay, three times o'er and o'er again;
But still they replied, "You must be denied, and must return on shore again."

I thought I saw the yellow flag flying, the signal for my husband to die.
A gun was fired as they required when they hung on the yard so high.
I thought I saw his hand a-waving, bidding me a last farewell;
The grief I suffered at this moment no heart can paint, no tongue can tell.

My fainting spirit I thought would follow the soul of him I loved most dear;
No friend or neighbour would come near me to ease me of my grief and care.
Then unto the shore my Parker was brought, most scornfully to be laid in the ground,
And for to get my husband's body an artful scheme I quickly found.

Indeed of night when all was silent, and many thousands fast asleep,
I and three more went to the shore and to his grave did quietly creep.
With trembling hands we worked with shovel and digged his body from the cold clay,
And there I had a coach a-waiting to carry to London his body away.



The hanging of Richard Parker on board HMS *Sandwich*

And there I got him decently buried, and then the doleful task
was done;
I soon did finish the doleful task that his imprudence had
begun.
Oh farewell, Parker, thou bright genius, thou were once my
only pride;
Though parted now it won't be long till I am laid down by your
side.

Ye gods above protect the widow, and with pity look on me.
Although my Parker was hung for mutiny there were worse
men in the wars than he.
All you who here my tender ditty do not laugh at me in
disdain,
But look on me with an eye of pity, for it is now my only claim.

No 5 The 'Hermione' Mutiny by Mike Sargeant

Mutiny is one of the few naval crimes punishable by death, and of all the capital crimes it, along with piracy, is probably the most feared because it strikes at the very heart of authority and discipline.

There have been many mutinies in the long history of the Royal Navy – we've already heard about two of the more well known ones tonight - and most of them although violent, have been relatively bloodless.

However the third mutiny to occur in 1797, although on a minor scale compared to those at Spithead and the Nore, was to be a very bloodthirsty affair resulting in the murder of the captain and nine officers and petty officers of HMS *Hermione*.

Hermione, a 32 gun frigate with a crew of 220 men under the command of Captain Hugh Pigot, was cruising near Puerto Rico in the West Indies in company with the brig *Diligent*.

As has been remarked elsewhere, the West Indies was a popular station because of the opportunities for prize money, and at the time both *Hermione* and *Diligent* were in pursuit of an enemy privateer; yet although "*Hermione*" already had several successes to her credit, she was far from being a happy ship, thanks to the erratic conduct of her captain.

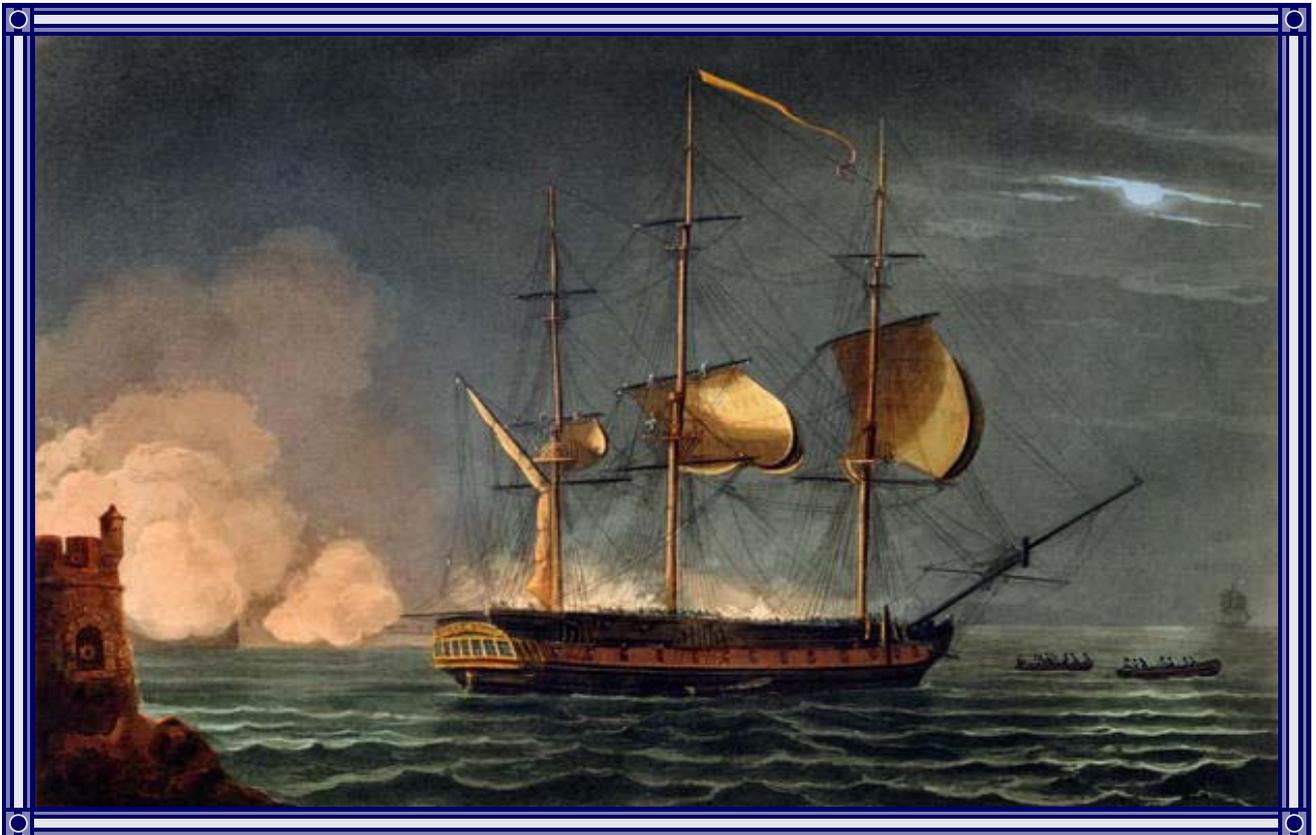
Hugh Pigot was a bully and a tyrant of the worst kind

