

Chapter 1 : "Napoleon: Power and Splendor" Opens Oct. 26 at Nelson-Atkins - In The News

The Battle of Trafalgar (21 October) was a naval engagement fought by the British Royal Navy against the combined fleets of the French and Spanish Navies, during the War of the Third Coalition (August-December) of the Napoleonic Wars ().

It was the morning of October 21, The scattered rainsqualls that swept through the previous night had vanished by sunrise and would not disrupt the historic sea battle that would soon unfold. Despite the calm weather, however, experienced sailors in both fleets knew that the heavy swells the ships rode foretold the approach of a gale within a day. Pierre Charles Jean-Baptiste Sylvestre Villeneuve, had raised anchor and inched its way out of the great harbor of Cadiz. Emperor Napoleon had ordered the fleet to ferry 4, soldiers to Naples, to capture any ships or convoys of the Third Coalition it found in the region. The wind was so still that only seven of the 33 ships of the line managed to clear the harbor. It was not until the following day that Villeneuve was able to get his flagship, the gun Bucentaure, and the rest of the fleet into the open ocean. Once under sail, the fleet set a course southeast for the Strait of Gibraltar. The British squadron responsible for the blockade of Cadiz, under Vice Adm. Horatio Viscount Nelson, stalked its prey closely. By dawn on October 21, Nelson had closed to within nine miles of his adversary. In his place of command aboard the gun flagship Victory, Nelson signaled his 27 ships of the line to form two columns, one behind Victory and the other behind the gun Royal Sovereign, flagship of Vice Adm. Cuthbert Collingwood, and to prepare for battle. Upon receiving the order, the British crews sprang to action. They also distributed fuses, powder charges and cannonballs to those manning the guns. The French and Spanish gun decks were already cleared for action. He wore a threadbare frockcoat, embroidered on the left breast with the stars of the four knighthoods that had been bestowed upon him during his lengthy naval career. He had been blinded in his right eye in Corsica in and had lost his right arm storming Tenerife in the Canary Islands in He may have been physically handicapped by the wounds, but his mental faculties were as sharp as ever. Nelson, together with his fellow countrymen, longed for the destruction of the Franco-Spanish fleet. To this end, Nelson planned a two-pronged attack that went against conventional tactics, which usually called for two fleets sailing in line opposite each other and trading broadsides. As the British ships broke through the Franco-Spanish line, they would engage their enemies from the leeward, or downwind, side. That would separate the main body of the Combined Fleet from its vanguard and allow the British to attain superiority in numbers. By 10 the Combined Fleet had reversed direction and was bracing for the British attack. In an effort to overtake the Combined Fleet before it could regain Cadiz, the British hoisted auxiliary sails. Nelson would lead the 12 ships of the British weather column, while Collingwood aboard Royal Sovereign would lead the 15 ships that formed the British lee column. In the final moments before the battle began, Nelson sent a signal to the fleet: As the two British columns bore down on the Combined Fleet, the bows, masts and rigging of lead ships in each column would be exposed to enemy broadsides, with no chance to return fire until they began to pass through gaps in the enemy line. The British had one decisive advantage over the Combined Fleet, however. British gun crews could fire at least two or three times as fast as either the French or Spanish. As Victory advanced, Nelson realized to his dismay that the Combined Fleet was not in one orderly line as he had expected. Instead, it was in clumps of three or four ships, with no gaps through which his column could pass. Shortly before noon, the gun French Fougueux fired a full broadside from 1, yards at Royal Sovereign. Collingwood ordered men on all three decks to lie flat, but the shells fell short, doing no damage. The vice admiral had ordered the ships in his division to follow Royal Sovereign into battle on his starboard side. The ships fanned out and began to advance abreast rather than in column. Royal Sovereign was greeted by broadsides from Fougueux, the gun French Indomitable and the gun Spanish Monarca. Once within range, Royal Sovereign was largely dismasted as it steered toward a gap between the Spanish gun Santa Ana and Fougueux. Victory received a similar reception. As Nelson and Hardy strode the quarterdeck, a cannonball passed between them. Each man looked at the other to see if his friend had been injured, but neither had. At Boulogne the French emperor managed to assemble about 2, boats to carry nearly , of his best troops across, but the various parts of his fleet were bottled

