

Naval Traditions and Etiquette

Bridging the gap between warships and cruise ships

With
(Rear Admiral Retired)
Simon Hardern





Helping You Become a (Salty) Sea Dog





Day One in the Royal Navy



BY APPOINTMENT
TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
LIVERY & MILITARY TAILORS



BY APPOINTMENT
TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH
NAVAL TAILORS & OUTFITTERS



BY APPOINTMENT
TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE OF WALES
TAILORS & OUTFITTERS

Royal Warrants held:

The late King George V 1911 to 1938

The late Prince of Wales 1922 to 1936

The late King George VI 1938 to 1955

CUSTOMS AND ETIQUETTE *of the* ROYAL NAVY

GIEVES & HAWKES
No. 1 SAVILE ROW
LONDON

Branches: London, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Portland, Bath,
Edinburgh, Chester, Winchester,
and other locations.



Why We Have Them



The first duty of every member of the Naval Service is to learn and conform to (social and ceremonial) customs and traditions

Custom is an act or ceremony that stems from tradition and is enforced as unwritten law

Courtesy among naval professionals is vital to maintain discipline

Traditions - the passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation

Etiquette - the process of socialisation and learning a form of corporate culture by the British



The only traditions of the Royal Navy are rum, sodomy and the lash



Camaraderie - The Heart of Naval Life



Mutual Support and Friendship

Supports and bonds cemented in service at sea



Ensuring Operational Effectiveness

Unity and trust are vital to mission success



Foundation for Morale

Critical to maintaining high spirits



A ship is more than the crew, as the crew is more than the man

Rudyard Kipling



He Clearly Never Sailed on a Silversea Cruise!



A ship is worse than a jail. In a jail, there is more air, better food and commonly better company

Samuel Johnson





They Are Shared Traditions



The Royal Navy is often referred to as the 'Mother of Navies.' Because Britain was the world's dominant maritime power for centuries, its customs, language and etiquette became the blueprint for naval forces globally. The nations that share these traditions most closely are members of the Commonwealth, though many other modern navies, like the USN as well as Japanese Maritime Defence Force, use the practices originally developed by the British

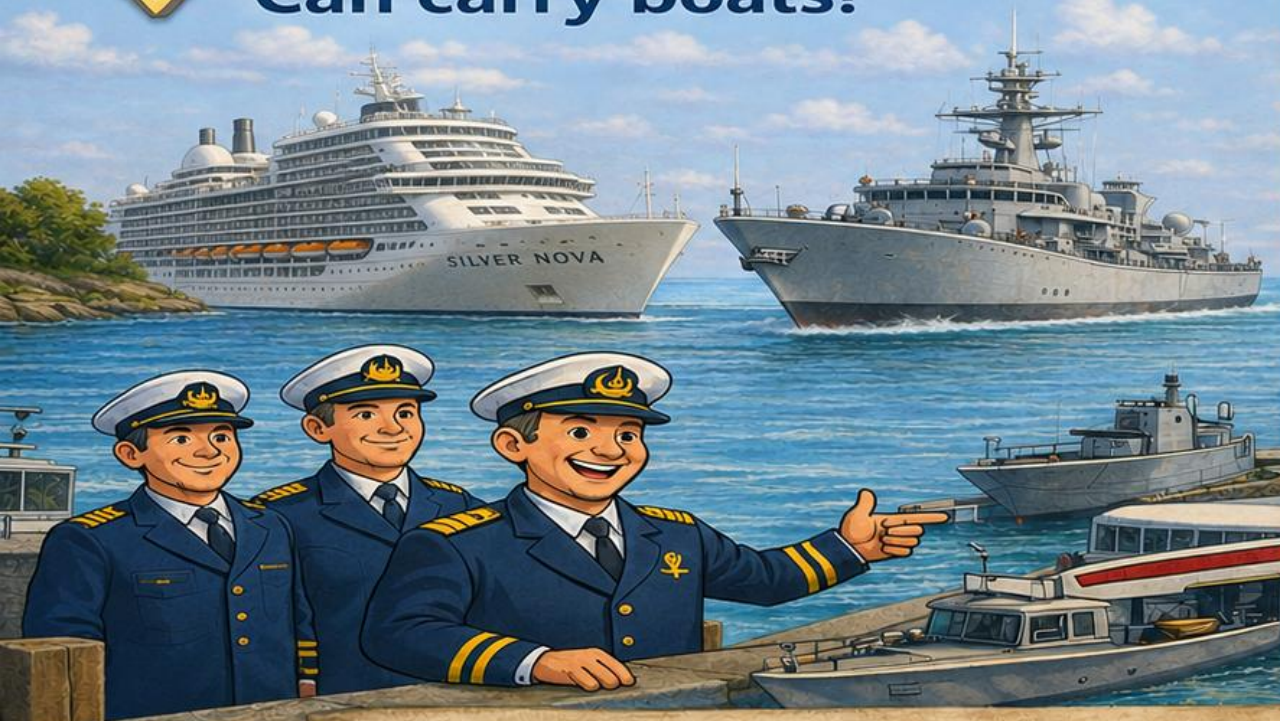


Is Silver Nova Ship or Boat?



