

ROBERT SOUTHEY



**THE LIFE
& LEGACY
OF LORD
NELSON**

Robert Southey

The Life & Legacy of Lord Nelson

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Erin Holloway

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Introduction

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Balancing the exhilarations of sea-born triumph with the exacting claims of duty, Robert Southey's portrait of Lord Nelson examines how public glory is fashioned from disciplined habit, moral conviction, and mortal risk, revealing a hero made not only by audacious decision at the edge of disaster but also by the quiet grind of preparation, the demands of command, and the constant negotiation between personal feeling and the impersonal necessities of war, all set against the shifting tides of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century conflict, imperial ambition, and a British society learning to narrate itself through exemplars.

First published in 1813, this work is a concise literary biography of Britain's most renowned naval commander, written at the close of the Napoleonic era and grounded in the maritime world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Its scenes unfold across ships, stations, and coastal towns that framed Royal Navy life, from training and patrol to high command. As a product of early nineteenth-century British letters, it unites narrative drive with moral reflection, offering an accessible account that helped shape how generations would understand the character of leadership at sea and the culture that sustained it.

Southey follows Nelson from youthful apprenticeship into the demanding cadence of professional service, observing how experience, mentorship, and opportunity consolidate

into command. The prose is lucid, measured, and economical, favoring clear incident over ornament, yet suffused with an ethical sensibility that considers motives alongside outcomes. Technical matters are explained with a light hand, so that strategy, seamanship, and administration remain intelligible without slowing the pace. The tone is admiring but not uncritical, and the narrative cadence—shifting between action, reflection, and character sketch—invites the reader to weigh conduct as carefully as achievement, and to sense the costs that accompany renown.

Central themes emerge with cumulative clarity: duty as a demanding ideal rather than a slogan; courage understood as disciplined calculation rather than raw daring; and leadership practiced under uncertainty, where imperfect information, weather, and human temperament complicate every choice. Southey traces how preparation and habit enable decisive action, how loyalty draws strength from fairness, and how initiative must coexist with obedience. He also registers the making of national example, showing how reputation grows from action but exceeds it, becoming a civic resource and a moral mirror, even as the pressures of fame test the very character they celebrate.

For contemporary readers, the book endures as a study in leadership under pressure, a casebook in how institutions form people and how people, in turn, reform institutions. Its reflections on responsibility, accountability, and care for subordinates speak across professions wherever decisions carry consequences for others. It also models critical patriotism: honoring service while measuring it against

standards larger than success. In an age concerned with risk management, public trust, and the ethics of power, Southey's analysis of character—how it is trained, tested, and remembered—offers a humane vocabulary for thinking about courage, authority, and the obligations of command.

Southey's method is deliberately selective, privileging clarity over exhaustive compilation and anchoring narrative to actions and decisions that shaped a career. Drawing on contemporary documents and widely circulated accounts, he distills complex episodes to their intelligible core, avoiding digression without flattening nuance. The result is biography as moral history: events are presented for what they reveal about judgment, habit, and responsibility. Yet the human scale persists—mess decks, signals, letters, and the texture of daily discipline appear just enough to keep grandeur grounded—so that readers meet not an emblem, but a person whose choices illuminate the demands of public service.

Approached in this spirit, *The Life & Legacy of Lord Nelson* invites a reflective encounter with courage and its costs, asking us to consider how excellence is learned and how memory becomes part of a nation's moral furniture. Without presupposing specialist knowledge, it offers a rigorous, humane narrative attentive to action and to conscience. Readers seeking strategy will find it; readers seeking character will find that, too. Above all, the book endures because it treats heroism neither as spectacle nor as abstraction, but as a disciplined way of acting in time, under limits, for purposes larger than self.

Synopsis

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Robert Southey's biography traces the rise of Admiral Horatio Nelson from obscure midshipman to emblematic commander of Britain's age of sail. Written in the early nineteenth century, it combines narrative momentum with moral portraiture, drawing on letters, dispatches, and contemporary reports. Southey situates Nelson within protracted maritime conflict against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, attentive to the strategic stakes that made naval command decisive. He structures the account chronologically, interleaving operations at sea with sketches of character, habits, and motivations. The result is both a campaign history and a study in leadership, exploring how personal qualities intersected with institutional discipline and national aims.