up by blockading British squadrons in the French ports of Brest, Rochefort and Toulon. Spain had joined France when it declared war on Britain in , and the following month the two continental powers signed a secret treaty whereby King Charles IV agreed to provide Napoleon with between 25 and 29 ships of the line. With the addition of the Spanish ships, the French and Spanish admirals would have larger, more heavily armed ships than their British counterparts. If used properly, they might offset British experience. Pierre Dumanoir le Pelley aboard the gun Formidable and the squadron of observation under Admiral Federico Gravina aboard the gun Principe de Asturias. Gravina, however, swung into the rear instead of taking up a position windward as Villeneuve had instructed. As the battle unfolded, the Combined Fleet missed two key opportunities. Those missed opportunities would cost the Combined Fleet the battle. The French maneuvered in vain to rescue Bucentaure. In a scene that was to be repeated often throughout the battle, Lucas and his men tried to disable Victory by annihilating the crew that controlled the ship from its upper deck. More ships joined the expanding battle in the center. The gun British Temeraire cut sharply through the enemy line behind Victory. In the process, it took a broadside from Neptune that brought its main topmast crashing down. As the fighting progressed, Temeraire and Redoutable became locked together when their masts fell across each other. The ships gradually drifted leeward until Temeraire crashed into Fougueux, a refugee from the action begun by Royal Sovereign farther down the line. This created the rare spectacle of four ships of line locked together in battle. An unidentified sharpshooter perched in the mizzen top of Redoutable fired a shot from his musket that struck Nelson in the chest at 1: Lucas organized a boarding party, cut the main yard for a bridge, and prepared to board. Victory had a larger crew than Redoutable, however, and Royal Marines and sailors repulsed the attack. Lucas then tried to board Temeraire, only to fail again. Through repeated broadsides, Temeraire eventually forced both French ships to strike their colors, but Lucas and his crew had inflicted so much damage on Temeraire and Victory that neither ship was able to play a significant role in the second half of the battle. Although the British seemed most hard pressed at the point where Victory cut through the Franco-Spanish line and Nelson was mortally wounded, that was not the case. The ships of the leeward column, which immediately followed Royal Sovereign through the line, were to suffer the most. Royal Sovereign managed to overpower Santa Ana, but Belleisle and Mars, which followed closely behind it at about Belleisle, under the command of Captain William Hargood, was the next to enter close combat. As it sailed through the enemy line, Fougueux struck it amidships. Once locked together, the two ships proceeded to demolish each other with cannon fire. While engaged with Fougueux, Belleisle was subjected to broadsides from a half dozen other enemy ships. Belleisle lost all three masts, while Fougueux lost two before finally managing to break free. Although it appeared that Belleisle would have to strike its colors, Hargood and his men held on until other British ships distracted their attackers. Mars traded broadsides with Pluton for about 20 minutes. About that time, Fougueux also turned its attention to Mars. Now under fire from three ships, Mars was in a tight spot. While trying to pinpoint the positions of the enemy ships from the quarterdeck, its captain was decapitated by a cannonball fired from Fougueux. The arrival of the gun British Tonnant at about 1 p. First Tonnant silenced Monarca with a several effective broadsides. Next it turned its attention to Algeiras, the gun flagship of French Rear Adm. While Tonnant was firing double shot at the French ship, Algeiras collided with it amidships. During an hour-long battle, the crew of each ship attempted to board the other. The boarders found Admiral Magon at the foot of the poop ladder, dead from a bullet in the chest. Royal Sovereign led the first group, while the gun Bellerophon led the second. The attack of the second group initially seemed promising, but quickly deteriorated. As Bellerophon passed through the Franco-Spanish line it reeled from the broadsides of five enemy ships. The third and fourth groups focused on the front and rear of the squadron of observation, led by Gravina aboard Principe de Asturias. It was saved, however, when the gun Spanish San Justo and Neptune came to its rescue. The plight of the Franco-Spanish center and rear might have been alleviated if Rear Adm. He ignored two signals from Villeneuve to come to the assistance of the main body of the fleet. The first signal was made shortly after noon at the outset of the engagement, while the second was given an hour later, at about 1 p. The gun French Intrepide and gun Spanish San Augustin were the only two ships to head for the thick of the battle, trying to assist Bucentaure and Santissima Trinidad, respectively. Hardy, aboard Victory, spotted the movement and signaled for all available British ships to meet

the threat. Intrepide, however, did not easily succumb to the British gunnery. After a two-hour fight, Intrepide struck its colors at 5: San Augustin met a similar fate. After he was shot, Nelson was carried by a sergeant major and two seaman from the quarterdeck down to the orlop deck. Finding no exit hole in his back, Beatty concluded the bullet had lodged in his spine. During a visit from Hardy at 4 p. The battle was drawing to a close as Nelson breathed his last. Franco-Spanish ships not already captured by the British either surrendered or managed to escape to the north or south.