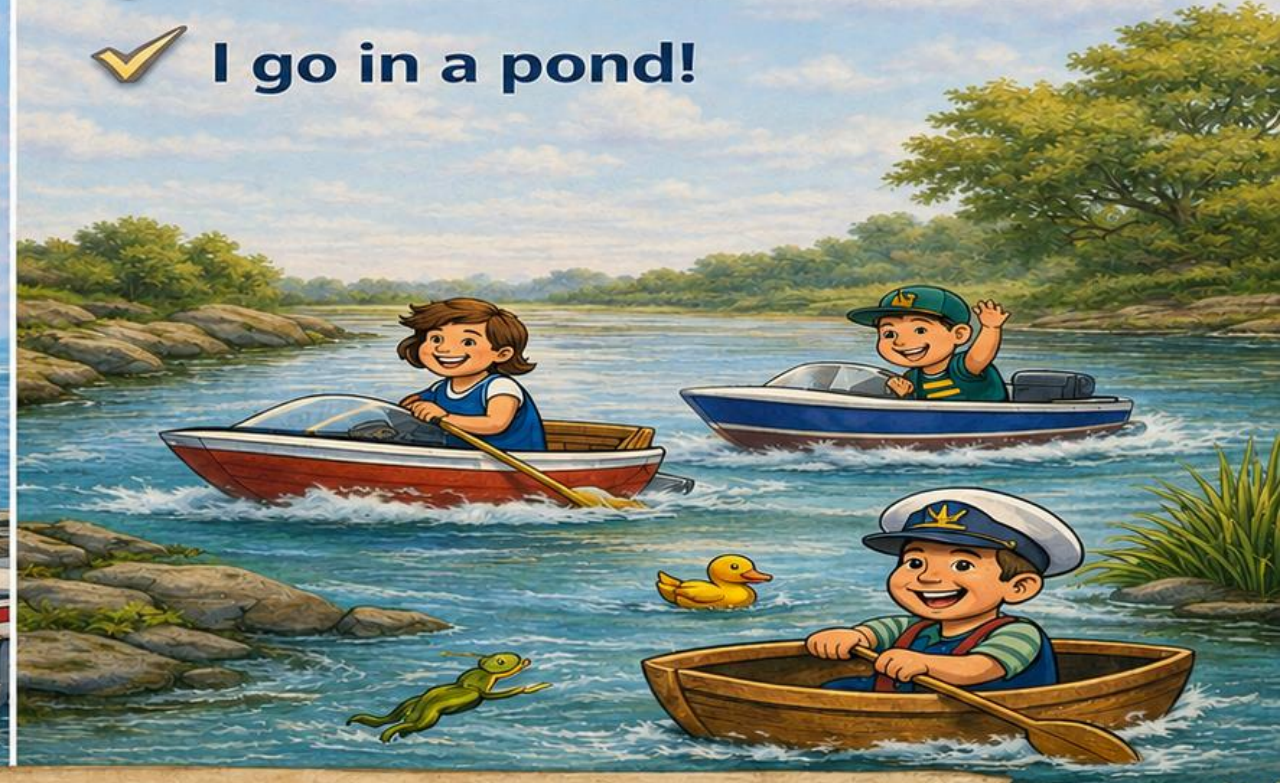
It's a ship if...

- ✓ It's big
- ✓ Has a crew
- ✓ Can carry boats!



It's a boat if...

- ✓ It's small
- ✓ You can drive it Yourself!
- ✓ I go in a pond!



A ship can carry a boat, but a boat can't carry a ship!



However ...there are Exceptions



SUBMARINES
are called **BOATS!**





Why is a Ship a She/Her?



Linguistic Roots

The Latin word for ship is navis, which is a feminine noun. French (la nef) and Italian (la nave) also use feminine articles. Then carried the feminine she into British naval culture



The Protective Mother

Sailors viewed the ship as a protective, motherly entity. Just as a mother carries a child, a ship carries its crew within its 'womb' (the hull) that provides life-sustaining shelter against a hostile environment



A Sailor's Devotion

A sailor was said to be married to the sea, and his ship was his first love. Naming a ship after a mother, wife, or daughter was a way to keep a piece of home with them



... and the Exceptions



The Bismark

During WWII, Captain Ernst Lindemann of the German battleship Bismarck famously insisted that the ship be referred to as he (er), arguing that such a powerful machine was far too formidable to be feminine



The Russian Navy

In the Russian language, the word for ship is masculine, so Russian sailors often refer to their vessels as 'he'



Starboard and Port



Starboard - Before ships had rudders attached to the centre of the stern, they were steered with a large steering oar (a 'steer-board'). Since most sailors were right-handed, this oar was placed over the right side of the ship. The Old English word for steer was stéor and bord meant the side of a boat. Over time, stéorbord evolved into the modern word Starboard

Port - Because the steering oar was on the right side, sailors couldn't dock with that side against the quay without risking damage to the oar. Consequently, they always docked with the left side facing the port or wharf. Originally, the left side was called Larboard (from ladebord, meaning 'loading side'). However, 'Larboard' and 'Starboard' sounded too similar in heavy winds. In 1844, the Royal Navy officially ordered that the term Port be used to ensure clarity



Sailors Use a Whole Different Language



Sailors have a rich volume of slang ... some that you could use (or you could adopt!) on the cruise ship include ...

Scran: Food

Afters: Pudding

Eating irons: Cutlery

Scratcher: Bed

Char: A word for tea

Do the honours: Pour the wine

Dhobey/dhobi/dhoby: Washing clothes

Cackle: Excessive and loud talk

Diddly-squat: Nothing

Dib-Dobs/Ickies: Foreign currency of any nation

Heads: Bathroom

Bumph: Description of never-ending stream of paperwork

Top banana: The best



And You Can Forget Using Your (Real) Name!