Most crews will put up with harsh discipline but not when it is inconsistently or unreasonably applied - and there were few captains more inconsistent or unreasonable than Pigot. Aged 28, he was the son of Admiral Hugh Pigot of whom Hood remarked that he had "neither foresight, judgement nor enterprise" - and it would appear that the son had bathed in the same gene pool!

There were already stirrings of discontent and some of the frigate's crew had exchanged clandestine correspondence with elements of *Diligent's* crew with a view to making a simultaneous attempt to take both vessels when, on the evening of 20th September 1797, Pigot ordered the men aloft to reef topsails and to ginger them up he added that he would flog the last man down.

Now reefing topsails is a job for experienced hands and the most experienced are invariably to be found at the outer ends of the yards, which in turn means that they are likely to be the last men down; thus Pigot's warped mind had automatically determined that one of the best hands would be punished rather than any supposed laggard.

The effect of this particular piece of pre-determined bastardry was that in the rush to get back down to the deck, two men fell to their deaths at Pigot's feet, at which point he sneered "*throw the lubbers overboard*" before



'Cutting out the 'Hermione' from Porto Cavallo' by Thomas Whitcombe 1760-1824

disappearing below to his cabin. The resentment at this appalling callousness fanned the flames of rebellion and plans were laid to take the ship.

It was decided that the attempt would be made on the following night and those not willing to participate were persuaded to keep quiet.

At about 10 pm on September 21st, Pigot visited the master, Southcott, before retiring to his cabin; Southcott had been injured on the previous evening when the two men fell to the deck. A marine sentry was posted outside Pigot's door as usual, but no other precautions were evident despite the air of palpable disquiet that permeated the ship.

At 10.30 pm a group of men armed with cutlasses and boarding axes overpowered the marine sentry, slashing him across the face with a cutlass and stunning him.

They broke down Pigot's door whereupon Pigot sprang from his cot and just had time to grab a dirk before they were upon him, slashing him and driving him back against a gun.

Futilely he called for his bargemen to which the reply was "*here are your bargemen you bugger; what do you want with them?*" His coxswain, Forrester, was one of the attackers and Pigot cried out "*Oh, David Forrester, are you against me too?*" "*Yes, you bloody rascal*" was the reply as Forrester hacked at him with his cutlass.

Finally, bleeding profusely and calling in vain for mercy he was driven to the stern windows from where he was hurled overboard; whether he was alive at this point seems to be moot - Forrester later claimed that he gave him his death wound but others said they heard a cry after he hit the water. By now the marine sentry had recovered his senses and together with one of the captain's servants, rushed up to the quarterdeck to raise the alarm.