Chapter 2 : Battle of Trafalgar - HISTORY

Horatio Nelson, also known as 1st Viscount Nelson, was an important English naval officer active during the French Revolution and the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars. Nelson was born in Burnham Thorpe, England, on 29 September, to Reverend Edmund Nelson and his wife, Catherine Nelson.

He also had four gun second rates and twenty third rates. One of the third rates was an gun vessel, and sixteen were gun vessels. The remaining three were gun ships, which were being phased out of the Royal Navy at the time of the battle. Nelson also had four frigates of 38 or 36 guns, a gun schooner and a gun cutter. Franco-Spanish[edit] Against Nelson, Vice-Admiral Villeneuve“sailing on his flagship Bucentaure“fielded 33 ships of the line, including some of the largest in the world at the time. The Spanish contributed four first-rates to the fleet. The fourth first-rate carried guns. The fleet had six gun third-rates, four French and two Spanish, and one Spanish gun third-rate. The remaining 22 third-rates were gun vessels, of which fourteen were French and eight Spanish. In total, the Spanish contributed 15 ships of the line and the French The fleet also included five gun frigates and two gun brigs, all French. One reason for the development of the line of battle system was to facilitate control of the fleet: First, the British fleet would close with the Franco-Spanish as quickly as possible, reducing the chance that they would be able to escape without fighting. Nelson knew that the superior seamanship, faster gunnery and better morale of his crews were great advantages. The ships in the van of the enemy fleet would have to turn back to support the rear, which would take a long time. The main drawback of attacking head-on was that as the leading British ships approached, the Franco-Spanish fleet would be able to direct raking broadside fire at their bows, to which they would be unable to reply. The Combined Fleet was sailing across a heavy swell, causing the ships to roll heavily and exacerbating the problem. The order of sailing, in which the fleet was arranged when the enemy was first sighted, was to be the order of the ensuing action so that no time would be wasted in forming a precise line. One, led by his second-in-command Vice-Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, was to sail into the rear of the enemy line, while the other, led by Nelson, was to sail into the centre and vanguard. In preparation for the battle, Nelson ordered the ships of his fleet to be painted in a distinctive yellow and black pattern later known as the Nelson Chequer that would make them easy to distinguish from their opponents. Nothing is sure in a sea battle, so he left his captains free from all hampering rules by telling them that "No captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of the enemy. Admiral Villeneuve himself expressed his belief that Nelson would use some sort of unorthodox attack, stating specifically that he believed“accurately“that Nelson would drive right at his line. But his long game of cat and mouse with Nelson had worn him down, and he was suffering from a loss of nerve. Arguing that the inexperience of his officers meant he would not be able to maintain formation in more than one group, he chose not to act on his assessment. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. At first, Villeneuve was optimistic about returning to the Mediterranean, but soon had second thoughts. A war council was held aboard his flagship, Bucentaure, on 8 October. This was used as the pretext for sudden change. The weather, however, suddenly turned calm following a week of gales. This slowed the progress of the fleet leaving the harbour, giving the British plenty of warning. Villeneuve had drawn up plans to form a force of four squadrons, each containing both French and Spanish ships. It took most of 20 October for Villeneuve to get his fleet organised; it eventually set sail in three columns for the Straits of Gibraltar to the southeast. That same evening, Achille spotted a force of 18 British ships of the line in pursuit. The fleet began to prepare for battle and during the night, they were ordered into a single line. Villeneuve again ordered his fleet into three columns, but soon changed his mind and ordered a single line. The result was a sprawling, uneven formation. This reversed the order of the allied line, placing the rear division under Rear-Admiral Pierre Dumanoir le Pelley in the vanguard. The wind became contrary at this point, often shifting direction. The very light wind rendered manoeuvring virtually impossible for all but the most expert seamen. The French and Spanish fleet now formed an uneven, angular crescent, with the slower ships generally to leeward and closer to the shore. The two fleets would be within range of each other within an

