

Manxmen in Nelson's Navy

Public Information Sheet

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This guide provides some information on Manxmen who served in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. Some sixty six sailors and three Royal Marines of Manx birth are believed to have fought at Trafalgar and included in this guide is the 'Manx Trafalgar Roll of Honour'.

A select bibliography gives references to modern histories of the Royal Navy at the time of Trafalgar. It also provides references to required reading about Captain John Quilliam RN who served with Admiral Lord Nelson.

ILLUSTRATION: Midshipmen at rest in their wardroom.



Midshipmens wardroom

Manx links to Trafalgar

John Quilliam



The most famous Manxman to have participated in the Battle of Trafalgar was John Quilliam, First Lieutenant of the Victory. Information about his early life is sketchy, but he was born at Marown in 1777. He was apparently the son of a farmer, but was

impressed into the Royal Navy in 1794. Quilliam showed great potential and rose through the ranks, eventually receiving a commission. He came to the attention of Admiral Lord Nelson at the Battle of Copenhagen, and Nelson requested that he serve aboard Victory. During the battle of Trafalgar, the ship's wheel was shot away, and Quilliam rigged up a temporary method of steering her using ropes, in the gunroom below. Quilliam's share of Prize Money enabled him to buy property in the Isle of Man, and led ultimately to a seat in the House of Keys.



ABOVE: Balcony House, John Quilliam's home in Castletown.

James Brown Snr (alias Cato)

James Brown senior, the father of James Brown, founder of the Isle of Man Times, claimed to have fought at Trafalgar. He claimed to have been born a slave, and that his original name was Cato (which fits with the fashion for giving slaves Roman names), before he changed it to Brown. No James Brown is shown on the roll of HMS Victory at Trafalgar, but interestingly there is a James Caton, aged 28, whose place of birth is shown as Brazil.

Lewis Buckle Reeves

Lewis Buckle Reeves was the son of a doctor from Cork, Ireland, who married into a Manx family. He served as a Lieutenant of Royal Marines aboard HMS Victory. He was wounded during the battle by grape shot which struck his forearm, but recovered and lived to reach the age of 75. At the time of his death he was one of the last surviving officers from the Victory, and he is buried in Onchan churchyard.



BELOW: Victory's log, recording the wound received by Lewis Buckle Reeves.

Men's Names	Quality	Parture of Wounds or Contusion	Cured, or board sent to Hospital or Sea
William Rivers	Mid ^l	Left Leg amputated below the Knee	3 ^d Decemb ^r . -
John Pasco	Lieut	Forearm and side severely wounded by a grape shot	12. January 1806.
Geo ^d M. Polign	Lieut	Wounded in the left Hip & shoulder by a Musquet Ball	1. Decemb ^r -
Alex ^r Palmer	Mid ^l	Shot through the Thigh by a Musquet Ball, Bone in large Wound untouched	28 Decemb ^r -
Lewis Reeves	2 ^d Lt. Marine	Wounded forearm by grape shot	5. Decemb ^r -
Jas. G. Blake	1 st Lieut	Wounded face	1 st Decemb ^r -



ABOVE: Battle of Trafalgar.

Other Seafarers connected with the Battle of Trafalgar

David Christian

David Christian was born on the Isle of Man in 1779. He was on board H.M.S Africa at Trafalgar as a Private in the Royal Marines. He was wounded at the battle and lost his left arm below the elbow. He received £40 from Lloyds Patriotic Fund for Wounds. He was invalided out of the service in 1806.

Hugh Bainbridge

Hugh Bainbridge was born in Peel, the son of James Bainbridge and Ellinor nee Shimmin. He was on board H.M.S Leviathan at the Battle of Trafalgar as Able Seaman. He had his right arm shattered by a canon shot during the battle and had his arm amputated beneath the shoulder joint. He was treated at Plymouth Hospital before being invalided out of the Navy. He received £40 from the Lloyds Patriotic Fund for Wounds.

Joseph Collins

Joseph Collins was born in Douglas, the son of Thomas Collins and Elizabeth nee Kelly. He was baptised in Braddan Church in March 1772. He was an Able Seaman on board H.M.S. Leviathan at the Battle of Trafalgar. He was awarded the Naval General Service Medal with Trafalgar Clasp in 1848.