The officer-of-the-watch, Lieutenant Fanshaw, immediately ordered the master's mate, Turner, to go below and investigate, but Turner refused, knowing full well what was going on being himself one of the ringleaders.

Fanshaw then ordered the helmsman to put the wheel over to close *Diligent* but this order was also refused, whereupon Fanshaw grabbed the wheel himself.

However, by now some of the mutineers had arrived on deck and Fanshaw was seized and dragged forward.

The commotion had awakened the injured master, Southcott, who upon hearing cries of "*Hughey is overboard*", went to the gunroom and climbed onto a table to look out of the skylight to see what was going on, but was spotted immediately and thumped with a handspike for his pains.

He grabbed his sword with the intention of warning the other officers, but after hearing shouts that all the officers were to be killed, he hid his sword and returned to his cabin to await his fate.

Meanwhile the mutineers started to break into the officers' cabins, the first of which was the First Lieutenant's, Samuel

Read, who was hit over the head with an axe. However, no further violence was offered at the time and assuring him that he would not be hurt again, they allowed the surgeon to bandage his head, confining them both to the gunroom together with the carpenter, gunner, purser and the Captain's clerk. Southcott was allowed to remain in his cabin in view of his injuries as was the Lieutenant of Marines who was in a high fever.

A midshipman, Casey, was also unmolested, possibly because he had previously been flogged by Pigot and disrated. He was assured that he would not be hurt but advised to make himself scarce. However, the Second Lieutenant, Douglas, was not so lucky. He had been found hiding in the Lieutenant of Marines' cabin and, streaming with blood was hauled up the hatchway by his hair and flung overboard.

Perhaps the most distressing case was that of another midshipman, Smith, a boy of only 13 or 14 who had found disfavour with the crew after previously dobbing one of them in to Pigot, which resulted in a flogging.

He ran screaming through the ship, pursued by the mutineers and when eventually caught, was hauled on deck and thrown overboard as well. Attention now returned to the officer-of-the-watch, Fanshaw who, after suffering repeated blows from cutlass and axe and pleading for mercy to no avail, was also thrown to the sharks.

A brief lull then settled over proceedings as tempers cooled and a degree of moderation returned temporarily to *Hermione*.

By now it was becoming apparent that there were two main factions among the mutineers and the more moderate of the two began to exert itself, but alas, not for long.

A violent argument erupted and one of the ringleaders, an Irishman by the name of Cronin, now began to harangue the mob urging further bloodshed, shouting, "*the people are doing a very good thing and every officer should be put to death*", and adding that if all the officers were dead, who would bear witness against them?

He then administered an oath requiring all to tell nothing of what had transpired and never to recognise one another once they were out of the ship.

Having roused themselves to new levels of violence, the mutineers returned to the gunroom where the First Lieutenant, surgeon, purser, and captain's clerk, together with the delirious Lieutenant of Marines were all hauled up on deck and cast overboard to shouts of "*as Hughey is*

overboard, they shall all go”.

It would appear that the next man to be dealt with, the boatswain, William Martin, was murdered because the quartermaster's mate, Richard Redman, lusted after Martin's wife Frances, who happened to be on board at the time. Redman hauled the boatswain up on deck and threw him overboard, after which he returned to the boatswain's cabin and didn't reappear until the morning, but whether Mrs Martin was a willing accomplice or whether she was terrified into silence is not known. The carpenter and the gunner were more fortunate than the other officers; they had managed to conceal themselves and together with Southcott, who was still in his cabin, and the midshipman Casey, who was keeping his head down, were overlooked -but not for long. The carpenter and gunner were dragged up on deck and were about to be dispatched when cooler heads prevailed. To cries of "enough bloodshed" it was decided that they, along with Southcott and Casey should be spared for the time being at least. All four were then tied up to gratings to await the further pleasure of the mob. Finally just before dawn broke, the moderates triumphed when a vote was taken as to the fate of the remaining prisoners. Most had by now seen enough violence and it was decided to spare the last four officers who were taken below and placed under guard.

It may be that they had the master, Southcott, to thank for their reprieve since there is some conjecture that he was spared because the master's mate, Turner, couldn't navigate the ship

However, the mutineers had a more pressing problem - what was to be done next?

Both the prize and *Diligent* were still within sight, the latter blissfully unaware of the murder and mayhem that had taken place during the night.