hour. Villeneuve was concerned at this point about forming up a line, as his ships were unevenly spaced and in an irregular formation. As the British drew closer, they could see that the enemy was not sailing in a tight order, but rather in irregular groups. Nelson could not immediately make out the French flagship as the French and Spanish were not flying command pennants. Nelson was outnumbered and outgunned, the enemy totalling nearly 30, men and 2, guns to his 17, men and 2, guns. The Franco-Spanish fleet also had six more ships of the line, and so could more readily combine their fire. As the two fleets drew closer, anxiety began to build among officers and sailors; one British sailor described the time before thus:

Chapter 3 : Battle of Trafalgar - Wikipedia

Nelson and Napoleon Their careers overlapped considerably during the French Revolutionary Wars () - Nelson as a commander in the British Navy and Napoleon as a general in the French army - though they never met in combat.

Print this page War with France When war broke out between Britain and Revolutionary France in the spring of there was no immediate threat of French invasion. Britain relied on the Royal Navy for defence and planned a series of sorties against the French forces in mainland Europe. But the picture started to change in French military successes and British military frustrations started to alter the balance of power and the British Government began to repair and reinforce coastal defenses and to raise, train and equip a huge force of volunteers. A member of the Society of United Irishman Wolfe Tone was a Protestant who by the mid s was convinced that change could come only through violent insurrection. In he was in France seeking aid and promoting the invasion of Ireland by a French army of liberation. Wolfe Tone and Hoche met and their aspirations coincided. Wolfe Tone promised popular support if the French invaded and, in late December , a French invasion fleet of around 50 ships carrying 15, veteran troops set sail from Brest for Bantry Bay in south-west Ireland. The plan was to land, ignite the country in rebellion against the Protestant English overlords, seize the port of Cork and be in Dublin within the fortnight. But nothing went right for the French - the weather was so violent that no troops could be put ashore - and by the first week of January the French invasion fleet, battered and dispersed, crept back to Brest. The Government continued to fear the enemy within and increased the power of sedition laws to break and stifle individuals and societies that appeared to be supporting pro-French Republican views. These fears seemed to be fully realised in April and May when elements of the Royal Navy - the first and major bulwark against invasion - mutinied at Spithead and the Nore. The mutiny - not primarily political in its nature - was dealt with and the British naval victory in October over a French-led and sponsored Dutch invasion fleet at Camperdown suggested that the Royal Navy was still in possession of its fighting spirit. But despite this British success the French still appeared to be closing in for the kill. Let us concentrate all our efforts on the navy and annihilate England. That done, Europe is at our feet. The Irish were too demoralised or too terrified to join the French would-be liberators and Wolfe Tone - who could perhaps have raised more resistance in Ireland - was captured en route by the Royal Navy and subsequently committed suicide while waiting execution as a traitor. In early September Humbert surrendered his tiny army which - although the invasion proved futile - had given a good account of itself. On the 1st August Admiral Nelson had destroyed a French fleet in Aboukir Bay - an action which not only marooned Bonaparte and his army in Egypt but also removed from France the ability to defend an invasion army as it crossed the English Channel. In March Britain appeared to have weathered the storm when, with the Treaty of Amiens, France - now a dictatorship with Bonaparte as the autocratic head-of-state - made peace with Great Britain. But both sides were intensely suspicious of each other, the terms of the treaty were not honoured and, in May , Britain was once more at war with France, more powerful and a more sinister enemy than ever before. Top Hourly threat By the end of Bonaparte had amassed on the cliffs around Calais an Army of England , strong and a flotilla of 2, crafts to carry the host across the Channel. The presence of the army put huge pressure on the British Government to come to terms with Bonaparte who, in May , had his position strengthened still further by getting the French senate to confer upon him the title of Emperor Napoleon I. Napoleon realised that with invasion, as with most things, time was of the essence. If he could get his men ashore, getting them moving and to London before the British could fully mobilise or deploy their forces then victory would be his. The British also realised that timing was all important and knew that the job of its land-based defences - both coastal fortifications and volunteer regiments - was to delay and disrupt enemy forces until British regular forces could be gathered and a counter-attack launched. In the dark days of and - when a French invasion was expected on an almost hourly basis - Britain started to construct a vast network of coastal defences as well as relying on the skill and resilience of the Royal Navy. As Admiral Earl St Vincent said at the time: This pointed to three prime invasion targets: Dover and the beaches around it, Chatham and the River Medway which the Dutch has successfully raided in and the flat, wide beaches of the Romney Marsh

