



Jackspeak - "Micky Duck" = A cartoon (as in to watch)

Gen Dit

**Stowmarket RNA
Newsletter**



October 2025

ISSUE No 111

Ships Office

Hello Shipmates and Friends,

We're back with our usual six pages of dits and updates this month, though it's been a near miss on a few fronts. But we've made it, and hopefully there's enough here to get you through stand easy.

October is a significant month for branches across the country, and indeed the Navy as a whole, as we mark the 220th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar and the loss of Vice Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson. Widely considered one of the greatest naval commanders in history, his legacy is still felt today.

In this edition, you'll find a bit of imagination in the form of how Gen Dit might have looked in 1805, reporting on the events of Trafalgar. When you consider that today we can send messages instantly to the other side of the world, it's worth remembering that although the battle took place on 21st October, it wasn't until 4th November that news reached our shores - and a further 36 hours before it reached the ears of the Admiralty.

Some of us will recall the days of waiting for a mail drop when we were away from home. Sometimes it brought not-so-good news, but more often it was the kind of news that put a smile on your face and made you reach for your pen to send a reply - which, of course, had to wait for the next mail drop to get back home. And as for the submariners - well, they'd go a whole patrol without the luxury of receiving or sending any letters.

That's why I can't help but smile when I see someone (mainly my kids, and nowadays, their kids) getting flustered because they've lost their phone signal or can't access a website. It makes me want to say, "Back in my day, we'd go weeks without hearing a thing from home, you just had to get on with it! No instant updates - just a good old-fashioned wait for the next mail drop. We survived just fine - and with a lot more patience!"

Bloody hell - I sound like Uncle Albert! I'll let you get on with reading this month's mail drop.

The Editor



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Stowmarket RNA Branch

Website

<https://rumoldboys.wixsite.com/mysite>

and we are also on Facebook

Even the ship's cat reads about it here first

A Great Victory but Nelson is Dead

*By our reporter onboard HMS Victory -
Writer 'Gracie' Fields*



Cape Trafalgar, October 1805 — Whilst the nation can rejoice in a famous victory, we mourn the loss of our maritime hero, Lord Nelson, shot by a French marksman whilst pacing the quarter-deck in full No1's, not afraid that the enemy would see him. They did.

Before battle, Nelson had made his famous signal, "England expects that every man will do his duty."

As Nelson's life ebbed away below deck, much of the fighting had become hand-to-hand before the battle was won, with Captain Hardy reporting, "we have taken 14 or 15" (enemy ships without the loss of a single British vessel).

Having uttered his last words to Hardy, "Thank God, I have done my duty", plans were made of news of victory to be taken to England, along with the body of Nelson preserved in brandy, aboard HMS Pickle.

With victory won, it is HMS Pickle that now holds every sailor's attention as it heads for home.

As one sailor said, "The Pickle may be pint-sized, but she has the biggest news in the world — and a national hero below deck."

Small Ship, Big News

By AB 'Dutchy' Mulholland onboard HMS Pickle

Commanded by Lieutenant John Richards Lapenotière, a man whose name is as long as the journey he undertook, HMS Pickle was chosen for the perilous task of racing back to England to deliver the news because of her speed. (And not because the crew wanted to get to a pub before the rest of the fleet).

In a scene with equal parts triumph and tragedy, His Majesty's schooner HMS Pickle limped heroically into port yesterday morning, soaked in saltwater, carrying victory in her sails — and Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson in a barrel of brandy.



The dashing, though dubiously named vessel, arrived bearing the official dispatches of the Battle of Trafalgar, confirming what every tavern rumour and loud man with a telescope had

already half-guessed: the French and Spanish fleets have been thoroughly thrashed, the Royal Navy reigns supreme, and Admiral Nelson is unfortunately no longer among the breathing.

A Pickle of a Mission

Eyewitnesses report that upon making landfall, Lapenotière staggered ashore, with an appropriately grim flourish, and requested a stiff drink and a dhoby, "in that order."

He then undertook a 271-mile dash from Falmouth to London, in a little over 36 hours, stopping 21 times to change horses.

Arriving in London, he handed over the dispatches and uttered to the First Secretary of the Admiralty, "Sir, we have gained a great victory but have lost Lord Nelson."

Nelson's Prayer

Written by him immediately before the battle.