Early chapters follow Nelson's boyhood entry into the Royal Navy and the apprenticeship that hardened him to the demands of ocean service. Southey depicts a cadet educated by long voyages, coastal surveys, and convoy duty, where exposure to hardship and responsibility accelerated advancement. Periods on distant stations test his health and judgment, while small-ship commands refine seamanship and initiative. The narrative emphasizes merit gained through vigilance and enterprise rather than seniority alone, showing how competence in routine tasks prepared him for crisis. Letters from this period reveal piety,

ambition, and a restless pursuit of usefulness that would define his approach to command.

As the war with Revolutionary France unfolds, Southey shifts to Mediterranean operations, where Nelson's audacity and attention to detail earn repeated notice. Actions off Corsica leave him wounded yet undeterred, and a demanding spell in frigates and a seventy-four fosters the tactical quickness that becomes his hallmark. Partnership with senior commanders brings both latitude and scrutiny, while administrative burdens—blockade logistics, coastal negotiations, the management of prize courts—show the breadth of naval command. Domestic circumstances enter the portrait as well, placing marriage, household cares, and financial strain alongside duty, and suggesting how private obligations complicated a career driven by service and honor.

Southey presents the dramatic ascent of Nelson's reputation through episodes that reward initiative under fire. Off Cape St Vincent, decisive movement amid superior numbers displays a willingness to seize fleeting advantage, and the narrative balances daring with disciplined gunnery and ship-handling. A failed assault in Atlantic waters brings grievous injury and a pause for recovery, but the subsequent Mediterranean campaign culminates in the destruction of a hostile fleet at anchor, resetting the strategic balance. The account underscores preparation, reconnaissance, and trust in subordinates as sources of victory, while acknowledging the attrition, storms, and supply anxieties that shadow even the most brilliant operations.

Nelson's responsibilities widen to encompass diplomacy and delicate alliances, especially around Italian and Baltic waters, where political aims overlap with naval constraint. Southey treats episodes of occupation, armistice, and local upheaval as tests of judgment in ambiguous conditions, portraying a commander who prizes resolve yet depends on orderly procedure and civilian cooperation. The northern campaign exhibits his insistence on clear signals, concentrated force, and sparing of unnecessary bloodshed once an enemy is subdued. Throughout, correspondence reveals concern for crews, attention to victualing and health, and a belief that strict discipline could coexist with generosity, forging loyalty that endured blockade and battle.

Alongside operations, the biography follows the strain between public obligation and private attachment, noting how fame complicated domestic ties and invited scrutiny of conduct. Southey neither indulges scandal nor ignores its bearing on decision-making, instead returning to the theme of duty as the compass by which Nelson judged himself and others. The closing phase describes protracted blockade, patient intelligence-gathering, and training designed to secure a decisive action at sea. Preparatory memoranda, attention to weather and formation, and a plan to break an opposing line set the stage for a climactic encounter off the Spanish coast that confirms hard-won strategic superiority.

In conclusion, Southey's work stands as a compact classic of naval biography, admired for clear prose, judicious selection of sources, and a steady focus on character under pressure. It helped fix Nelson's image in British memory while acknowledging complexity, offering an ideal of service

animated by energy, foresight, and care for those commanded. Beyond recounting campaigns, the book invites reflection on how nations remember conflict and the qualities they reward in leaders. Its restraint and moral seriousness give the narrative lasting reach, allowing readers to assess achievement and cost without sensationalism, and to consider the responsibilities attached to exceptional success.

Historical Context

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In 1813, amid the final phase of the Napoleonic Wars, Robert Southey published *The Life of Nelson* in London with the house of John Murray. Britain was under the Regency of the Prince of Wales, and the Royal Navy stood at the center of national security and identity. Southey, a prominent poet and essayist who became Poet Laureate that same year, addressed a broad reading public hungry for authoritative narratives about recent warfare. His biography drew on official dispatches and contemporary accounts to memorialize Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson, presenting a model of professional duty and patriotic service at a time of sustained European conflict.

Nelson's career unfolded within the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Royal Navy, governed by the Admiralty for policy and the Navy Board for supply and dockyards. Officers advanced through a system that combined examinations with patronage, beginning as midshipmen and vying for command. Fleet tactics relied on ships of the line, signal books, and disciplined crews maintained under the Articles of War. Impressment, quota acts, and the lure of prize money filled complements, while convoy protection safeguarded commerce. Technical practice emphasized seamanship, gunnery, and blockade endurance. This institutional framework shaped the opportunities, constraints, and professional expectations that Southey depicts throughout his narrative.

