



## Press Release

10 October 2005

### **All you need to know about Lord Nelson**

The National Archives launches new online exhibition

The National Archives in Kew has launched a new online exhibition on Lord Nelson and his prestigious career as a naval hero. 'Nelson, Trafalgar and those who served' is a biography that follows Nelson through his life and naval career, and can be viewed at:

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nelson](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nelson)

Visitors to the exhibition will be able to learn in detail about Nelson's childhood, the death of his mother when he was just nine years old and how he left boarding school to go to sea with his uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling of 'HMS *Raisonnable*'.

Uncle Maurice was an inspiration to the young Nelson. By the age of 18, Nelson had six years' sailing experience that included a stint in the merchant navy, having travelled to some of the most remote places in the known world, the North Pole and the East Indies. Experience he used to pass his lieutenantcy examinations, two years earlier than the official age of 20. Three days later, Nelson was made lieutenant on HMS *Lowestoffe* and had reached the first rung on the ladder of promotion as a commissioned officer.

Nelson's career and reputation grew from strength to strength with stunning naval victories at the Nile (1798), Copenhagen (1801), and Trafalgar (1805).

The exhibition details Nelson's career and visitors have the opportunity to view key and unpublished documents written by him and about his life for the first time online. Highlights of the exhibition include:

- The oldest letter, written and sent by Nelson, which is held at the The National Archives – it was sent just two days after he had passed his lieutenantcy examination requesting that he be paid outstanding wages.
- Nelson's account of the evacuation of the Neapolitan monarchy in December 1798. Nelson was responsible for the personal safety of the royal family and their personal fortune of £2,500,000 (£175 million in today's prices!).
- A letter to Sir Hyde Parker about Nelson's desire for an immediate and direct attack on Copenhagen. It details the military tactics that Nelson felt should be taken and determines the sense of urgency that Nelson felt on the matter.

Nelson's enmity towards the French is well known, however a document featured in this on-line exhibition, dated 1804, a year before the Battle of Trafalgar reveals Nelson's compassion and sense of humanity towards French prisoners of war, by suggesting they be given a regular quantity of wine.

Nelson entrusted the care of Emma and their daughter Horatia Nelson to his country whilst he was dying on board HMS *Victory* at the Battle of Trafalgar. However, the naval authorities decided not to honour his wishes and instead accepted an application by Nelson's estranged wife for the Royal Bounty – a payment of twelve months' wages to the wives of men who had been killed in action. The application, written by Lady Nelson, can be viewed in the exhibition.

The exhibition accompanies The National Archives highly successful Trafalgar database that allows visitors to search online for ancestors who fought in the battle.

Bruno Pappalardo, naval historian at The National Archives and author of 'Nelson, Trafalgar and those who served' said, 'Lord Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar are key to British history and researching the documents to put together in this highly informative online exhibition has been a fascinating project.

'This unique collection of documents at The National Archives provides a new insight into Nelson and has been brought together for the first time in this free online exhibition.'

To visit 'Nelson, Trafalgar and those who served' log onto: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nelson](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nelson)

**For further information, interviews and images please contact:**

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**Notes to Editors:**

The National Archives, Kew, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) has one of the largest archival collections in the world, spanning 1000 years of British history, from Domesday Book to newly released government papers. The free museum and research rooms are open to the public 6 days a week.

Over nine million records are available to view at Kew and some, including wills, First World War Army medal cards and Second World War Seamen's medal records are also available online at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline)

The Family Records Centre, Islington, which is jointly managed by The National Archives and the Office for National Statistics, holds the indexes (not the certificates themselves) for births, deaths and marriages for England and Wales from July 1837 and also copies of wills, before 1858, from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) and some other church courts.