adjoining the small port at Rye. So Prime Minister William Pitt, a firm believer in the benefits of fixed fortifications, followed the advice of a number of military engineers, notably General Twiss, and approved plans to strengthen the defences of these prime targets. The greatest weakness of Dover was vulnerability to land attack. The ancient castle - despite being greatly strengthened during the s - was also vulnerable to attack from land, especially from the neighbouring Western Heights from which modern artillery could rapidly reduce the castle to ruins. From until was turned into one of the great artillery fortresses of Europe. It housed batteries firing out to sea and inland, and barracks for a large garrison of troops that was given rapid access to the sea by means of the spectacular Great Shaft, a foot deep cylinder containing three staircase designed to allow troops to move to and from the Western Heights and the harbour with maximum speed. The Western Heights was also provided with an impressive strong point - a place of great defensive and offensive power - called the Drop Redoubt. This fortress with its massive, brick-clad earth walls, deep ditch, well sited gun embrasures and vastly strong casemates and magazine remains one of the wonders of British post-medieval military design. The defence of the Romney Marches was a trickier problem. Flooding was one possibility but this would have destroyed many homes and much productive land. In late a Royal Engineer colonel John Brown came up with a better idea: These squat, ovoid-shaped brick-built towers are immensely strong and were modelled on a gun tower at Martella, Corsica that had caused the Royal Navy much trouble in Martello Towers were the idea of Captain William Ford of the Royal Engineers and they were sited roughly yards apart and each mounted a long-range 24 pounder cannon. The aim was to cover the most likely landing beaches and to confuse any French landing while British reserves and Royal Navy ships were rushed to the area. These squat, ovoid-shaped brick-built towers are immensely strong These towers were never tested which is a great tribute. But in late the picture was not quite so clear. After the destruction of his fleet at Trafalgar Napoleon went on to win, in December , the vastly important victory at Austerlitz that confirmed the French as the military and political masters of Europe. A French fleet could be reconstructed and, as far as the British could see, it was just a matter of time before the French were again in a position to invade. It was not until when Napoleon and his allies were smashed in Russia that the invasion of Britain was clearly beyond the French - and in this year the construction of the chain of Martello towers ceased. Top Victory at Waterloo The victory at Waterloo in left Britain the dominant power in Europe with the Royal Navy the strongest fleet in the world - despite suffering a series of significant but small-scale reverses during the War of with the fledgling United States Navy. For 40 years threats of invasion were forgotten but then, in the late s, emerged in a sudden and most dramatic manner. France - revived as an empire with immense territorial ambitions under Napoleon III - was once again the enemy and in the late s Britain led by its Prime Minister Lord Palmerston undertook to spend vast sums on defence. On the contrary, it merely identified a new enemy. Initially the British had been gratified by the discomfiture of their traditional enemy but by the end of Prussian brutality, its cold-blooded military efficiency and its territorial ambitions had made it the next potential invader. Defence against Bonaparte, by R. The Nelson Touch by D. Howarth Collins, Defending the Island by N. Longmate Hutchison, Invasion: From the Armada to Hitler, by F. The Nelson Society site has lots of information about the man and his battles. Dover Castle - English Heritage site gives information of how to get there and what to expect.

Chapter 4 : Napoleonic Wars: Battle of Trafalgar -- Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson Did His Duty | HistoryNet

Nelson and Napoleon were the titans of their day -- with Wellington coming along just a bit later. The differences were, of course, land and water. Napoleon had few rivals on land.