The French Revolutionary Wars (1792-1802) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) defined the strategic environment of Southey's subject. Britain pursued a maritime strategy of blockade, trade defense, and coalition support, seeking to deny France seaborne mobility. Naval victories such as the Glorious First of June (1794), Cape St Vincent (1797), the Nile at Aboukir Bay (1798), Copenhagen (1801), and Trafalgar (1805) established and confirmed British command of the sea. These engagements, widely reported and commemorated at home, furnished touchstones for public understanding of leadership, discipline, and initiative. Southey organizes his account against this backdrop of continuous war at sea and its decisive strategic outcomes.

Wartime pressures exposed strains within the fleet. The Spithead and Nore mutinies of 1797 arose from grievances over pay, provisions, and conditions, prompting reforms that raised wages and improved victualling. At the same time, discipline under the Articles of War remained stringent. Medical administration advanced, notably the Admiralty's adoption of lemon juice in the 1790s on the advice of physicians such as Gilbert Blane, reducing scurvy's toll. These changes, together with prize incentives and steady employment in blockades, affected morale and readiness. Southey sets naval leadership within this domestic context, attentive to the relationship between institutional order, welfare, and operational effectiveness.

International politics further shaped British operations. Mediterranean diplomacy entangled naval strategy with the courts of Naples and Sicily, the Ottoman Empire's resistance

to French expansion in Egypt, and commerce through Malta and the Levant. In northern waters, neutral shipping and the Baltic grain trade drew Britain into confrontation with the League of Armed Neutrality, culminating in Copenhagen (1801). Western Hemisphere campaigns targeted French and Spanish colonies and protected British sugar and shipping. Persistent blockades of French and Spanish ports constrained enemy fleets. Southey's narrative reflects these theaters, showing how Admiralty policy, alliances, and economic priorities set the stage for fleet actions and sieges.

The period's expanding print culture shaped how naval events were recorded and remembered. Newspapers and the London Gazette published dispatches; The Naval Chronicle (1799–1818), edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur, compiled reports, memoirs, and documents. Early accounts of Nelson's career, including Beatty's medical narrative of 1807 and Clarke and McArthur's multi-volume biography (1809), circulated widely. Southey drew upon such sources, letters in print, and official papers to produce a concise, readable life. Writing for a literate public accustomed to documentary excerpts, he balanced quotation with synthesis, aiming to present verifiable detail while offering a coherent portrait of professional character.

Britain's war economy and imperial networks framed public reception of naval heroes. Convoys supported merchants and insurers at Lloyd's; subscriptions funded relief for wounded seamen and their families. The Slave Trade Act (1807) altered Atlantic commerce while the war continued to hinge on maritime logistics. After Trafalgar,

national mourning culminated in Nelson's state funeral in St Paul's Cathedral (1806), and public subscriptions erected memorials at home and abroad. This culture of commemoration and philanthropy elevated naval service as a civic ideal. Southey writes within that environment, consolidating a widely shared image of exemplary duty, sacrifice, and national maritime ascendancy.

Southey's *Life* reflects a Romantic-era mode of exemplary biography shaped by recent history. It presents leadership as a union of professional skill, resolution, and humane concern, aligning with contemporary ideals of patriotic service under constitutional government. The book privileges official correspondence and battle reports, avoids sensationalism, and treats private controversies sparingly, emphasizing public duty and the costs of war. In doing so, it reinforces a prevailing British narrative of national character and naval supremacy while acknowledging the discipline, administration, and alliances that made victories possible. The work thus both records its age and helps define how that age remembered its foremost admiral.

The Life & Legacy of Lord Nelson

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CHAPTER I

1758 - 1783

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Nelson's Birth and Boyhood—He is entered on Board the RAISONABLE—Goes to the West Indies in a Merchant-ship; then serves in the TRIUMPH—He sails in Captain Phipps' Voyage of Discovery—Goes to the East Indies in the SEAHORSE, and returns in ill Health—Serves as acting Lieutenant in the WORCESTER, and is made Lieutenant into the LOWESTOFFE, Commander into the BADGER Brig, and Post into the HINCHINBROKE—Expedition against the Spanish Main—Sent to the North Seas in the ALBERMARLE—Services during the American War.

