

October: Trafalgar season; bringing thoughts of our country's victories of the 18th and 19th centuries. However - and for a change - let's think more of Nelson's protege, William Hoste (yes, the Hoste Arms *is* connected). Like Nelson, Hoste was also the son of a Norfolk clergyman, attended the Paston school in North Walsham and went to sea as a young lad.

Nelson was impressed with Hoste, promoted him to his own command while still a teenager and subsequently sent him on a mission as CO of HMS Amphion, during which absence the Trafalgar action took place. Hoste was completely frustrated to have missed that battle by just a few days and deeply saddened at the loss of his commander, patron and friend, Nelson.

However, Hoste's subsequent tactical genius and operational successes were so impressive that he became the basis for the Jack Aubrey character in Patrick O'Brian's series of naval novels (Master and Commander, etc). Some of these adventures are very much seen in the real life Battle of Lissa, where Hoste's command of 4 frigates drubbed a French force of eleven ships. This year was the bicentenary - that's got to be worth splicing the mainbrace.

Hoste's achievements reminds me of St Paul, who, having missed the main event of history - the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ - went on nonetheless to be one of the most effective captains of the Church and its thinking. Whereas Hoste's inspiring signal to his flotilla was "Remember Nelson," St Paul's message was always, "Remember Jesus."

The irony is that neither Nelson nor Hoste ever forgot Jesus, which is an underlying factor in why they were so confident: they knew this life was for living but there is another life to which we can look forward. The confidence of St Paul and the grit of a British tar.

With a legacy like that, how are we doing with our little battles along life's way?

I'll be drinking four tots (at least!) of Nelson's Blood this 21st October: Nelson, Hoste, Paul and the Messiah. Then back into battle...