It was never going to be any ordinary battle, and quickly acquired a heightened, almost magical, reality. Little wonder the battle transcended the mundane calculation of ships and men, victory and defeat. By Nelson was already a national hero, and considered the ultimate naval commander. His elevated conception of war ensured that every battle he fought was used to solve major strategic problems, and his many successes ensured he was the only contemporary to rival Bonaparte as ultimate exemplar of total war. Nor did Bonaparte disagree - he kept a bust of Nelson in his private quarters. He did so by taking the command system of Admiral Sir John Jervis, the tough old officer who taught him how to keep a fleet efficient, and melding it with the genius for battle and strategy he developed while serving under Admiral Lord Hood. Nelson used this combination of strategic flair and practical management to help Britain survive the 22 year struggle with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Late in , however, Spain joined the war as an ally of France, giving Napoleon the ships he needed to challenge Britain. This was the context of Trafalgar. Napoleon was looking for an opportunity to strike at Britain, without having to fight Nelson and the Royal Navy - while all his attempts to attack British interests were thwarted by expert seamen who countered his every move. It had to be destroyed. His very presence electrified the men under his command, while his new battle plan, explained at his table on HMS Victory, was key to decisive combat. If the enemy put to sea Nelson wanted to be able to annihilate them completely, ending the need for Britain to stand on the defensive. In fact his 33 ships of the line faced 27 British vessels. At dawn on the 21st the fleets were in visual contact. He knew a storm was coming, and he had to engage the enemy quickly. Nelson knew his skilled captains could wipe out the rest of the opposing fleet He was to lead the first column into the attack and destroy the enemy flagship, leaving his opponents, leaderless and confused, to be destroyed by the second column, led by Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood. With the enemy admiral disabled, Nelson knew his skilled captains could wipe out the rest of the opposing fleet in the remaining hours of daylight. All his men cheered this example of courage and confidence that they had but to follow. The enemy had reversed course during the morning, heading back to Cadiz, leaving their line confused. Now the fleets were off Cape Trafalgar, and the British sailors had time to eat a good meal in preparation for the engagement - although their opponents may not have had such healthy appetites. Nelson waited for Villeneuve to show his flag, so he would know where to strike. As Victory bore down on the enemy line she had to endure heavy fire from the allied line, without being able to reply. Round shot came smashing through the flimsy bow of the ship, killing and wounding the men on the upper deck. This is too warm work to last for long. Then the steering wheel was smashed, and a double-headed shot scythed down a file of eight marines on the poop. Still Nelson and Hardy paced up and down on their chosen ground, the starboard side of the quarterdeck, with splinters flying around them. Fifty men had been killed or wounded, and the crew of the Victory had yet to open fire. Soon afterwards the Victory ran right under the stern of the French flagship, the Bucentaure, and fired a double shotted broadside that made the enemy ship shudder, and killed or wounded over men. Admiral Villeneuve was the only man left standing on the quarter deck. Villeneuve was trapped on a crippled ship, and the Franco-Spanish centre was reduced to chaos, lacking the leadership to meet the irresistible British. Then, at about 1. He was knocked to the deck, and it was clear the wound was mortal. Hardy had his chief carried below, where Surgeon William Beatty was hard at work on the mounting list of casualties. Meantime the battle raged, with the faster and more effective British gunnery steadily wearing down the enemy. Over the next three hours the Franco-Spanish force would collapse. At the start of the battle, when the first British ships arrived, they were initially fighting a far greater number of enemy ships. They won the day because of their speed and flexibility, and by the time they were weakening, a later wave of vessels was in place to administer the coup de grace. In fact the battle was won while the enemy had far more ships in the fight than the British. The real triumph was not of 27 ships against 33, but of 12 against British casualties tell the story - 12 ships fought the early and decisive phase of the battle, suffering some deaths and injuries.

The French repeatedly tried to board the Victory, only to be driven back by heavy fire, and at 1. The genius of his opponent, the power of the Royal Navy and the failure of his lead squadron to come to his aid had doomed his brave effort. He lived to return to France, only to be murdered by Napoleon. Hardy went back on deck and signalled the ships nearby to support the flagship. Hardy visited Nelson again at 3. Thank God I have done my duty. Hardy knelt and kissed him, as Nelson struggled to breathe and kept repeating his motto: Nelson died shortly before 4. Nineteen enemy ships had been taken. Some 1, British were killed or wounded, with 6, enemy casualties and nearly 20, prisoners. The loss, however, provided a national hero to help enhance the newly formed British identity. Trafalgar, as the battle was named by George III, had crushed the naval power of a deadly enemy, and - although they had fought like heroes - the Spanish and French had been annihilated. Other British admirals could have won at Trafalgar, but only Nelson could have settled the command of the sea for a century.