HORATIO, son of Edmund and Catherine Nelson, was born September 29, 1758, in the parsonage-house of Burnham Thorpe, a village in the county of Norfolk, of which his father was rector. His mother was a daughter of Dr. Suckling, prebendary of Westminster, whose grandmother was sister of Sir Robert Walpole, and this child was named after his godfather, the first Lord Walpole. Mrs. Nelson died in 1767, leaving eight out of eleven children. Her brother, Captain Maurice Suckling, of the navy visited the widower upon this event, and promised to take care of one of the boys. Three years afterwards, when HORATIO was only twelve years of

age, being at home during the Christmas holidays, he read in the county newspaper that his uncle was appointed to the RAISONNABLE[1], of sixty-four guns. "Do, William," said he to a brother who was a year and a half older than himself, "write to my father, and tell him that I should like to go to sea with uncle Maurice." Mr. Nelson was then at Bath, whither he had gone for the recovery of his health: his circumstances were straitened, and he had no prospect of ever seeing them bettered: he knew that it was the wish of providing for himself by which Horatio was chiefly actuated, and did not oppose his resolution; he understood also the boy's character, and had always said, that in whatever station he might be placed, he would climb if possible to the very top of the tree. Captain Suckling was written to. "What," said he in his answer, "has poor Horatio done, who is so weak, that he, above all the rest, should be sent to rough it out at sea?—But let him come; and the first time we go into action, a cannon-ball may knock off his head, and provide for him at once."

It is manifest from these words that Horatio was not the boy whom his uncle would have chosen to bring up in his own profession. He was never of a strong body; and the ague[2], which at that time was one of the most common diseases in England, had greatly reduced his strength; yet he had already given proofs of that resolute heart and nobleness of mind which, during his whole career of labour and of glory, so eminently distinguished him. When a mere child, he strayed a-birds'-nesting from his grandmother's house in company with a cowboy: the dinner-hour elapsed; he was absent, and could not be found; and the alarm of the

family became very great, for they apprehended that he might have been carried off by gipsies. At length, after search had been made for him in various directions, he was discovered alone, sitting composedly by the side of a brook which he could not get over. "I wonder, child," said the old lady when she saw him, "that hunger and fear did not drive you home." "Fear! grandmama:" replied the future hero, "I never saw fear:—What is it[1q]?" Once, after the winter holidays, when he and his brother William had set off on horseback to return to school, they came back, because there had been a fall of snow; and William, who did not much like the journey, said it was too deep for them to venture on. "If that be the case," said the father, "you certainly shall not go; but make another attempt, and I will leave it to your honour. If the road is dangerous you may return: but remember, boys, I leave it to your honour!" The snow was deep enough to have afforded them a reasonable excuse; but Horatio was not to be prevailed upon to turn back. "We must go on," said he: "remember, brother, it was left to our honour[2q]!"—There were some fine pears growing in the schoolmaster's garden, which the boys regarded as lawful booty, and in the highest degree tempting; but the boldest among them were afraid to venture for the prize. Horatio volunteered upon this service: he was lowered down at night from the bedroom window by some sheets, plundered the tree, was drawn up with the pears, and then distributed them among his school-fellows without reserving any for himself. "He only took them," he said, "because every other boy was afraid."

Early on a cold and dark spring morning Mr. Nelson's servant arrived at this school, at North Walsham, with the expected summons for Horatio to join his ship. The parting from his brother William, who had been for so many years his playmate and bed-fellow, was a painful effort, and was the beginning of those privations which are the sailor's lot through life. He accompanied his father to London. The *RAISONNABLE* was lying in the Medway. He was put into the Chatham stage, and on its arrival was set down with the rest of the passengers, and left to find his way on board as he could. After wandering about in the cold, without being able to reach the ship, an officer observed the forlorn appearance of the boy, questioned him; and happening to be acquainted with his uncle, took him home and gave him some refreshments. When he got on board, Captain Suckling was not in the ship, nor had any person been apprised of the boy's coming. He paced the deck the whole remainder of the day without being noticed by any one; and it was not till the second day that somebody, as he expressed it, "took compassion on him." The pain which is felt when we are first transplanted from our native soil—when the living branch is cut from the parent tree is one of the most poignant which we have to endure through life. There are after-griefs which wound more deeply, which leave behind them scars never to be effaced, which bruise the spirit, and sometimes break the heart; but never do we feel so keenly the want of love, the necessity of being loved, and the sense of utter desertion, as when we first leave the haven of home, and are, as it were, pushed off upon the stream of life. Added to these feelings, the sea-boy has to endure physical

hardships, and the privation of every comfort, even of sleep. Nelson had a feeble body and an affectionate heart, and he remembered through life his first days of wretchedness in the service.