Lieutenant James Warring R.N.

'Lieutenant James Warring R.N. . . who died at St. Johns in the parish on the 8th day of June 1832 aged 50 years. He was engaged in the action of the Nile, that of Sir Robert Calder and in the Battle of Trafalgar was serving on board the Ajax when that ship was destroyed by fire'.

Monumental Inscription, memorial since lost.

James Warring was born in Westmorland in 1779. He volunteered to join the Navy and was Midshipman on board H.M.S Ajax during the Battle of Trafalgar. He was on board the ship when it caught fire in 1807 when his passing certificates and papers were destroyed.

John Cawle

John Cawle was born in 1784 on the Isle of Man. He was on board H.M.S Temeraire at the Battle of Trafalgar. He was wounded at the battle and had his arm amputated at Gibraltar Hospital. He was discharged from the service in 1805. After returning to the Isle of Man he became a school teacher at Kirk Bride. He was awarded the Naval General Service Medal with Trafalgar Clasp in 1848.

Thomas Curphey

Thomas Curphey was born in 1778 on the Isle of Man. He was on board H.M.S. Britannia at the Battle of Trafalgar as Quarter Gunner. He was awarded the Naval General Service Medal with Trafalgar Clasp in 1848. He features in the 1851 census as 'Thomas Curphey aged 72 (born Onchan) of Ballanard. Retired Super Boatsman RN. Married to Anne Curphey (aged 26) nee Fargher.'

Robert Benjamin Young

Robert Young was born in Douglas in 1773, the son of Robert Parry and Jane nee Redfern. He was a Lieutenant commanding H.M.S Entreprenante at the Battle of Trafalgar. He was granted a parliamentary award of £161 and the Lloyds Patriotic Fund for Wounds presented him with a sword worth £100. He died in Exeter in 1846.

James Kewley

James Kewley was born in Douglas in 1778. He was a Bosun's Mate on board H.M.S Ajax during the Battle of Trafalgar. He died in February 1807 when the Ajax was destroyed by fire.

The Manx Trafalgar Roll of Honour

Some sixty six sailors and three marines of Manx birth are believed to have fought at Trafalgar.

Below are given their names and any other information known about them.

Please note that the spelling of surnames are as recorded by the Royal Navy.

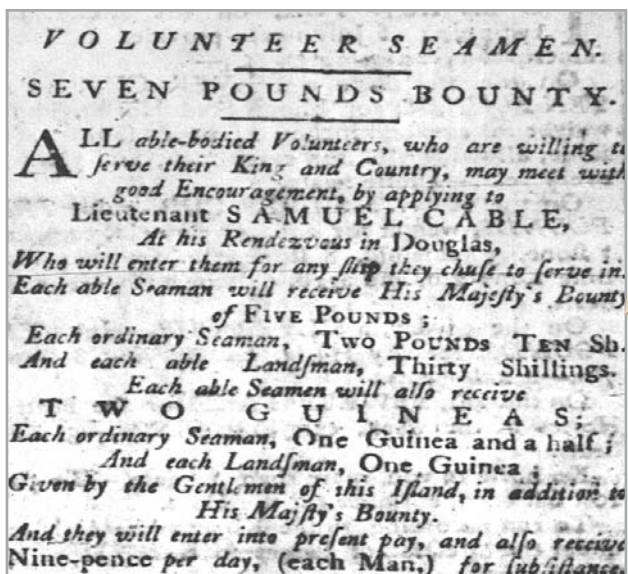
Name	Vessel	Rank / Rating	Date of Birth	Place of Birth / Comments
Thomas Gawne	Achilles	Ord Sea	1783	Douglas Volunteer. Ran 1806.
David Christian	Africa	Pte RM	1779	IOM Lost left arm below elbow.
Thomas Kelly	Africa	Able Sea	1752	IOM Pressed.
William Corkhill	Agamemnon	Ord Sea	1783	IOM Volunteer.
William Chace	Agamemnon	Able Sea	1784	IOM Pressed.
James Kewley	Ajax	Bosun's Mate	1778	Douglas Volunteer. Died 1807.
John Cowen	Ajax	Landsman	1770	IOM Volunteer.
William Kannell	Ajax	Landsman	1779	IOM Pressed.
John Norris	Bellerophon	Ord Sea	1783	IOM Volunteer. Ran 1806.
William Edwards	Britannia	Able Sea	1771	IOM Volunteer.
Thomas Carphy	Britannia	Quarter Gunner	1778	IOM Volunteer.
Charles Potter	Britannia	Quarter Gunner	1774	IOM.
John Shemmin	Britannia	Landsman	1769	Castlet'n Pressed.
John Kniel	Colossus	Boy 2nd Class	1784	IOM.
Thomas Cannal	Conqueror	Landsman	1782	IOM Volunteer.
Robert Kelly	Conqueror	Landsman	1770	IOM Vol. Disch 1806 Madness.
William Callow	Conqueror	Landsman	1781	Maughold Vol. Died 1808.
Robert Cardy	Conqueror	Landsman	1771	IOM Volunteer.
Edward Cores	Conqueror	Landsman	1773	IOM Volunteer.
Robert Luin	Conqueror	Able Sea	1776	IOM Volunteer.
John Querck	Conqueror	Landsman	1776	Douglas Volunteer.
John Queney	Conqueror	Landsman	1774	Douglas Enlisted by Civil Power.