Chapter 5 : nelson and napoleon | Download eBook PDF/EPUB

There are a lot of histories of Nelson and Napoleon, this book has a lot more on their lower level commanders. Perhaps best however, is the final fifty pages or so. Here is where the battle itself, and the aftermath is described.

The British fleet bears down on the French line. Although initially disappointed that the main French fleet was not at Alexandria, Nelson knew from the presence of the transports that they must be nearby. The French initially reported just 11 British ships – Swiftsure and Alexander were still returning from their scouting operations at Alexandria, and so were 3 nautical miles away. At the sight of the French, Troubridge abandoned the vessel and made strenuous efforts to rejoin Nelson. Brueys gave orders to abandon the plan to remain at anchor and instead for his line to set sail. This convinced Brueys that rather than risk an evening battle in confined waters, the British were planning to wait for the following day. He rescinded his earlier order to sail. It also increased manoeuvrability and therefore reduced the risk of coming under raking fire. Brueys, now expecting to come under attack that night, ordered each of his ships to place springs on their anchor cables and prepare for action. The admiral ordered Hood to establish the safest course into the harbour. The British had no charts of the depth or shape of the bay, except a rough sketch map Swiftsure had obtained from a merchant captain, an inaccurate British atlas on Zealous, [75] and a year-old French map aboard Goliath. This caused a gap to open up between Zealous and Goliath and the rest of the fleet. British ships are in red; French ships are in blue. Ten minutes after the French opened fire Goliath, ignoring fire from the fort to starboard and from Guerrier to port, most of which was too high to trouble the ship, crossed the head of the French line. On his own initiative, Foley decided to exploit this tactical error and changed his angle of approach to sail through the gap. Hastily launching their boats, they returned to their vessels. The convention in naval warfare of the time was that ships of the line did not attack frigates when there were ships of equal size to engage, but in firing first French Captain Claude-Jean Martin had negated the rule. Saumarez waited until the frigate was at close range before replying. Miller steered his ship through the middle of the melee between the anchored British and French ships until he encountered the third French ship, Spartiate. Captain Henry Darby on Bellerophon missed his intended anchor near Franklin and instead found his ship underneath the main battery of the French flagship. By this time, Guerrier had been completely dismasted and heavily battered. Zealous by contrast was barely touched: It was not until With his ship immobile and badly damaged, the mortally wounded Captain Etienne Dalbarade struck his colours and a boarding party seized control. Goliath lost most of its rigging, suffered damage to all three masts and suffered more than 60 casualties. Its masts protruded from the water as survivors scrambled into boats and rowed for the shore. Certain that his wound was fatal, he cried out "I am killed, remember me to my wife", [] and called for his chaplain, Stephen Comyn. Nelson returns on deck after his wound is dressed. Defence and Orion attacked the fifth French ship, Peuple Souverain, from either side and the ship rapidly lost the fore and main masts. Peuple Souverain drifted south towards the flagship Orient, which mistakenly opened fire on the darkened vessel. Defence had lost its fore topmast and an improvised fireship that drifted through the battle narrowly missed Orion. The wrecked ship surrendered during the night. Franklin remained in combat, but Blanquet had suffered a severe head wound and Captain Gillet had been carried below unconscious with severe wounds. Shortly afterwards, a fire broke out on the quarterdeck after an arms locker exploded, which was eventually extinguished with difficulty by the crew. Captain Darby recognised that his position was untenable and ordered the anchor cables cut at The battered ship drifted away from the battle under continued fire from Tonnant as the foremast collapsed as well. Captain George Blagdon Westcott was among the dead, killed by French musket fire.

Chapter 6 : Nelson and Napoleon: The Long Haul to Trafalgar by Christopher Lee

Thus, if Nelson's bold plan of attack succeeded and the British could isolate parts of the Combined Fleet and outnumber it, then the British gunnery might administer a mortal blow to Napoleon's principal fleet.