The *RAISONNABLE* having been commissioned on account of the dispute respecting the Falkland Islands, was paid off as soon as the difference with the court of Spain was accommodated, and Captain Suckling was removed to the *TRIUMPH*, seventy-four, then stationed as a guard-ship in the Thames. This was considered as too inactive a life for a boy, and Nelson was therefore sent a voyage to the West Indies in a merchant-ship, commanded by Mr. John Rathbone, an excellent seaman, who had served as master's mate under Captain Suckling in the *Dreadnought*. He returned a practical seaman, but with a hatred of the king's service, and a saying then common among the sailors—"Aft the most honour; forward the better man." Rathbone had probably been disappointed and disgusted in the navy; and, with no unfriendly intentions, warned Nelson against a profession which he himself had found hopeless. His uncle received him on board the *TRIUMPH* on his return, and discovering his dislike to the navy, took the best means of reconciling him to it. He held it out as a reward that, if he attended well to his navigation, he should go in the cutter and decked long-boat, which was attached to the commanding-officer's ship at Chatham. Thus he became a good pilot for vessels of that description from Chatham to the Tower, and down the Swin Channel to the North Foreland, and acquired a confidence among rocks and sands of which he often felt the value.

Nelson had not been many months on board the TRIUMPH, when his love of enterprise was excited by hearing that two ships were fitting out for a voyage of discovery towards the North Pole. In consequence of the difficulties which were expected on such a service, these vessels were to take out effective men instead of the usual number of boys. This, however, did not deter him from soliciting to be received, and, by his uncle's interest, he was admitted as coxswain under Captain Lutwidge, second in command. The voyage was undertaken in compliance with an application from the Royal Society. The Hon. Captain Constantine John Phipps, eldest son of Lord Mulgrave, volunteered his services. The RACEHORSE[3] and CARCASS bombs were selected as the strongest ships, and, therefore, best adapted for such a voyage; and they were taken into dock and strengthened, to render them as secure as possible against the ice. Two masters of Greenlandmen were employed as pilots for each ship. No expedition was ever more carefully fitted out; and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Sandwich[4], with a laudable solicitude, went on board himself, before their departure, to see that everything had been completed to the wish of the officers. The ships were provided with a simple and excellent apparatus for distilling fresh from salt water, the invention of Dr. Irving, who accompanied the expedition. It consisted merely in fitting a tube to the ship's kettle, and applying a wet mop to the surface as the vapour was passing. By these means, from thirty-four to forty gallons were produced every day.

They sailed from the Nore on the 4th of June. On the 6th of July they were in latitude 79d 56m 39s; longitude 9d 43m

30s E. The next day, about the place where most of the old discoverers had been stopped, the RACEHORSE was beset with ice; but they hove her through with ice-anchors. Captain Phipps continued ranging along the ice, northward and westward, till the 24th; he then tried to the eastward. On the 30th he was in latitude 80d 13m; longitude 18d 48m E. among the islands and in the ice, with no appearance of an opening for the ships. The weather was exceedingly fine, mild, and unusually clear. Here they were becalmed in a large bay, with three apparent openings between the islands which formed it; but everywhere, as far as they could see, surrounded with ice. There was not a breath of air, the water was perfectly smooth, the ice covered with snow, low and even, except a few broken pieces near the edge; and the pools of water in the middle of the ice-fields just crusted over with young ice. On the next day the ice closed upon them, and no opening was to be seen anywhere, except a hole, or lake as it might be called, of about a mile and a half in circumference, where the ships lay fast to the ice with their ice-anchors. From these ice-fields they filled their casks with water, which was very pure and soft. The men were playing on the ice all day; but the Greenland pilots, who were further than they had ever been before, and considered that the season was far advancing, were alarmed at being thus beset.

