

## TRAFALGAR

A forecast for Trafalgar is only broadcast on BBC Radio 4 during the 48 minutes past midnight bulletin, otherwise it is mentioned only in gale warnings. Its western boundary is the 15° west line of longitude, the same as Bailey, Rockall, Shannon, Sole and FitzRoy. To the east it covers the coastline of Portugal and Spain from Oporto to Cape Trafalgar.

Trafalgar for most people is a battle. Nelson and all that; Great Britain, great sea nation.

Where most countries celebrate success, however, we tend to celebrate failure and misfortune. On 5 November we celebrate the fact that Guy Fawkes failed to blow up Parliament. On Trafalgar Day we celebrate the death of our most famous Admiral. At least at the moment he died during that fateful afternoon the enemy surrendered.



Poor Lord Nelson, he suffered from seasickness. I suppose that at least we can be thankful that his final voyage home, as a cadaver preserved in a cask of brandy, was peaceful.

Sea sickness is an awful affliction – and, unless you are already dead, alcohol is best avoided if you suffer.

I have two recommendations for the prevention of sea sickness. I'm sorry to say, however, that on the occasion we crossed Nelson's battleground they did not work too well.

Of course succumbing to the situation, voiding the tanks as it

were, can be a solution in itself if the upheaval seems survivable at the time. Still, to avoid that try my first recommendation: Keep the horizon in view at all times. Your eyes transmit to your stomach all the relevant data needed for keeping its contents on an even keel. The second



**Trafalgar**  
*Southeasterly veering northeasterly 3 or 4 occasionally variable in southeast.  
Mainly fair.  
Moderate or good.*

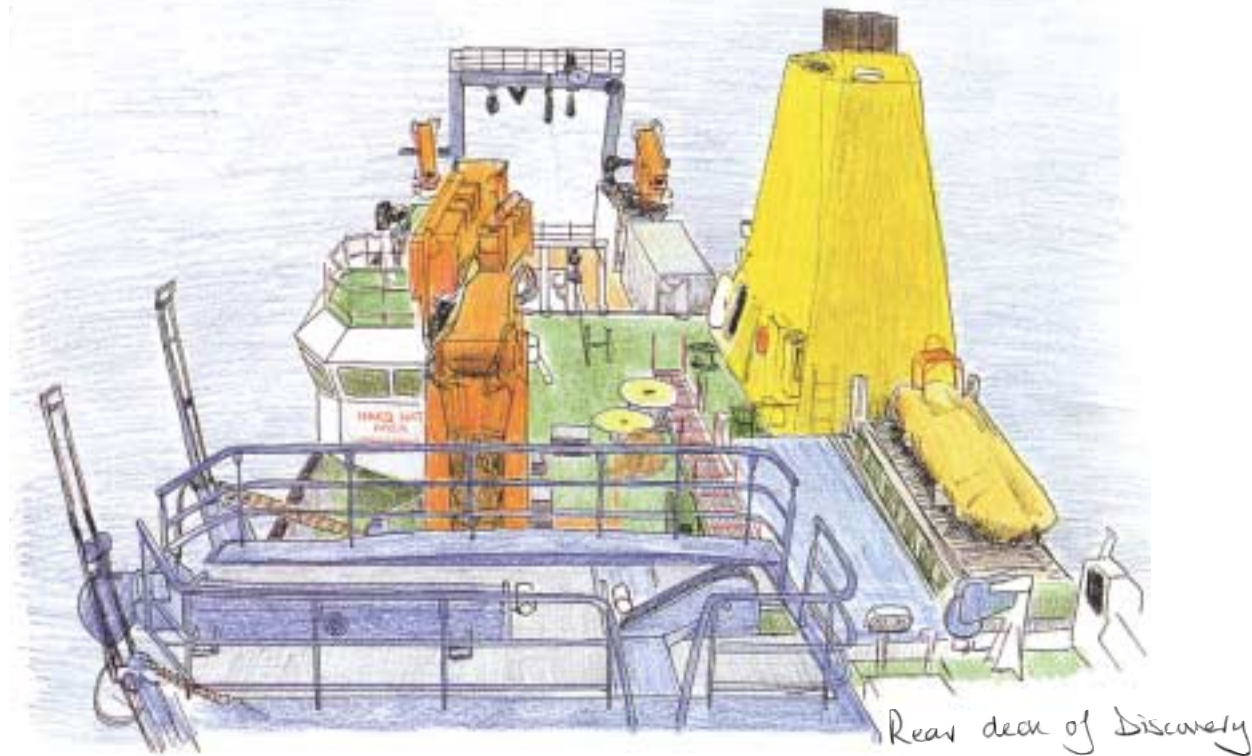
recommendation is to eat lots of McVities ginger nuts. They soak up surplus liquid and set like concrete, thus suppressing the discomfort caused by excess movement.

A combination of the two, together with the prescribed amount of the miracle drug Stugeron, had previously enabled me to survive Ullapool to Stornoway in a force 7 near gale.

Anyway, during the period that we sailed through sea area Trafalgar I did find enough calm

for sketching. One whole day was spent on the 'monkey island', that is the name for the small platform on the roof of the bridge, the highest part of the ship. Although very windy, it is a good place to work, with a fine view across the rear deck. My sketch, the largest I can recall completing, was started in pencil, coloured with crayon and then redrawn over the pencil in ink.

That evening I painted the second of two magnificent sunsets which were one of the



highlights of our journey. While I was working on the sunset painting back home in the studio, I found a magazine article about Turner's famous painting *The 'Fighting Temeraire' tugged to her last berth to be broken up*. This is as much a study of the sun setting over water as of the ship itself. Her finest hour was at the battle of Trafalgar and I was led to think about the line of painters who have worked as I have.

We may travel in different ways, have worked in different styles and be very different in temperament, but we all try to capture the essence of what we see.

Spending all this time aboard ship gave me time to read around the subject. I was surprised to learn how few of the words commonly used at sea or in relation to sailing are of English origin. In the countryside nearly all the words that relate to agriculture or the land have their roots in English. Go down to the coast or to sea and suddenly many of the words connected with things nautical are from other languages.

Cod, haddock, prawn, beach, jib, berth and capsizes can all be traced back to our own language, but it would seem little else can. Inevitably the Vikings gave us many nautical terms; keel, raft, tug, windlass, wake, billow. Their aggressive excursions were followed by the traders of the Hanseatic League and then the powerful Dutch navies from where we assimilated a whole 'raft' of words; skipper, mate, buoy, deck, yacht, sloop,

lugg'er, splice, commodore, and so the list goes on, seemingly endless. Spain, too, has been a rich source of words; flotilla, stevedore, cargo and embargo.

Most fascinating for me was the discovery of just how much the language of the sea and sailing has become part of our everyday speech, particularly from what one might call 'jackspeak', the language and terminology used aboard ship in Nelson's day.

We will say that we are sailing close to the wind, when our ship comes in we can let the cat out of the bag and celebrate with some 'down the hatch'. We might be learning the ropes, or taken aback, we will describe something as being a mainstay or it is packed to the gunwales, all ship shape and Bristol fashion.

These are some of the more recognisable terms. Others are less obviously nautical in their origin.

Rigging ropes passed through wooden blocks which were hauled up the rope to shorten and tighten it, pulley-like. Occasionally, where there were many ropes close together the blocks would become jammed, preventing any further tightening, this was known as being chock-a-block. If the ropes were slackened the blocks could be freed up allowing normal operation to be resumed, this action was called overhauling.

Sailing through sea area Trafalgar while learning all this made me feel that I, too, had sailed with Nelson.