

The Sound of The Waves

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Originally published in the **Winter 2002** edition of **Trafalgar Times**

A hundred and ninety-seven years after his death Senior Naval Officers still gather aboard H.M.S. Victory on the 21st October to lay wreathes and pay tribute to England's greatest naval hero. Such is the esteem in which Admiral Horatio Nelson is held even to this day.

The ceremony is of course to commemorate the death of Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, but he was not actually laid to rest until the 6th of February, 1806. His final interment was a grand affair in which the much loved and revered Admiral was mourned by the nation and given the honour of a full State Funeral.

Many of the facts and logistics involved in the ceremony are quite astounding. Over one hundred and twenty vessels accompanied the funeral barge on its journey up the Thames from Greenwich to the Admiralty. Nelson's coffin was constructed from timbers salvaged from the French flagship "L'Orient" which he had destroyed in his famous victory of the Battle of the Nile in 1798. It was a gift from Captain Benjamin Hallowell who was with him at the Nile campaign. The crude coffin was encased in an ornate iron sarcophagus which was then transported from the Admiralty to St. Paul's in a colonnaded funeral carriage in the form of H.M.S. Victory, the whole thing weighing several tons. The funeral carriage was drawn by six black horses and such was the length of the procession that its head had reached St. Paul's long before the funeral carriage itself had left the Admiralty. An eye witness at the time said that along the route a sound like the rushing of waves was heard whenever the carriage came into sight. It was actually the sound of the men removing their hats to pay their last respects.

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