The next day there was not the smallest opening; the ships were within less than two lengths of each other, separated by ice, and neither having room to turn. The ice, which the day before had been flat and almost level with the water's edge, was now in many places forced higher than

the mainyard by the pieces squeezing together. A day of thick fog followed: it was succeeded by clear weather; but the passage by which the ships had entered from the westward was closed, and no open water was in sight, either in that or any other quarter. By the pilots' advice the men were set to cut a passage, and warp through the small openings to the westward. They sawed through pieces of ice twelve feet thick; and this labour continued the whole day, during which their utmost efforts did not move the ships above three hundred yards; while they were driven, together with the ice, far to the N.E. and E. by the current. Sometimes a field of several acres square would be lifted up between two larger islands, and incorporated with them; and thus these larger pieces continued to grow by aggregation. Another day passed, and there seemed no probability of getting the ships out without a strong E. or N.E. wind. The season was far advanced, and every hour lessened the chance of extricating themselves. Young as he was, Nelson was appointed to command one of the boats which were sent out to explore a passage into the open water. It was the means of saving a boat belonging to the RACEHORSE from a singular but imminent danger. Some of the officers had fired at and wounded a walrus. As no other animal has so human-like an expression in its countenance, so also is there none that seems to possess more of the passions of humanity. The wounded animal dived immediately, and brought up a number of its companions; and they all joined in an attack upon the boat. They wrested an oar from one of the men; and it was with the utmost difficulty that the crew could prevent them from staving or

upsetting her, till the CARCASS's boat came up; and the walruses, finding their enemies thus reinforced, dispersed. Young Nelson exposed himself in a more daring manner. One night, during the mid-watch, he stole from the ship with one of his comrades, taking advantage of a rising fog, and set off over the ice in pursuit of a bear. It was not long before they were missed. The fog thickened, and Captain Lutwidge and his officers became exceedingly alarmed for their safety. Between three and four in the morning the weather cleared, and the two adventurers were seen, at a considerable distance from the ship, attacking a huge bear. The signal for them to return was immediately made; Nelson's comrade called upon him to obey it, but in vain; his musket had flashed in the pan; their ammunition was expended; and a chasm in the ice, which divided him from the bear, probably preserved his life. "Never mind," he cried; "do but let me get a blow at this devil with the butt-end of my musket, and we shall have him." Captain Lutwidge, however, seeing his danger, fired a gun, which had the desired effect of frightening the beast; and the boy then returned, somewhat afraid of the consequences of his trespass. The captain reprimanded him sternly for conduct so unworthy of the office which he filled, and desired to know what motive he could have for hunting a bear. "Sir," said he, pouting his lip, as he was wont to do when agitated, "I wished to kill the bear, that I might carry the skin to my father."

A party were now sent to an island, about twelve miles off (named Walden's Island in the charts, from the midshipman who was intrusted with this service), to see

where the open water lay. They came back with information that the ice, though close all about them, was open to the westward, round the point by which they came in. They said also, that upon the island they had had a fresh east wind. This intelligence considerably abated the hopes of the crew; for where they lay it had been almost calm, and their main dependence had been upon the effect of an easterly wind in clearing the bay. There was but one alternative: either to wait the event of the weather upon the ships, or to betake themselves to the boats. The likelihood that it might be necessary to sacrifice the ships had been foreseen. The boats accordingly were adapted, both in number and size, to transport, in case of emergency, the whole crew; and there were Dutch whalers upon the coast, in which they could all be conveyed to Europe. As for wintering where they were, that dreadful experiment had been already tried too often. No time was to be lost; the ships had driven into shoal water, having but fourteen fathoms. Should they, or the ice to which they were fast, take the ground, they must inevitably be lost; and at this time they were driving fast toward some rocks on the N.E. Captain Phipps sent for the officers of both ships, and told them his intention of preparing the boats for going away. They were immediately hoisted out, and the fitting begun. Canvas bread-bags were made, in case it should be necessary suddenly to desert the vessels; and men were sent with the lead and line to N. and E., to sound wherever they found cracks in the ice, that they might have notice before the ice took the ground; for in that case the ships must instantly have been crushed or upset.

21 Earl St. Vincent refers to Admiral John Jervis, 1st Earl St Vincent (1735–1823), a senior British admiral who commanded the Mediterranean station and played a key role in directing squadrons such as Nelson's during the 1790s.

22 Aboukir Bay is a shallow bay on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast near Alexandria and was the anchorage where the French fleet was engaged and largely destroyed in the 1798 naval action commonly called the Battle of the Nile or Battle of Aboukir Bay.

23 The "chelengk" (also spelled çeleng or chelengk) was an Ottoman ornamental military decoration or jeweled plume worn on a turban; the text refers to the chelengk presented to Nelson by the Sultan as an honorific gift.