There were some suggestions that *Diligent* should also be attacked and taken but it was soon realised that it was far too risky an undertaking and it was decided to sheer off before the alarm was raised and set a course for the Spanish port of La Guaira, in what is today, Venezuela.

By morning *Hermione* had disappeared and nothing more was heard of her for a month. In the meantime, she had arrived at her destination in a filthy condition after a voyage punctuated by frequent bouts of drunkenness and fighting as well as not infrequent calls to murder the remaining officers.

Upon arrival at La Guaira the mutineers claimed that they had overthrown their captain and officers because of their extreme cruelty but had set them adrift in a boat, much as had occurred in *Bounty* several years earlier.

The four prisoners, along with several other crew members and marines who had not taken part in the

mutiny, were handed over as prisoners of war; the mutineers were given twenty-five Spanish dollars each in return for the ship which was handed over to the authorities - who were of course delighted since it was not often that a British frigate fell into Spanish hands.

Rumours now began to spread throughout the Caribbean that a British frigate had been taken, and the rumours eventually reached the British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Hyde Parker, who wrote to the Spanish authorities requesting that they hand over both the mutineers and the ship, which request was politely refused.

Most of the mutineers returned to seafaring, being the only trade that they knew, many taking berths in French and Spanish privateers, but over the next nine years 32 were recaptured and brought to trial of which 24 were hanged.

One was particularly unlucky having joined a French privateer that subsequently captured a British merchantman; he was nominated as one of the prize crew but recognised and taken when the prize was recaptured by a British man-o-war. He joined his mates dancing at the end of a rope. Forrester seems to have been particularly stupid; he was recognised going through the Point Gates in Portsmouth of all places; needless to say, he too suffered the ultimate penalty.

However, Cronin and Turner disappeared, never to be seen again and Mrs Martin, the boatswain's wife, returned to England in 1802 to petition for a widow's pension, having apparently spent the intervening five years in the United States.

Thus ended one of the most shameful events in British naval history, although it wasn't quite the end of the story; ironically, the loss of *Hermione* was to give rise to one of the most glorious episodes in the annals of the Royal Navy when she was recaptured in an audacious cutting-out expedition led by Captain Edward Hamilton of the frigate *Surprise*, in September 1799, almost exactly two years after the mutiny – but that's a story for another day.

Suffice to say that Hamilton received a knighthood for his efforts and *Hermione*, renamed *Retaliation* and then *Retribution*, continued to serve in the Royal Navy until 1805 when she was broken up.

Sources for all the talks
'The Sailors' Rebellion' by Professor Allan
The Spithead Mutiny and Urban Radicals in the 1790's by
Frank Mabee
and the World Wide Web

Gateway to History by Edward Arnold

A history text book used in Western Australian schools at the turn of the century
Book IV *Wardens of Empire*. Chapter 25.

A simple account of Nelson and his times to give to your grandchildren to read!

About ten years after the war in America, Britain was plunged into another and far more terrible struggle, which lasted for twenty-two years. Our country has never been in greater danger than during that time. This great war arose out of what is called the French Revolution. For many years France had been badly governed. The people were heavily taxed to pay for the wars such as that in which Wolfe won Canada but the nobles were excused from paying any taxes at all.

At last the people of Paris rose against their rulers. The King Louis XVI was made a prisoner. Then the peasants all over France began to plunder and burn the country houses of the nobles.

At this time the Prime Minister in our country was, William Pitt, a son of the great statesman who had sent Wolfe to "take Quebec." He was only twenty four years of age, but he was as great a man as his father. He saw that England needed a rest after her late wars. But when the French had put their King to death, even he could not prevent war from breaking out.

A few months later the French Queen was also being beheaded. Every day batches of nobles, men and women, aged people and young children, were sent off in carts to execution. The whole of France was in a very fearful condition, and the other countries of Europe banded against her. But in time all except Britain made peace, and we were left to carry on the great struggle single-handed.

It was at this time that Napoleon Bonaparte rose to power. He entered the French army when a boy, and quickly rose to be a general. Then he led the armies of France from one country of Europe to another, and made them submit to him. In time he rose to be Emperor of the French; and now his great aim was to humble Britain, which so far had been the only country of Western Europe to stand up against him. In the struggle with Napoleon we had many brave leaders both by land and sea. One of the bravest was Nelson, whom one of our poets calls "the greatest sailor since the world began."