Edward Searf	Conqueror	Landsman	1770	IOM Pressed.
William Bell	Defence	Able Sea	1768	IOM Volunteer.
John Wilson	Defence	Pte RM	1777	Kk Malew Trade machine maker.
John Corgeage	Defiance	Able Sea	1775	Ramsey Volunteer. Awarded NGS.
Thomas Lace	Defiance	Landsman	1778	IOM Volunteer.
John Cockrane	Dreadnought	Boy 3rd Class	1793	IOM Wounded. Aged 12.
William Ford	Entreprenante	Sailmaker	1774	IOM Volunteer.
Robert B. Young	Entreprenante	Lieutenant	1773	Douglas Died 1846, Devon.
George Delmar	Entreprenante	Able Sea	1773	IOM Volunteer. Ran.
Joseph Collins	Leviathan	Able Sea	1774	Douglas Volunteer. Awarded NGS.
Hugh Bainbridge	Leviathan	Able Sea	1781	Patrick R arm amputated.
William Garrett	Leviathan	Able Sea	1766	IOM Volunteer.
Thomas Crowe	Leviathan	Capenter's Mat	1774	IOM Volunteer.
Charles Jockin	Mars	Ord Sea	1779	IOM Volunteer.
James Cromarty	Mars	Quartermaster's Mate	1761	IOM Volunteer.
John Kelly	Minotaur	Landsman	1779	IOM Volunteer.
Thomas Couley	Naiad	Landsman	1784	IOM Volunteer.
Thomas Gilling	Neptune	Ord Sea	1780	Douglas Volunteer.
John McKenzie	Neptune	Landsman	1769	Castlet'n Volunteer.
Paul Kelly	Orion	Able Sea	1777	IOM Awarded NGS.
Edward Crow	Orion	Ord Sea	1778	IOM Wounded R leg.
Thomas Neil	Phoebe	Acting Sailmaker	1740	IOM.
Jeremiah Black	Phoebe	Able Sea	1767	Douglas Pressed.
Daniel Crutch	Phoebe	Boy 2nd Class	1786	IOM Volunteer. Awarded NGS.
William Brown	Polyphemus	Pte RM	1772	IOM Wounded.
Clive Clugas	Prince	Landsman	1782	IOM Volunteer.
John Cannon	Prince	Landsman	1782	Douglas Volunteer.
William Creer	Prince	Landsman	1782	Castlet'n 1851 Greenwich hospital.
Thomas Lace	Prince	Ord Sea	1782	IOM.
Richard Scarf	Prince	Ord Sea	1781	IOM Volunteer.
John Lawson	Revenge	Able Sea	1774	IOM Volunteer. Wounded.
John Taylor	Revenge	Able Sea	1770	Douglas Volunteer. Ran 1805.
George Savage	Royal Sovereign	Ord Sea	1773	Douglas Volunteer.
William Kelly	Royal Sovereign	Ord Sea	1784	IOM.
John Matherill	Royal Sovereign	Ord Sea	1776	IOM.
Thomas Gill	Royal Sovereign	Carpenter's Crew	1756	IOM Volunteer.
John Cammast	Spartiate	Landsman	1780	IOM Substitute.
Thomas Dwyer	Spartiate	Boy 2nd Class	1789	Douglas.
Robert Harrison	Temeraire	Ord Sea	1778	IOM Volunteer.
John Cawle (Cowell)	Temeraire	Landsman	1784	IOM Lost R. arm. NGS.
John Taggant	Temeraire	Landsman	1764	Peel Killed in action.
Arthur Small	Thunderer	Ord Sea	1746	IOM Volunteer.
John Lace	Thunderer	Able Sea	1780	IOM Pressed.
George Mills	Thunderer	Landsman	1768	IOM Volunteer.
Jasper Butler	Tonnant	Able Sea	1774	IOM Volunteer. Wounded.
William Kelly	Tonnant	Yeoman Powder Rm	1771	IOM Volunteer.
John Quilliam	Victory	Lieutenant	1772	Marown Died 1829.