*May the great God whom I worship,
grant to my country and for the
benefit of Europe in general, a great
and glorious victory, and may no
misconduct in anyone tarnish it, and
may humanity after victory be the
predominant feature in the British
fleet.*

*For myself individually, I commit my
life to Him that made me, and may his
blessing alight on my endeavours for
serving my country faithfully.*

*To Him I resign myself and the just
cause which is entrusted to me to
defend.*

Amen. Amen. Amen

Ships Noticeboard

IMPORTANT NOTICE - October Branch Meeting

Shipmates, please note our October branch meeting will be held on **Wednesday 29th October** and not Tuesday 21st as originally planned. The meeting will be at 7.30pm (1930 for the watchkeepers).

Biennial Parade

On Sunday, September 14th, shipmates Katrine, Andy, Tony, Archie, Gary, Nick, and Chivs joined 400 sailors, marines, and fellow shipmates from across the UK and Ireland for the naval association's biennial parade at The Cenotaph.

The Service was led by the Deputy Chaplain of the Fleet, with Rear Admiral Anthony Rimmington as the Reviewing Officer. Thankfully, the dreaded rain forecasts didn't materialise, and in front of an enthusiastic crowd of onlookers and tourists, Jack and Jenny were in fine form, looking sharp in their best rig and even managing to bumble in perfect unison! As music from The Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Plymouth drifted down Whitehall and Standards - ours included - fluttered in the breeze, there was no doubt about it: the Navy was in town.

With plenty of hipflasks making the rounds for a pre-parade 'sippers', it's safe to say there was a noticeable whiff of rum in the air too.

After the parade, the party moved to the Civil Service Club, where the sound of laughter and stories filled the air throughout the remainder of the afternoon, shared among both old friends and new. Though it had been a long day, not helped by the generous number of 'wets' sunk the night before at the Union Jack Club, it was a brilliant day, and with bellies full of beer (and rum), everyone made their way home happy as could be. As for our mob heading back to East Anglia, the other passengers on the train could be forgiven for wondering what all the Jackspeak and dit telling was about!

Here's to the next parade, two years from now!

Enter or follow this link for more about the parade and a lot more photographs <https://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/the-royal-naval-associations-biennial-parade-comemorating-75-years>



On the left, our Shipmates gather just before the parade, and on the right, Shipmate Diana (of Norwich RNA) and our very own Katrine, standing either side of Clare (still serving) at the memorial remembering the women who died in World War II.

How it works

Luke wanted to join the navy. Luke went to the careers office, picked up his pen and answered the questions on the test paper. Luke became a sailor. Larry also wanted to join the navy. Larry went to the careers office, picked up his crayon and coloured in the test paper. Larry became a marine.

HMS BLUE BOTTLE

With our regularly reporting on our affiliated ship and her crew, we thought that this month we'd give you an insight into both, and -

THE SHIP THAT EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT

If you ask anyone in the fleet about HMS BLUE BOTTLE, you'll get one of two answers: a knowing smile or a look of bewildered confusion. BLUE BOTTLE isn't just a ship – she's a legend, a riddle wrapped in naval mystery, and the only vessel in history that's somehow both everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

The Ship

HMS BLUE BOTTLE is the ship that time forgot – quite literally. She's seen more harbours than a migratory bird and more paint jobs than the local hardware store's sample wall. Despite being officially "in service," she often operates under a mysterious cloak of invisibility, earning nicknames like "The Phantom of the Fleet" and "The Ship That Got Away."

Technically, she's a proper naval vessel with all the bells and whistles – radar, guns, engines, and a remarkably sturdy coffee machine on the NAAFI flat that is the true heart of the ship. But it's said that the real power aboard BLUE BOTTLE isn't in her machinery; it's in the crew's uncanny ability to avoid work without actually getting caught.

The Officers: Masters of Ceremony and Paperwork

The officers onboard BLUE BOTTLE are a breed apart. They spend much of their time on the bridge looking important and issuing orders that sound incredibly complex but often boil down to "make sure something happens." The Captain leads this circus with the calm of a man who knows the ship will survive as long as he doesn't look too closely at the engine room.

The First Lieutenant is the epitome of discipline – at least on paper. In reality, he's a master of delegating just enough to keep the officers happy while leaving the messy stuff to the Senior Rates. The Ops Officer and Gunnery Officer spend their days making strategic plans and double-checking that no one accidentally fires anything important.

The Navigator, perpetually confused by the sea's whims, is always recalculating routes that somehow lead the ship away from trouble – or at least any place that requires actual work.