The French wished to gain command of the sea. In this way they hoped to check British trade, and to cut us off from our colonies. But their fleets were beaten again and again by the British Admirals, among whom were some of the finest fighting-men the world has ever seen. Then they made a plan to send a force to Ireland, where they hoped to raise up the people against the British. But this plan

did not come to anything. Napoleon then formed yet another scheme for doing harm to Britain. He said he would march his armies into Egypt, hoping to cut us off from India, and thus take from us what he thought was the great source of our riches. He therefore set out with a fleet along the Mediterranean and took Malta on the way, meaning to make it a kind of stepping-stone to Egypt and on to India.

At last he landed at Alexandria, and very soon overran the whole of Egypt. Firmly placed there, he said he would found a great "Empire of the East." So he sent to Tippoo Sultan, of whom we have heard, and ordered him to make attacks upon the British.

Meanwhile Nelson was sailing up and down the Mediterranean, trying to find out where Napoleon had gone. At last he found the French ships lying at anchor in a long line in Aboukir Bay. There was very little room between them and the low sandy coast. But Nelson boldly sent half his ships inside the enemy's line, and kept the other half outside. In this way each French vessel was attacked on both sides.

Once the battle raged all night long, and Nelson was slightly wounded. A surgeon at once ran up to attend to him. "No," said the Admiral, "I will take my turn with my brave fellows." While he was lying in his cabin he heard that the French Admiral's ship was on fire; and, wounded as he was, he went up on deck and gave orders that the boats should be lowered to rescue as many of the French as possible. The French fought very bravely, but eleven of their thirteen ships were taken or burned, and the victory was complete. The Battle of the Nile was one of the greatest sea-fights in our history.

After this Napoleon and his army were prisoners in Egypt, and he soon had to give up his great plans in the East. He made his way back to France alone, where, in spite of what had happened, his power was greater than ever. After awhile he agreed to make peace with Britain but this was only because he wanted time to prepare for the invasion of our island home

After a rest of thirteen months war broke out again, as he meant that it should. He now collected a great army of his best troops and hundreds of boats at Boulogne, and thought it would be very easy some



calm, foggy night to get his soldiers across the Channel. "It is but a ditch," he said, "and anyone can cross it who has the courage to try." There was great excitement in England and not a little fear. A large army of volunteers was enrolled; their services were never required. The British admirals were too much on the alert for that. Napoleon began to understand that he must have a powerful fleet to protect the crossing of his large army.

At last he got the Spanish King, who had a great navy, to join him in the war against England. At the same time a French fleet, which Nelson had been keeping prisoner in a certain port, managed to get out. In his last and greatest battle Nelson had to fight these two fleets together. This was the world-famous Battle of Trafalgar, which took its name from a cape on the south coast of Spain. The enemy had thirty-three ships to his twenty-seven. But he had most of his old captains with him; and it was an age of great sailors. They understood his plans exactly; while every man

in the fleet knew his station and what he had to do. At eleven in the morning Nelson ran up his famous signal, "*England expects that every man will do his duty.*" Before the great day was ended the enemy's fleet was beaten and shattered. But Nelson lay dead on board the *Victory*, having given his life for his beloved country, after the manner of the heroes of all ages.

Let us not forget the place of the great fight at Trafalgar in the history of our Empire across the seas. While the French fleet was strong and numerous our colonies and dependencies were open to attack; but when it was beaten and dispersed our lands across the seas were to a great extent safe from harm. So we can truly look upon Nelson, not only as fighting for the homeland, but also for the British homes beyond the sea.

Editor: This history book is in my possession and was used at West Collie school by my mother about 1908.