Three years after, he went on an Arctic expedition under Commodore Constantine Phipps , and on his return in , he was made a lieutenant. Two years later he was promoted to the rank of post-captain. He was then sent to Nicaragua in command of a man-of-war. Through - he made another expedition into the North Sea , but returned to the West Indies in and placed in command of the HMS Boreas ; he was kept on this duty for five years, accomplishing much good from his vigorous attempts to prevent smuggling between the United States and the British colonies. He was, however, upheld by the British government. In , [1] Nelson was married to Frances Nisbet. It has been hinted that through jealousy undue influence was brought to bear upon the Admiralty to keep him from active service. At any rate he remained in obscurity until all officers were recalled into active service on the outbreak of the war with the French Republic in He participated in the Siege of Calvi and there had the misfortune to lose one of his eyes. While on a diplomatic mission to Naples in September he met Lady Emma Hamilton , who was destined to be so closely identified with an important part of his life. In he was promoted to be commodore and was given a new command. On 25 September , orders came ordering the abandonment of Corsica and the Mediterranean, and Nelson sorrowfully left the field. He was, however, shortly sent back to secure supplies which had been left on the island of Elba , and on returning passed through the whole Spanish fleet which had then joined the common cause of France. His next service was an attack on the town of Santa Cruz , in the island of Tenerife , in which he suffered the loss of his right arm. The wound refused to heal and he was obliged to return to England. The admiral sent him to watch the progress of the armament at Toulon. Notwithstanding his vigilance, the French fleet which conveyed Napoleon Bonaparte to Egypt escaped. Nelson set sail from Alexandria on 19 August and arrived at Naples on 22 September. Here began the pitiable period of his career, which left an indelible blot upon his otherwise unblemished name. He came under the influence of Emma, Lady Hamilton , wife of the English ambassador. His criminal relations with that lady, with whom he lived openly after the death of her husband, led to his ultimate separation from his devoted wife. Her influence can be recognized in many of his public acts during the two years he spent under her spell in Naples. During this time he seemed to fall into a lethargy which for the time being made him forget his duty to Great Britain, and at one time he practically acted in the capacity of admiral of the Neapolitan navy. He did, however, really get the Neapolitans to take up arms against the French, but their army was soon subdued and the Parthenopaeian Republic was established by Napoleon. The imminent danger of the French regaining the naval supremacy of the Mediterranean set Nelson to work with all his old time vigor. In the meantime Admiral Jervis had resigned his command and was succeeded by George Elphinstone, 1st Viscount Keith , with whom he was at variance from the very start. He determined to take Naples before the possible arrival of the French, and forthwith appeared before that city 24 June Here he found Commodore Caraccioli in command of a Neapolitan squadron which was in league with the Republicans who were in complete control. The Neapolitan admiral was not captured until 29 June, but Nelson immediately ordered a court-martial and condemned him to death, thus violating the capitulation concluded 23 June. Caraccioli was cruelly hanged. The whole miserable affair has been attributed to the influence of Lady Hamilton , who was also the favorite of the Queen of Naples. He obstinately remained at Naples when ordered to join Lord Keith, who expected to meet the French fleet. This affair had a great deal to do with his quarrels with Keith and also his subsequent orders recalling him to England. He arrived home 6 November , having traveled overland with the Hamiltons; soon after this the scandal of his life culminated in the final breach with his wife. This league by its policy of armed neutrality was really aiding the French Republic, and Nelson wished to strike first at Russia , but this policy was overridden, and Nelson contented himself with making a bold attack on the Danish fleet at Copenhagen. He completely annihilated the fleet and silenced the shore batteries on 2 April. During the battle his attention was called to the fact that his ship had been signaled to cease firing. Placing a telescope to his blind eye he remarked he could not see the signal. This

remark added to his popularity at home. For his success and gallantry upon this occasion he was created a Viscount, and his honors were made hereditary in his family, even in the female line. He then took command of the squadron for defense against the contemplated French invasion of England and unsuccessfully attacked the French flotilla off Boulogne on 15 August. When hostilities recommenced after the Treaty of Amiens, Lord Nelson was appointed to command the fleet in the Mediterranean, and for nearly two years was engaged in the blockade of Toulon. The British admiral pursued them all the way to the West Indies and back to Europe. The French admiral, however, learned that Napoleon was contemplating relieving him of his command because he would not fight. In despair, Villeneuve decided on desperate measures and the French and Spanish fleets sailed forth to meet the dreaded enemy, leaving the harbor on 19 October, the French commanded by Villeneuve, the Spaniards by Gravina. On 21 October they came up with the British squadron off Cape Trafalgar. Then occurred the Battle of Trafalgar, as desperate an engagement as ever took place upon the high seas. The engagement ended in a glorious victory for the British, but it cost them the greatest naval hero England ever produced. Nelson was mortally wounded early in the day and died during the afternoon.

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