F			U		
Fagin	Patsy	from the title of an Irish folk song "Hello Patsy Fagin" early 20 th C – Admiral Sir "Jacky" Fisher responsible for major reforms in the RN			
Fisher	Jacky				
Flower	Flossie		V		
Ford	Florrie	Australian hall singer who sang "Down at the Bush" in 1903	Vaughan	Guy	
Francis	Connie	1950s female pop singer	W		
Fraser/Frasier	Joe	Joe Frasier – 1970s heavyweight boxing champion	Walker	Hooky	circa 1800: Hookey Walker is probably derived from Mr. John Walker, an outdoor clerk of Messrs. Longman Clementini & Co, formerly of Cheapside and noted for his hook nose, disliked because in order to keep his workmen up to their work he frequently invented unfavourable reports in order to keep himself in office
Freeman	Harry		Walker	Whisky	after Johnny Walker whisky
			Wallace	Wholly	
G			Wa	Sharkey	after the nickname of John Ward (Yusuf Rais) (c. 1553 - 1622) an English sea captain turned Barbary Corsair, Ward was based in Tunis, where he died of plague. Precise origin of nickname sharkey unknown.
Gale/Gail	Windy	play on words – in the sense of storms	Wardle	Sharkey	
Gay	Betsy		Warner	Plum	after Sir Pelham (<i>Plum</i>) Warner – famous England test cricketer at beginng of 20 th century
Gilbert	Tosh		Warren	Bunny	<i>Bunny</i> rabbits live in warrens
Gordon	Flash	1930s American comic strip hero – has reappeared in numerous spin-off cinema serials and films	Waters	Stormy	play on words – rough seas
Graves	Digger	a play on grave <i>digger</i> , digging graves	Watson	Soapy	a brand of <i>soap</i> issued to the Fleet was reputed to have been produced by a company called "Watsons"
Gray	Dolly	"Goodbye <i>Dolly Gray</i> " title of famous marching song from both the Boer War and WW1	Web(b)	Spider	self evident – spiders make webs
Green	Jimmy		Welch	Racquel	1960s screen goddess
Gunn	Ben	character from the novel "Treasure Island" by Robert Louis Stevenson	Wellington	Duke	Duke of Wellington, victor of Battle of Waterloo 1815
H			Wellington	Boots	item of footwear named after Duke of Wellington
Hall	Nobby	see related explanation for Nobby Clark, the nobility live in halls	Wells	Bomber	after <i>Bomber</i> Bill Wells, a former boxer who used to hit the Rank gong on Cinema screens
Hare	Dusty		Wells	Kitty	
Hart	Ticker	play on someone's heart beating or " <i>ticking</i> "	West	Banjo	
Harris	Bomber	WW2 – Head of <i>Bomber</i> Command, Air Chief Sir Arthur Harris	West	Fred	builder from Gloucester – 1980s notorious mass murderer
Harris	Chats		Weston	Aggie	after the former Royal Sailors Rest in Devonport, always known as "Aggie Weston's" after its founder Dame Agnes
Harris	Chopper	1970s – Chelsea fullback renowned for <i>chopping</i>			
Harris	Wiggy				
Henderson	Granny				
Hewitt	Nosh				
Hill	Bunker	Battle of <i>Bunker</i> Hill 1775, American War of Independence			
Hill	Pusser				
Hinds	Cosher				
Holland	Dutchy	play on words – the <i>Dutch</i> coming from Holland			
Honeybun	Gus	1970s/80s West Country ITV children's character			

'All' Barber

'Dinger' Bell

'Mini' Cooper



The Dolphin Code - When Less Means More



Submariners communicate playfully with a code of 80 separate numbers - says what you are thinking when operationally you might need to be economical with words!

9. Your exercise instructions are simple. Simply awful.

26.
A. Thank you for your valuable assistance.
B. Had assistance been rendered, I would have been thankful.
C. No, thank you, I do not require assistance.
D. Please do not render assistance, I need your help like a hole in the head.

22. Submarines never cheat and rarely lie.
23. It's a pity that in wartime we'd be on the same side.
24. Your approach to the problem was impossible but tactically sound.

77. This port is:
A. Fantastic. Better not send surface ships here.
B. Outstanding. Can we come again?
C. Reasonable.
D. Not the sort of place Submariners should visit.
E. Hostile.
F. Only good for storm avoidance.

78. Wish you were here.
79. Bet you wish you were here.
80. Glad you're not here.

32. If you're so good why aren't you in submarines?
33. Submariners do it deeper.
34. Submariners think deeper.
35. Deep down you know it makes sense.
36. Submariners are super.
37. Submariners have bigger balls.

44. You have the uncanny ability to complicate a very simple exercise.
45. Intelligence is a God-given gift. Doorknobs are man-made. Mental midgets only have God's love. Is my point clear?

Chapter and Verse - For The Skimmers



Royal Navy



The Royal Navy Tradition of Biblical Quotation Signalling

A time-honoured naval custom in which officers use references to the Bible - Book, Chapter and Verse - to convey instructions, remarks or rebukes

The recipient looks up the passage and understands the message

Compact - Witty - Unmistakable



Situation	Bible Reference	Meaning / Message
 Ship collided with the jetty while docking	Proverbs 22:28	'Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set'
 Ship failed to keep proper station	Psalms 77:19	'Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known'
 Another warning about station keeping	Proverbs 4:26	'Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established'
 Reprimand for disobeying instructions	Job 31:11	'For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges
 A more measured rebuke - follow instructions	Proverbs 8:33	'Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not
 Request for a report or full account	Revelation 1:19	'Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter'



How it Works

The officer sends a signal with the Book, Chapter and Verse
The recipient looks it up in the Bible (or Chapter & Verse handbook) and understands the meaning - often a gentle nudge, sometimes a sharp rebuke, always unforgettable



Example Signal

Prov 22:28

(Proverbs 22, Verse 28)
Sent by flag hoist, lamp flash or visual signalling



Proverbs 22:28)
'Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.'

Used by the Royal Navy and Commonwealth Navies throughout the 20th century



A uniquely naval language rooted in faith, humour and professionalism





Common (English) Terminology from Days of Old

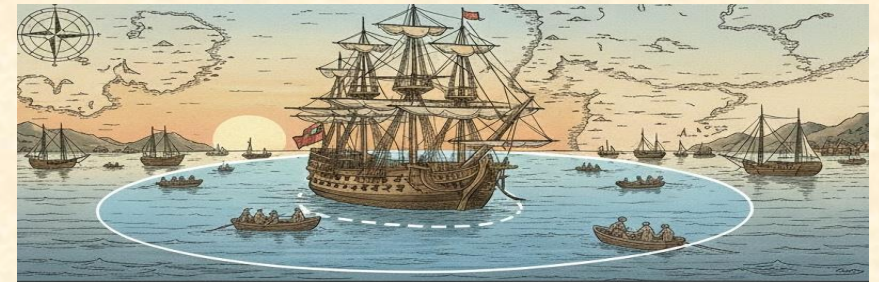


Dressing Down - the expression for a severe scolding or reprimand came into use in the 1660s. On a ship, dressing down means to dress or apply a preservative to the rigging. This unpleasant and dangerous job may have been assigned as punishment for a wayward sailor

Dummy Run - this term for a practice comes from torpedo training when runs were made with torpedoes fitted with a dummy warhead

Give them a Wide Berth - the term for avoiding someone or something comes from the practice of giving anchored ships in harbour a wide berth to avoid collision

Piping Hot - this expression had its origins in the way food was collected from the ship's galley for the mess after a 'pipe' was sounded. The sooner it was collected after the 'pipe' the hotter it was





And now ... an Audience Test!