Fourth Plinth Gains a Joyful Statue to put Wind in our Sails

It feels like a long time since we've had a substantial work of art on Trafalgar Square's Fourth Plinth, but boy was it worth the wait for Yinka Shonibare's Nelson's a 'Ship in a Bottle'. Doing just what it says in the title, the sculpture consists of a perfect replica of Nelson's HMS *Victory* inside a giant Perspex bottle. Fully rigged with 31 hand-stitched canvas sails set as they were on the day of the Battle of Trafalgar, the oak, hardwood and brass model is minutely detailed, varying from the original only in the artist's use of his trademark African textiles instead of plain canvas for the billowing sails. Shonibare's last act was to cork the bottle, seal it with red wax and imprint with initials, a giant knick-knack ready for display on the nation's very own what not. There it sits, overlooking the square, joyful and enchanting, an object of delight for adults and children alike. But because the plinth is so high, it is difficult to see it close to. Even if you walk up the steps to view it from the balustrade in front of the National Gallery, you're still too far away to take in the details. So by far the best thing is to forget the detail, and view the work from across the square, where suddenly you can see the vessel intact, prow to stem, as though in full sail on the high seas. Shonibare is much too thoughtful an artist for this to have been a miscalculation. I'm guessing that he determined the ship's scale by calculating the size of an ordinary ship-in-a bottle in proportion to the height of a grown man, then adjusted the proportion to the height of Nelson's Column (which is, after all, the reason why the work is in Trafalgar Square in the first place). Shonibare says that the use of African textile patterns refers to "the legacy of British colonialism and its expansion in trade and Empire, made possible through the freedom on the seas and new trade routes that Nelson's victory provided". He asks us to consider the relationship between Nelson's "historic victory and the multicultural society we have in Britain today". Now, there are so many dodgy ideas packed into those two short sentences that I'm not going to bore you by entering into the kind of futile, politically correct debate that became so fashionable about 20 years ago. Whatever else it may be, Nelson's Ship in a Bottle is an exhilarating work of art that needs no excuse for raising our spirits in the gloomy days we're living through right now.



Article Richard Dorment. Daily Telegraph June 2-8 2010



Vale Ivan Hunter

Ivan Hunter was a long time member of the Nelson Society and will be fondly remembered and sadly missed. He led the Royal Naval Association as its President at the march past on Anzac Day. On completion of this role he uttered his last word to the men he led — 'Dismiss' and thus ended the life of an outstanding leader, family man and one who had earned the respect of so many, attested by the very large crowd assembled at his Funeral.

*The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn;
Till danger's troubled night depart,
And the star of peace returns.*

Thomas Campbell



Cmdr Justin Jones (Recipient of the 'Sword of Excellence') Commander of the HMS Newcastle and the Governor General.

Excerpt from a Naval News by Michael Brooke

In her 16 years of distinguished service in the RAN, there has been no prouder moment for HMAS Newcastle (CMDR Justin Jones) than April 6 when she was presented with the prestigious Gloucester Cup, the Spada Shield and the Australia Cup, all for the first time in her history.

Newcastle's ship's company were the personification of the Navy's 'values when they stood at attention while Governor-General Quentin Bryce presented them with three Fleet awards for 2009. Ms. Bryce presented the awards at a ceremony on Newcastle's flight deck at Fleet Base East where family and friends gathered to watch the outstanding warship's crowning achievement. Ms Bryce praised CMDR Jones and his ship's company for their extraordinary ethic of collaboration, teamwork, trust and respect, which ensured such a highly professional outcome. The Governor-General said the Gloucester Cup, which recognises the Fleet unit foremost in all aspects of its operations, safety, seamanship, reliability and unit level training, spoke volumes of Newcastle's prolific year in 2009. "I offer my warmest congratulations to her CO and her ship's company for a hard earned and well deserved honour; one that will stand proudly alongside her other esteemed awards of today," she said.

Vale Nigel Coate

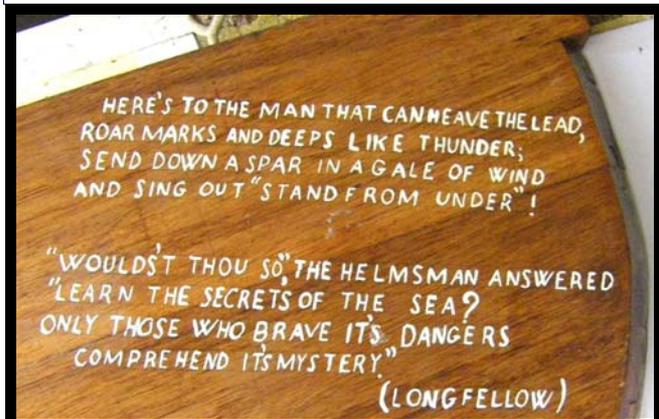


Rear Admiral Nigel Coates on left with sword recipient 2008 Lieut. Commander David Graham and Mike Sargeant HMS Stirling 13 Oct. 2008

It is with great regret we write of the death of Rear Admiral Nigel Coates, who twice presented the 'Sword of Excellence'. He was diagnosed with an aggressive brain cancer in late 2009, and relinquished command of the Australian Fleet to undertake treatment. He died on 2 June 2010 aged 51. He served in the Navy from 1975 – 2010 and before his death was Commander of the Australian Fleet and Director General Navy Personnel. He served on HMAS Anzac and HMAS Canberra in the Gulf War and in Operation 'Slipper' in the War in Afghanistan.