The Senior Rates: The Real Commanders

If the officers are the ship's brain, the Senior Rates are the spine – and the occasional elbow to the ribs. These seasoned pros know every inch of the ship and can find the missing wrench or the secret stash of rum or beer in seconds. They speak a language of grunts, sarcasm, and naval jargon that only the truly initiated understand.

The Chief Stoker, Chief Tiff, Chief Elec, and Chief Cook keep the ship running with a blend of know-how, stubbornness, and just the right amount of "that'll do." The Master-at-Arms ensures discipline – though mostly by knowing what someone has done before they've done it, and reciting from memory, scripture from The Naval Discipline Act.

The Senior Rates are the ones who transform vague orders into real tasks (or cleverly avoid them), maintain morale through strategic rum rationing, and keep the junior rates from accidentally launching the ship into orbit.

The Junior Rates: The Wildcards

The junior rates aboard BLUE BOTTLE are a fascinating mix of eager enthusiasm, bewildered confusion, and creative procrastination. They are the engine room grease monkeys, the deck sweepers, and the unofficial keepers of secrets of what's occurring (that they may share in exchange for a beer or two).

While officers and Senior Rates plan and strategize, the junior rates often embark on entirely different missions: spinning dits (and retelling them again and again), inventing new card games, or conducting extensive "equipment inspections" (which usually means napping in a darkened compartment).

Leading Seaman 'Mini' Cooper and Leading Airman 'Bomber' Harris are the ringleaders of this merry band, expertly helping other navigate the tricky waters of "looking busy without actually doing anything."

The Unsung Heroes and Characters

No mention of HMS BLUE BOTTLE would be complete without the quirky specialists:

- The Pusser, who's basically the ship's version of a multitasking wizard, juggling supplies, admin, and the occasional crisis in the ships office involving misplaced forms (or cash).

- The Doc and The Padre, the healing hands and soothing voices, who keep the crew physically patched up and spiritually intact – often by both showing up just in time to witness the latest misadventure.
- Writer ‘Gracie’ Fields, the ship’s unofficial historian and chaos reporter, armed with a clipboard and biro, forever wandering the decks and turning every incident into an epic tale (whether it happened or not).
- The Tiffs – those mysterious little maintenance elves – who occasionally surface from their pits to actually do some work, much to everyone’s surprise (and concern).

Life Onboard: Controlled Chaos

Life aboard BLUE BOTTLE is a delicate dance of pretending to work and skilfully avoiding actual labour. The day the ship ran out of toilet paper (a national crisis in itself) saw the crew improvising with everything from old newspapers to the Captain’s confidential reports – which, unsurprisingly, disappeared mysteriously soon after.

Or the day the officers spent the day coordinating damage control after BLUE BOTTLE gently kissed another ship – “the immovable object,” as it was later dubbed – each group convinced they were the only ones handling the crisis correctly. Meanwhile, the junior rates were busy turning the mishap into a new game called “Collision,” betting on who (from the Captain down) could pretend to look most innocent.

Why BLUE BOTTLE Matters (and ships like her from the past, present and into the future)

In a navy filled with shining ships and precision drills, HMS BLUE BOTTLE stands apart. She’s not just a ship – she’s a floating reminder that even in the most disciplined environment, there’s room for laughter, creativity, and a bit of well-intentioned chaos.

The crew are more than sailors; they’re a family bound by shared stories, inside jokes, and an unspoken understanding that sometimes, the best way to keep a ship afloat is with a little humour and a lot of heart. Oh, and not forgetting in a language that is unique to the navy - Jackspeak.

So, here’s to HMS BLUE BOTTLE – the ship that somehow sails, the crew who somehow manages, and the legends who make the navy a little more human, one questionable decision at a time.

A toast to one and all who have served under the White Ensign - Once Navy, Always Navy



Letters to the Editor

It’s always a pleasure to receive post from our readers, especially if a dit or a bit of news has brought back a memory. The September edition of Gen Dit certainly seems to have done just that. Don’t forget, if you have a dit to share, then please send them into the *Editor*.

BZ on another amusing and informative edition of Gen Dit and VMT for putting a pic of a TON, HMS Kedleston. Big K spent most of her service with the Fishery Protection Squadron: 1969 - 76. Her main claim to fame; 4 Sept 1975 when she arrested 10 foreign trawlers in a single day off the North Yorkshire coast. All the skippers were convicted, fined and had their fishing gear confiscated.