The Answers



Over the Barrel - means a person is placed in a predicament from which there is no escape. The term comes from the practice of tying a sailor who was to be flogged over the barrel of a cannon



Let the Cat Out of the Bag - in the Royal Navy, the punishment prescribed for the most serious crimes was flogging. This was administered by the Bosun's Mate using a whip called a 'cat of nine tails.' The cat was in kept in a leather bag and was considered bad news if indeed the 'cat was let out of the bag'



Square Meal - a substantial meal this expression comes from the time when sailors ate their food off square wooden plates with a raised edge called a fiddle. This design was to stop food falling off the plate and to set a limit on the amount of food taken



Apt for Any Cruise - Three Sheets to the Wind!



It's classic piece of nautical slang used to describe someone who is staggeringly drunk. Its origin is based on the physics of sailing and how a ship behaves when it loses control of its rigging. A sheet is not the sail, but the rope used to control the tension and angle of a sail. Because most small-to-medium vessels had three primary sails (the main, the jib and the mizzen) - the scale is:

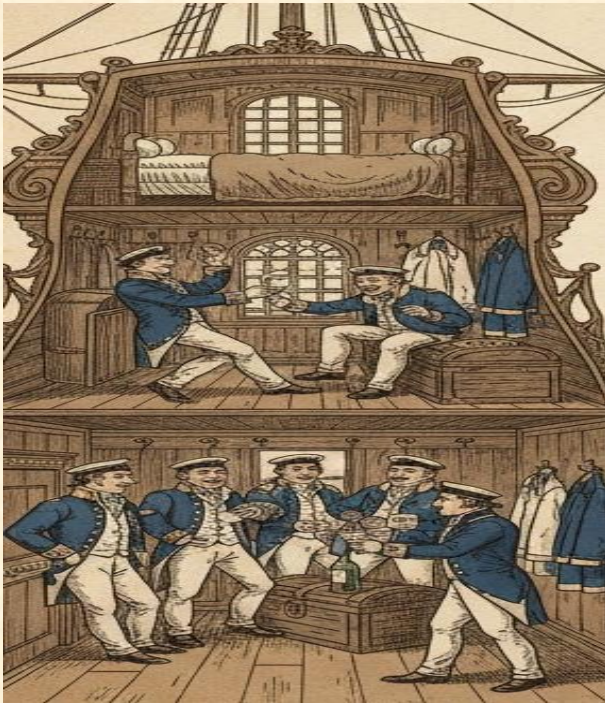
One sheet in the wind - **slightly tipsy**

Two sheets in the wind - **clearly drunk and unsteady**

Three sheets to the wind - **completely out of control, staggering and unable to maintain a straight line**



Origins - Parts of Ship Names



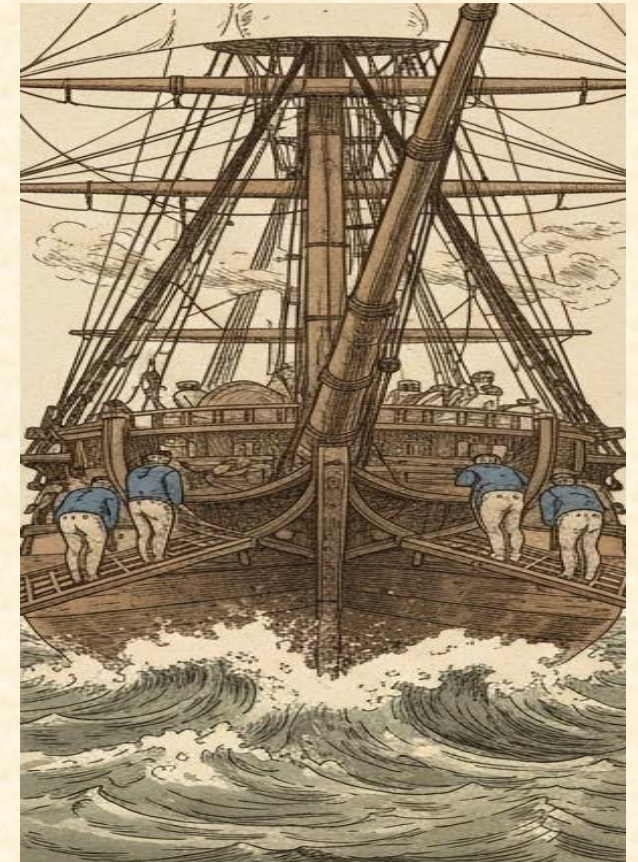
Wardroom

In the early 1700s, large warships had a compartment known as the Wardrobe. From 1750 onwards ships grew and so did the compartment - it was close to the Officer's sleeping quarters ... so morphed into the Wardroom



Galley

By the 1700s, as large sailing ships became the norm, the dedicated cooking area was moved below deck for safety and stability. Because the workspace was long, narrow, and cramped - much like the interior of those old oared galley ships - sailors began calling the kitchen the Galley



Heads

Sailors relieved themselves by going to the heed/bow of ship; the prevailing wind and wave action scouring action was deemed to make this the best location

And ... The Poop Deck ... is not the 'poop' deck!