The Press Gang in the Isle of Man

Handsome bounties were offered by the Duke of Atholl and his agents to try to obtain volunteers for the navy in the Isle of Man, but even these were not enough to bring forth the necessary recruits. Several times the Press Gang visited the Island, and so valuable were Manx sailors considered, that the gang received an extra bonus for any Manxman taken.

This created havoc in an island dependant upon its herring fishery, for at times the fishing fleet dare not put to sea. In 1798 alone forty men were impressed in Port Erin bay, in spite of the protests of the Governor and the House of Keys to the Admiralty. In 1811 a press gang from the warship Maria raided Douglas Harbour, carrying off twenty fishermen and a number of men of the Manx Volunteers. The raid caused indignation because of the level of violence used.

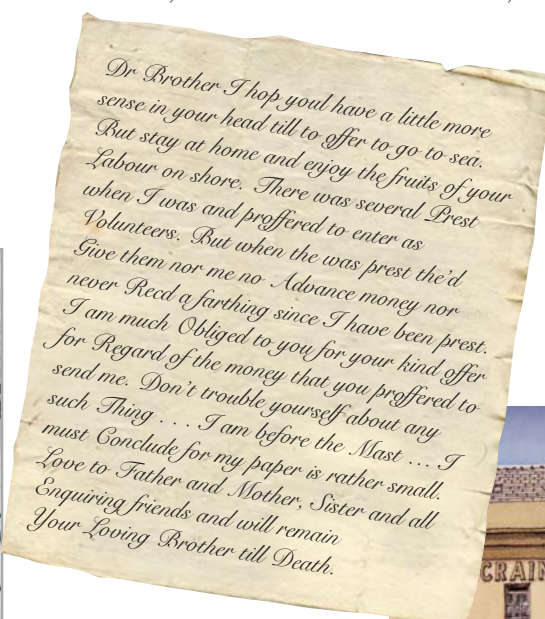


ABOVE: A handsome bounty was offered to try to tempt Manx seafarers to volunteer for the navy.

The press gang created terror wherever they arrived – one occasion was recalled by Mr Shimmin of Onchan, born in 1801. He remembered an incident around 1810, whilst he was a pupil at Onchan Parish School, when the face of a black sailor appeared at the window, creating terror among the children who fled from the school. A lad of about 14 was seized by the gang, but they were forced to release him when local women pelted them with stones.

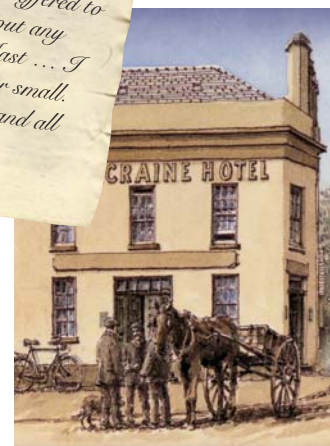
Not only fishermen were seized – there were numbers of occasions when lads ploughing were carried off, and sometimes many years would pass before they returned.