Cheers, Peter D

Following our ‘Jackspeak’ last month, “Top Gum” = Head of the RN Dental Service, we had this come into our in-tray, which made us smile.

Hi, Ordinary Dentists were called Toothwrights.

Michael.

Ahoy.

Loved the rugby dit (‘Frosty’ and Blue Bottle) which reminded me of a reverse scenario when Aurora called at Simonstown on her way to doing two Beira patrols. We played the Capetown Olympic Club who fielded their Extra B Team, aged 40 - 50 but almost all having represented S Africa at something as Springboks. Postie was our scrum half who got carried off on a stretcher and I moved up from Full Back to fill his slot. A flogging great Yarpy flanker looked down at me at the next scrum and said, “I’m gonna kill you, you little bastard” or something like that, and proceeded to do so for the rest of the game!

As Aye,

Paul

This month's dit

It was a bright and breezy morning aboard ship, the sort of morning where the decks were damp, the coffee was questionable, and as always, the junior rates were already up to something suspicious. That's when the Doc got the phone call in sickbay.

"Doc. It's the Buffer. One of my lads is heading to sickbay. Says it's... um... personal." The Doc, a man who'd seen more unmentionables than a soap opera, sighed deeply and braced for impact.

Enter a young sailor, fresh faced and with a sheepish look.

The Doc nodded at him. "Right then young man. What seems to be the problem?" The young sailor coughed. Fidgeted. Glanced around like the bulkheads were listening. "Doc... it's me... you know... it's acting... weird." Doc raised an eyebrow. "Weird how?" The sailor replied, "It burns when I... you know... launch the torpedo." The Doc, who'd heard it described as everything from 'fire in the tube' to 'the angry snake', nodded slowly, then gestured for the sailor to hop on the examination bed. "Right. Let's take a look."

One awkward inspection and a gentle prod later, the Doc sat back with a sigh that could've sunk a battleship. "Well, congratulations. You've officially joined a proud naval tradition stretching back to Nelson: you've got the clap."

The young sailor's eyes went wide. "The what? But I wore cologne!" "Son," the Doc said, removing his glasses like a surgeon about to deliver a eulogy, "Cologne is not armour. It just makes you smell fancy when you get infected." "But... she said she was clean!" The Doc replied, "She also probably said she was a contortionist from Catalonia and could balance on a bottle of rum. Which part of that felt credible?"

Our young sailor looked wounded. "Doc, how... how did this happen?" And that's when the Doc leaned in, the way only a ship's scab lifter can – halfway between compassion and thinly veiled amusement. "It happened, son, because your brain went on liberty while the rest of you went AWOL with someone you met outside a kebab van at 2am. It happened because you treated a packet of condoms like it was optional PPE. It happened because you thought 'she looks alright' was a sufficient health screening."

The young sailor blinked. "So... I'm dying?" "No," said the Doc. "But your pride might be. And for the next week, so will every sailor within earshot of your urinal."

The Doc handed him a paper cup. "Two pills now, one jab in the backside, and you'll be back to full firing capability. But while you're here – let's cover a few basics.

If it sounds too good to be true – it probably has a rash. Don't trust anyone who calls you "sailor boy" in five different languages. Condoms are not just for decoration. And lastly, if her eyes say "romance," but her purse says "cash only" – run."

The young sailor winced as the Doc administered the jab with a little too much enthusiasm.

"Will... will everyone know?" The Doc grinned. "Only if they hear the cookie boys yell, 'WHO GOT BURNED IN BARCELONA?!' over breakfast tomorrow. So yes. Probably."

Word spread, as it always does, faster than news of a rum ration. Our young sailor earned a new callsign – "Torch" – and an unofficial warning from the Master-at-Arms to "keep his periscope holstered".

And finally ... Remember. When a sailor looks back at their time in the mob, their memories will either be ones filled with excuses or of progress. Either way, one thing for sure - they did it their way, and most likely enjoyed every minute of it.

We are always pleased to receive a dit, news or an item that will be of interest to our readers.

Just send the Editor an email to
pcpro@rumoldboys-rna.org.uk



And we'll see what we can do.

Future RNA Branch Meeting Dates

Wednesday 29th Oct @ RBL Club at 7.30pm

Tuesday 18th Nov @ RBL Club at 7.30pm

**Stowmarket RNA, c/o Royal British Legion,
8 Tavern Street, Stowmarket IP14 1PH**

Once Navy, Always Navy