From the Latin 'Puppis' meaning stern

Raised deck at the stern with Captain's Cabin below offering a clear vantage point

'Pooped' by a wave means being swamped





A Tradition Formed in the Atlantic



Navigation in the Atlantic - The Noon Sight - It established the nautical day running from noon to noon rather than midnight to midnight, which is why a ship's log entry runs noon to noon and why this still technically persists in naval record-keeping



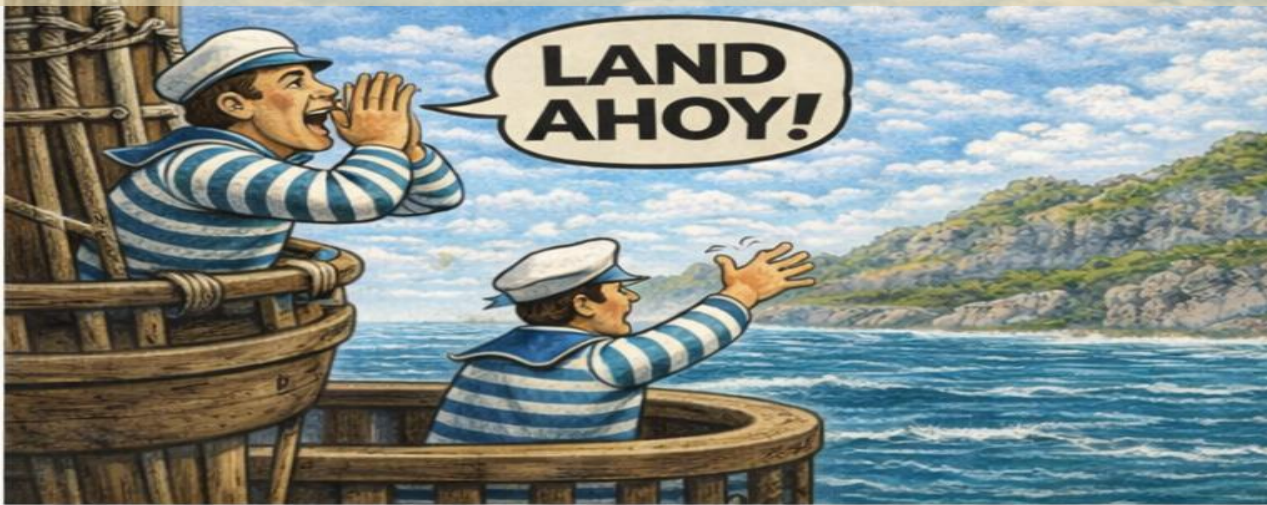
The Origins of Land Ahoy!



Age of Sail (16th-19th Centuries). The word 'hoy!' (used to hail a ship) likely comes from the Middle English 'hoy!' or the Dutch 'hoi'



A lookout's cry to alert crew and captain that land was visible



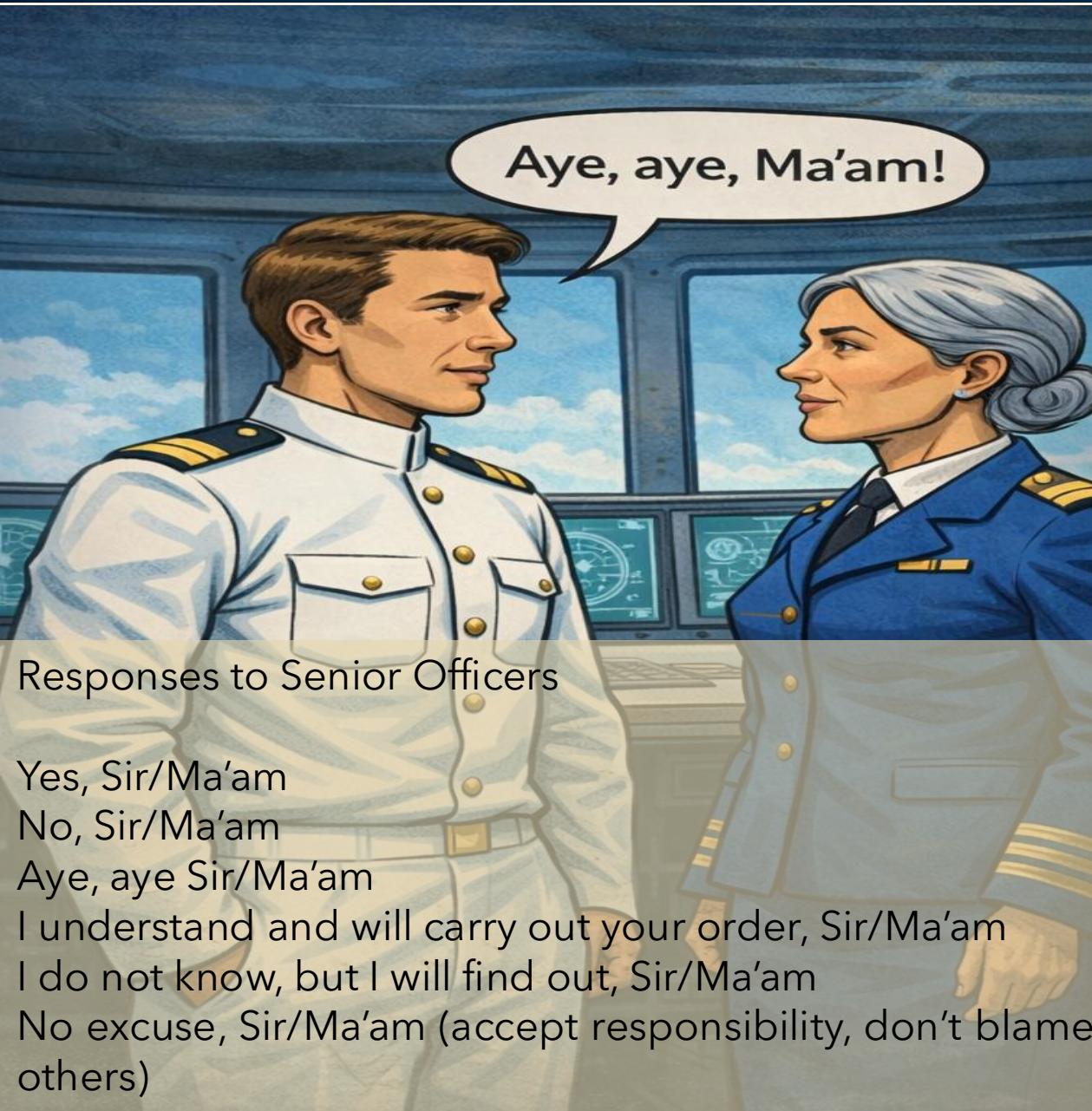
A pivotal and often emotional moment that could last months



Alexander Graham Bell suggested people answer a call with 'Ahoy!' Thomas Edison preferred 'Hello!'