24 In the naval context here, a "cartel" is a ship employed under a flag of truce for the exchange or transport of prisoners, so prisoners "sent on shore by cartel" were landed or repatriated on such a vessel.

25 "Langridge shot" (more commonly spelled "langrage") denotes an improvised anti-personnel artillery projectile made of nails, scrap metal, and other fragments packed into a gun to increase casualties at close range; period spelling and exact composition could vary.

26 The Battle of Cape St. Vincent (14 February 1797) was a major naval engagement off the coast of Portugal in which a British fleet defeated a larger Spanish squadron, an action in which Nelson distinguished himself.

27 Sir William Hamilton was the British envoy (Envoy Extraordinary) to the Kingdom of Naples and a noted

antiquarian and diplomat, husband of Emma Hamilton and a close friend of Nelson.

28 The Directory was the five-member executive government that ruled the French First Republic from 1795 to 1799 during the period of the French Revolution.

29 Maria Theresa (1717–1780) was the Habsburg archduchess and ruler of the Austrian dominions; in this passage she is referenced as the mother of members of European royal families, whose descendants include the Neapolitan queen.

30 The lazzaroni were the urban lower classes and street populace of Naples, often described in contemporary accounts as a distinct and politically active popular element in the city.

31 Gozo is a small island in the Maltese archipelago north of Malta, historically linked to Malta and mentioned here as having been seized and later surrendered during the French occupation.

32 "General Mack" refers to the commander sent to lead Neapolitan land forces, likely Karl Mack von Leiberich (1752–1828), an Austrian officer who served in Italian campaigns and later became notorious for his surrender at Ulm in 1805.

33 St. Januarius (San Gennaro) is the patron saint of Naples, venerated for the traditional 'miracle of the liquefaction of his blood' which was and is a major religious and civic event in the city.

34 The GUILLAUME TELL was a large French ship of the line (an 80-gun warship) of the late 18th century that was blockaded at Malta and subsequently captured by British forces.

35 A formal rank in the Royal Navy of the period indicating the holder was a vice-admiral assigned to the 'Blue' squadron; the Navy then divided admirals into Red, White, and Blue squadrons denoting seniority.

36 Admiral Sir Hyde Parker (1739–1807) was the officer commanding the British Baltic expedition during the Copenhagen operation and served as Nelson's superior in that campaign.

37 Cronenburgh Castle refers to the fortress at Elsinore (modern Kronborg Castle, Helsingør, Denmark), a historic stronghold and state prison overlooking the Øresund strait.

38 Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) was a Danish nobleman and pioneering astronomer whose observatory was on the island of Hven (Huen), noted here for its ruins and his scientific work.

39 The Trekroner battery was a fortified gun position on an artificial island (Trekroner) defending the approach to Copenhagen and played a key role in the Danish shore defences during the battle.

40 A praam (plural praams) here denotes a flat-bottomed armed vessel or floating battery used in shallow coastal waters, commonly employed by the Danes for harbour and littoral defence.

41 Revel was the historical name used in the 18th–19th centuries for the port city now called Tallinn, the capital of present-day Estonia, then part of the Russian empire.

42 Carlscona is an older spelling of Karlskrona, a principal Swedish naval base on the Baltic coast founded in the late 17th century and still an important military port.

43 The ST. GEORGE refers to HMS St George, a Royal Navy ship of the line used as a large warship and occasional flagship during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

44 The peace of Amiens was the 1802 agreement between Britain and France that brought a short-lived cessation of the Revolutionary/Napoleonic wars, effectively lasting from 1802 until war resumed in 1803.

45 The Swin is a shallow tidal channel in the Thames Estuary used by shipping to enter the River Thames; navigable routes there were hazardous and required local piloting and surveys.

46 Merton refers to Merton in Surrey (now within the London Borough of Merton), where Nelson purchased a house and estate known as Merton Place to be his country residence.

47 Diamond Rock is a small volcanic island off Martinique that the British famously occupied and armed in 1803–1805, treating it as a fortified position to control nearby shipping.

48 Prize-money was the legal practice of distributing the proceeds from captured enemy ships and cargo among the captors in the navy and merchant service, a major incentive in naval warfare and a frequent subject of dispute.

49 A British rear-admiral who engaged the combined Franco-Spanish fleet on 22 July 1805 off Cape Finisterre, capturing two enemy ships; he later faced public criticism at home and a formal court-martial over his conduct in that action.

50 A headland on the northwest coast of Spain (in Galicia) that was an important navigational landmark in the