*Then, then, ye ocean warriors!
Our song and feast shall flow
To the fame of your name,
When the storm has ceased to blow
And the fiery fight is heard no more
and the storm has ceased to blow*

Thomas Campbell



Cannington Maritime Museum

On Sunday, the 11th July, some forty members and their friends were the guests of Barry and Doris Hicks at their private Maritime museum in East Cannington. Since his retirement as a Craftsman Carpenter when he worked on the *'Duyfken'* and the *'Endeavour'* and with the assistance of his son Robin, Barry has assembled a remarkable array of artifacts and equipment associated with wooden sailing ships, much of it made with his own hands and all professionally displayed and labeled. The collection is enhanced by the inclusion of numerous models of sailing ships and steamboats made by Barry's talented friend, Brian Lemon. A highlight of the visit was the delicious and bountiful morning tea, beautifully prepared by Doris and Brian's wife, Irene, and revealing culinary skills to rival the manual dexterity of their husbands.



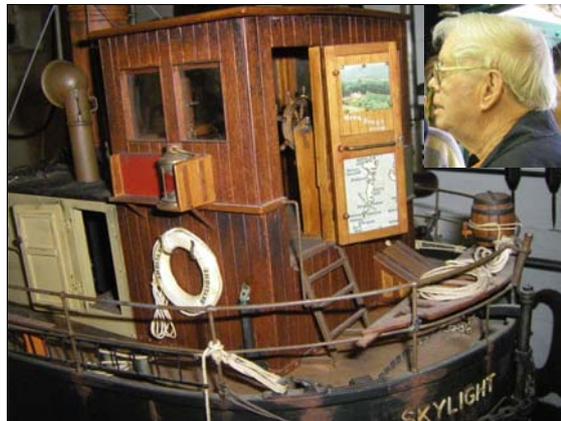
Bob Woollett on behalf of the Nelson Society presents a drawing of the *'Victory's'* Port Sheet Anchor by Michael Johnson to Barry Hicks the owner of the collection.



Richard Savage presents a Nelson Birthday Medallion to Barry and Doris Hicks for their gracious hospitality.



An abundance of blocks and tackles



A tugboat, one of the countless magnificent models made by Brian Lemon



The outside workshop



Some of Barry's handiwork

The Nelson Society of Australia Inc

Patron: Commodore David J Orr. RAN (Ret'd) **Honorary Life President:** Graham Perkins
Honorary Chaplain: Rev Joe Newbold



COMMITTEE 2010-2011

Office Bearers:

Chairman: Mike Sargeant
Vice Chairman: Bob Woollett
Secretary: Richard Savage
Treasurer/Membership Secretary: John Lyall

Committee Members:

Ron Ingham, Gillian Mead,
(Minutes Sec.)

OTHER POSITIONS

Newsletter: Betty Foster, (editor), Bob Woollett, (assistant editor) Ted Collinson and Rob O'Connor, (photos)
Lilian Toomer. (distribution)

Nelson Dispatch Distribution: Gwen Phillips

SUB COMMITTEES

Memorial Service:

Richard Savage (Chair), Ron Ingham, John Caskey,
John Ashworth and Mike Sargeant.

Bell Tower Display

Ron Ingham and Mike Sargeant

Catering:

Position vacant

Pickle Night

Bob Woollett, (coordinator) Betty Foster and
John Caskey

Reception: Cynthia and John Lyall

THE NELSON SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (INC).

Membership Application/Renewal Form for 2010.

PLEASE ENTER ALL INFORMATION IN CAPITALS.

Preferred First Name.....Last Name.....

Home Postal Address.....

Suburb.....State.....P/C.....

Telephone Home.....Office.....

Mobile.....

Email address.....

I hereby apply to join/renew my membership and enclose herewith annual subscription \$30.00.

Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to The Nelson Society of Australia (Inc).

Internet Banking to BSB 806-015 Account 230345. At Narration please give surname & initials.

Signed.....Date.....

Post to: Membership Officer, N.S.A. (Inc),
Mr. John Lyall, 184 Mitchell House
AFME, Bull Creek Drive, Bull Creek WA 6149