Forms of Address - Always Show Respect



Responses to Senior Officers

Yes, Sir/Ma'am

No, Sir/Ma'am

Aye, aye Sir/Ma'am

I understand and will carry out your order, Sir/Ma'am

I do not know, but I will find out, Sir/Ma'am

No excuse, Sir/Ma'am (accept responsibility, don't blame others)



Never call a Commanding Officer/Master a Skipper - a warship is not a fishing vessel!



The Salute



From the Days of Chivalry

Knights raised visors to friends for identification



When in Doubt SALUTE!

Part of Everyday Life

The salute is a time-honoured expression of mutual respect!





Loneliness of Command



Summary - A psychological and social phenomenon where a leader must remain emotionally and socially detached from their subordinates to maintain authority and make impartial, often life-or-death, decisions

The Social Barrier - To maintain discipline, a Commanding Officer should not be 'one of the men/women'

The Weight of Finality - In the middle of the ocean, the Commanding Officer is the ultimate authority - literally the judge, jury and, occasionally, the executioner

Intellectual Isolation - The Captain often possesses information the crew does not - strategic objectives, political secrets, or the true direness of a situation





Piping





Talking of Pipes - Imagine Being Woken by Call the Hands





Whistling into the Wind



The Myth



You Must Never Whistle on a Vessel

The Reason



Whistling Is Said To Whistle Up a Storm

The Exception



The Ship's Cook Can Whistle
Because if he is whistling,
it means he isn't eating the rations





Wardroom versus Sailors Etiquette



Wardroom

- Fine china and silver service
- Stiff rules of conversation
- Polite, scripted meals
- Every detail by the book



Sailors' Mess

- Tin mugs and pewter plates
- Loud, boisterous, and rude
- Meals = grub and rum
- Every detail off the cuff

After centuries of strict wardroom etiquette, the Royal Navy discovered something remarkable: Officers behave exactly like everyone else... just slightly more politely and they just use better wine glasses



Random Unwritten Wardroom Rules



No Grey Shoes!



No Tomato Sauce!



No Jeans!



No Trendy Clothes!





Don't Fall Asleep in the Wardroom





Royal Navy Traditional Toasts!



Monday



Our Ships at Sea - Monday's toast pays tribute to the vessels that are the backbone of naval operations. It acknowledges their global presence and crucial role in maritime defence

Tuesday



Our People - This day honours the service members, a reflection of the evolution from 'Our men' to embrace all personnel. It highlights the human strength of the fleet

Wednesday



Ourselves - A moment for self-reflection, emphasising the importance of self-reliance. The toast humorously suggests looking out for oneself, as external support can be scarce



Royal Navy Traditional Toasts!



Thursday



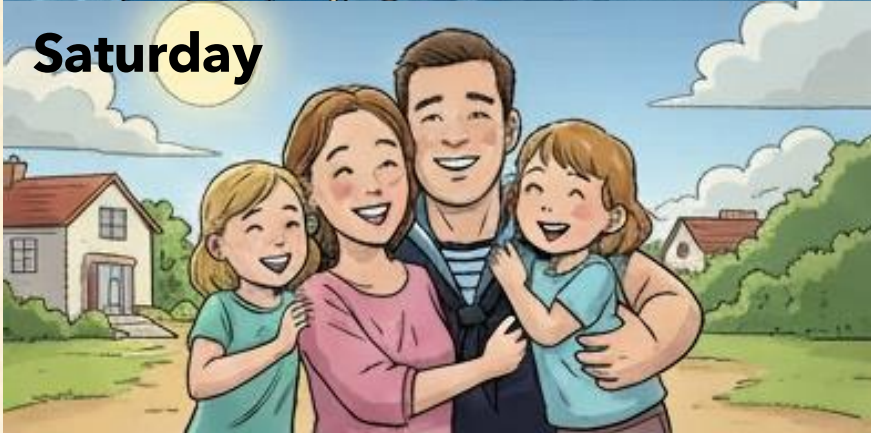
A Bloody War and Quick Promotion - This toast historically acknowledged the realities of service, where conflict or hardship could lead to career advancement. It speaks to the inherent risks and ambitions within military life

Friday



A Willing Soul and Sea Room - Celebrating the spirit of adventure and the freedom of navigation. It signifies readiness for challenges and the unhindered ability to traverse the seas

Saturday



Our Families - This toast honours the families, a shift from the historical 'Our wives and sweethearts, may they never meet!' It (now) recognises the vital support system of those serving



Royal Navy Traditional Toasts!



Absent Friends - Sunday is dedicated to remembering and cherishing absent friends, including those on distant deployments. It reinforces bonds of fellowship and shared experience across the service



The Loyal Toast



Clinking Glasses



Rum and the Navy!



After Britain captured Jamaica in 1655, rum became far more available than beer (sailors had previously been issued beer or brandy). Caribbean sugar plantations produced vast quantities of rum, which proved easier to store aboard ship in the tropics

Rum Ration: Until 1970, each day at midday every sailor was given just short of three shots of overproof rum. Known as a 'tot', this tradition was abolished as it was deemed unsafe for sailors to use heavy machinery after their tot. Most navies are dry!



Splicing the Mainbrace: If a crew hears this order, they're issued with an alcoholic drink. It came to symbolise the celebration that followed the successful completion of one of the most difficult repairs on a sailing ship. Only the King or the Admiralty Board can issue the order





Royal Navy Traditional Games



Uckers

An intense, highly competitive version of Ludo played specifically in the (Royal) Navy. It involves complex rules about 'blocking' opponents and is often played with great theatre and shouting



Sling the Monkey

A more boisterous game where one sailor (the monkey) is suspended in a rope sling. Other sailors try to strike him with knotted handkerchiefs while he tries to tag them. If he tags someone, they take his place



The History of Naval Tattoos



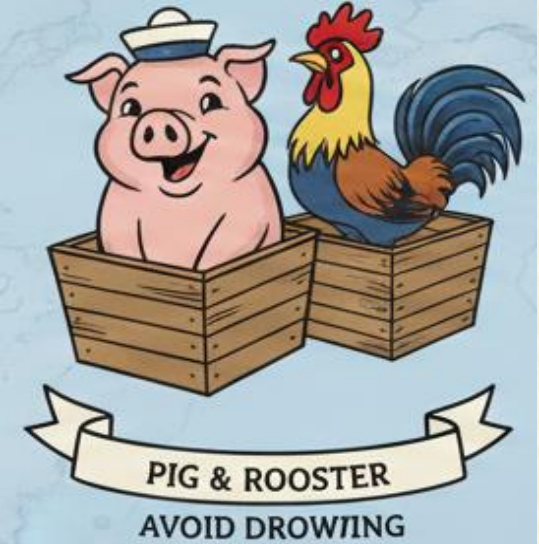
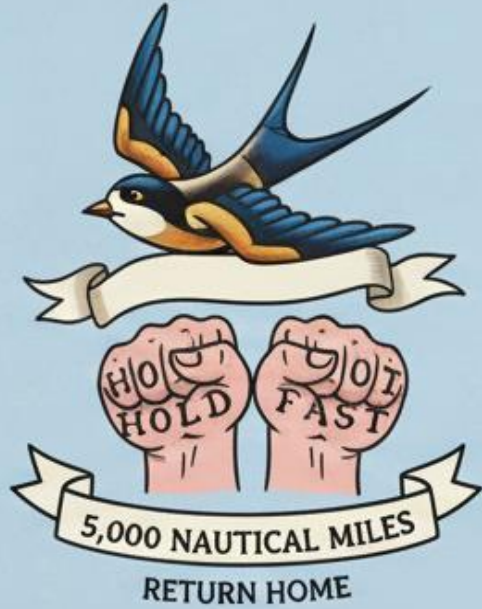
Origins - The history of naval tattoos is a blend of practical necessity, deep-seated superstition and the simple human desire for storytelling. While tattoos existed in various cultures for millennia, the modern Western tradition was essentially born at sea in the 18th century

The Etymology - Capt James Cook's crew in the 1760s observed the Polynesian art of tatau (meaning 'to strike' or 'mark'). They brought the word back to England, where it became tattoo

The Souvenir - Sailors, particularly those in the Royal Navy, began getting tattooed as a permanent souvenir of their travels. Because space on a warship was limited, a tattoo was the ultimate portable memento. Think physical photo!



The Language of the Sea





Crossing the Line (Equator)



An Ancient Maritime Custom

This long-standing (Royal) Navy tradition occurs when a ship crosses the Earth's equator

Honouring King Neptune

Ships crossing the equator traditionally pay respects to King Neptune, the Lord of the Seas

Sailors' Trials and Tribulations

The ceremony includes tests of 'handling rough seas' through initiation rituals for sailors

From Pollywog to Shellback

Sailors undergo a transformation, moving from 'Pollywog' status to becoming a 'Shellback'

Initiation Rituals Unveiled:

Expect face painting, dunkings and strange snacks as part of the 'rough seas' testing





Royal Navy Style





Dipping the Ensign



A Sailor's Salute

Like a hat-tip at sea - lower your national flag to salute a passing RN Warship

Tradition & Etiquette

Only warships of the state do not initiate - they return the salute to civilian craft

Breaches of Protocol

Failing to return the dip is a breach of naval etiquette - and won't go unnoticed by the other vessel





Burials at Sea and Scattering of Ashes!



Honouring the Deceased at Sea - Given the long ocean passage across the Atlantic, burials at sea provide a dignified way to honour the deceased in a maritime setting, respecting their final wishes

Ceremonial and Respectful Process - The process involves formal ceremonies ensuring respect and solemnity during the scattering of ashes or burial





Used To Be No Moustaches!



A Clean Slate at Sea

The Royal Navy traditionally ordered sailors to be clean-shaven

Exceptions to the Rule

Royal Marines and pilots of the Royal Air Force were the historic 'exceptions to the rule'

The 'No Moustache' Rule

Until recently, moustaches were banned in the Royal Navy - though beards were permitted

Growing Acceptance

Today, many sailors sport 'regulation staches', echoing the iconic look of days gone by

I am outraged by this!





Christmas Lunch



A Festive Meal at Sea

A timeless tradition where sailors gather to celebrate the holiday season together

Paper Hats & Crackers

Sailors don colourful paper crowns, pull Christmas crackers, and share laughs over silly jokes and trinkets

Feasting in the Mess

The galley serves up a full Christmas spread, complete roast turkey, stuffing, and flaming pudding

Duty One, Duty Still

Christmas spirit abounds, but the crew remains vigilant and ready even amid the merriment

Senior Ranks Serve All

Officers put on aprons and serve the crew their festive meal





Dogs and Cats at Sea

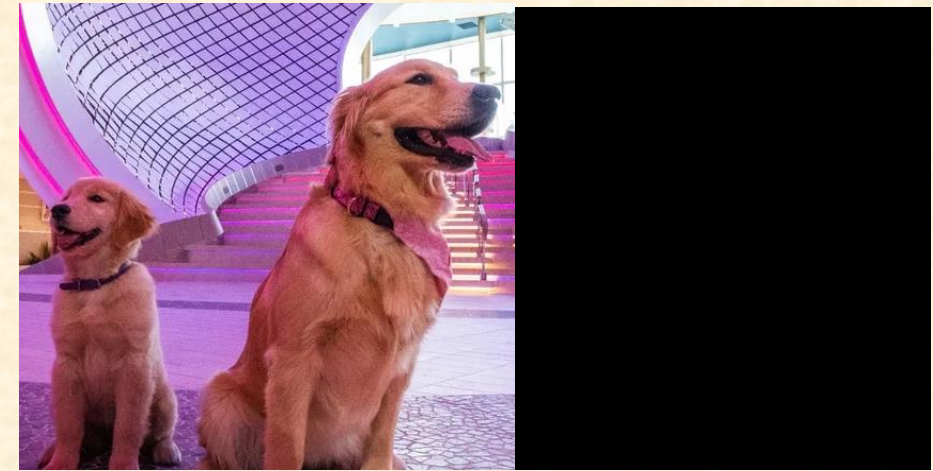


Modern Policy

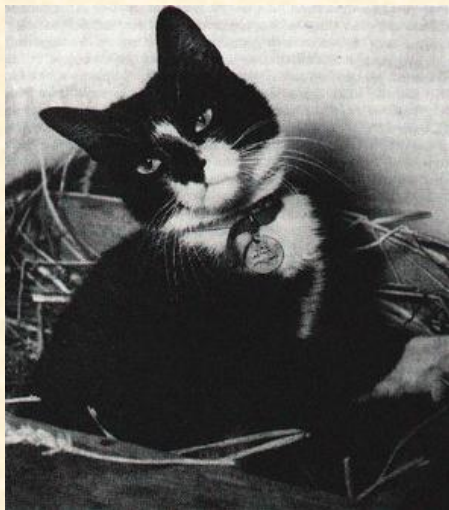
Modern Policy, of course, prohibits animals onboard ships except military dogs for temporary duties (explosive sniffers) ☹️

Historically However ...

Up until mid 20th century, it was commonplace to have dogs, cats and parrots 😊



Royal Caribbean now has **Rover (ICON)** and **Sailor (STAR)** and will have **Skipper (LEDGEND)**



Able Seaman Simon

In 1949 received the PDSA's Dickin Medal after surviving injuries from an artillery shell, raising morale and killing off a rat infestation during his service during the HMS AMETHYST incident on the Yangtze River



Simon



Jenny the Parrot



USS Gerald R Ford



Sailors Pet Sage - a dog assigned to the USS Gerald R. Ford through Mutts with a Mission



HMS LANCASTER



Jenny the Parrot - A True Royal Navy Legend



Warning - This dit will include some swearing



Warning - This Dit Will Include Some Swearing





Never Steer Course 232 Degrees



S. 232. (Established—January, 1940.)
 10M-243 (8356) (Revised—January, 1941.)
 H.Q. 815-9-232

REPORT OF COLLISION OR GROUNDING

(King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions, Articles 1167 and 1170.)

H.M.C.S. Date 194.....

ATTENTION IS CALLED TO THE NECESSITY FOR MAKING A FIRST REPORT BY TELEGRAM OF COLLISIONS OR SERIOUS GROUNDINGS.

If it is desirable to answer any question at greater length than the space provided in the form permits, the answer (numbered) should be written on a separate sheet and attached hereto.

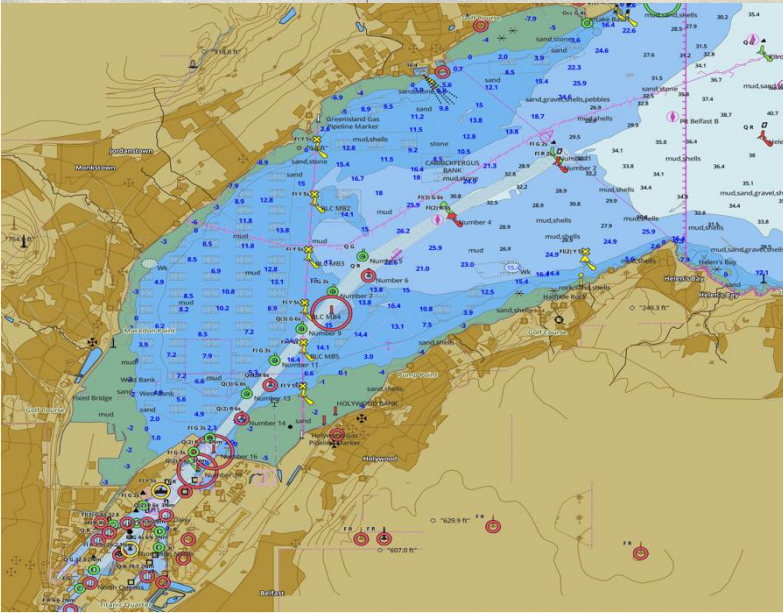
If all the particulars required hereunder cannot be furnished promptly, the report should not be delayed, any information that has been omitted being sent in as soon as possible afterwards.

(Any question not applicable to the report should be crossed out.)

SECTION I (Collision or Grounding)

1. Date, time, and place/position of collision/
 grounding. 194..... (zone.....)
 (Strike out words inapplicable.) Lat.....°.....' Long.....°.....', or bearing
 and distance.....

2. Direction and force of the wind.....



HMS TRUCULENT collided with the Swedish tanker Divina in the Thames Estuary on the evening of 12 January 1950 steering 232



The Curious Case of Emergency Engine Orders



Phase 1: The Order
(Control Room)



- Full Ahead ordered from slow speed

- Full Astern/Emergency Astern

- Crash-stop orders

- Sudden heavy load on engines and gears

Phase 2: Sudden Heavy Load
(Engine Room)



Tradition dictates the Captain rewards the Marine Engineers with a magnum of champagne if ever one of these Emergency Orders is made



Phase 3: The Reversal & Crash-stop
(Control Room)





Handing Over a Deployment





Handing Over a Command





Thank You