Others fled to the hills to hide in specially constructed shelters. There was reportedly a field next to Jurby Parish School called Ballaconney, thickly overgrown with Gorse. Young men would hide themselves here when the Press Gang was scouring the district. Other times ruses were used. A man named Keggin was caught with other fishermen in Port Erin bay. He pretended to be a simpleton, and played with the buttons on the officer's coat, saying "Oh, the dee buttons, the dee buttons" ('dee' meaning 'fine' in Manx). The officer retorted, "This botch of a man's no use, send him away."



ABOVE: A letter from John Corkill, a pressed sailor aboard HMS Superb lying at Spithead, 1779.

RIGHT: Ballacraine Hotel, scene of the 'Battle of Ballacraine'.



The 'Battle of Ballacraine' took place in the old Ballacraine hotel. Ten Manxmen were drinking there when twelve members of the Press Gang walked in. The Manxmen made to leave the building but were stopped by the gang and told they were coming. In the ensuing fight, one of the Press Gang was badly injured and subsequently died.

Sometimes however impressment was used by local magistrates as a form of punishment. A story relates how Deemster John Lace returned home to find his serving maid locked in a passionate embrace with a Castletown youth. The Deemster, unimpressed, ordered the unfortunate lad to be handed over to the press gang.

Other Manxmen at sea in Nelson's age

Isle of Man provided many seafarers to the Royal Navy in the 18th Century. Among them was Peter Fannin, who had sailed with Captain Cook on his journeys of discovery in the Pacific in the 1770s. Upon his return from sea, Fannin established a School of Navigation in Douglas.

Captain William Bligh had friends in Douglas, and was married at St Peter's church in Onchan. When he sailed to the south pacific aboard HMS Bounty in 1788 he took with him as Midshipman Peter Heywood and as First Mate Fletcher Christian, who though not born on the Island was of a Manx family, the Christians of Milntown.

The Heywood family were prominent as Deemsters and lived at the Nunnery. When Heywood became caught up in the mutiny aboard the Bounty, and was later put on trial, his sister Nessie was a tireless supporter and helped to clear his name. Heywood was allowed to resume his naval career, eventually reaching the rank of Post-Captain. His most notable appointment was to HMS Bellerophon, the famous 'Billy Ruffian', in which he served at several actions.

Lieutenant William Kelly of HMS Illustrious was present at the capture of Cape Town in 1806, and received a silver cup for bravery on that occasion. Kelly later retired to the Island, and in 1821 became an MHK.

BELOW: Lieutenant Edward Gelling RN of Douglas.

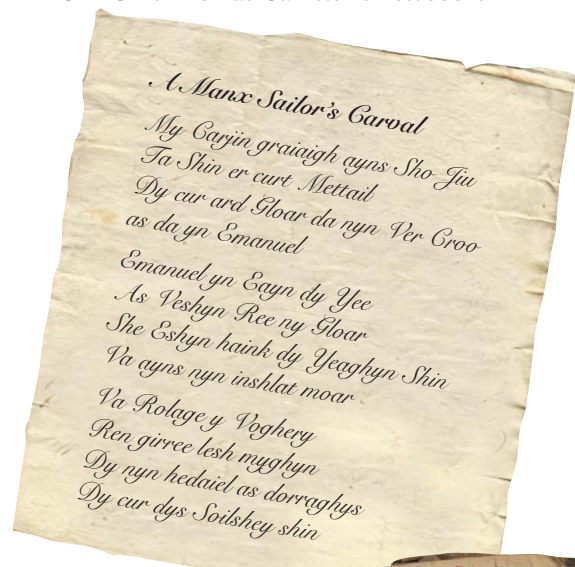


Of Manxmen on the lower decks we have rather less information. It is known that William Kewley served in HMS Princess Royal at the battle of the Glorious First of June, and was with Nelson in the attack on Tenerife. In old age he was a resident in the House of Industry in Douglas.

A remarkable account exists from another Manx sailor, Thomas Callister who was taken from a fishing boat in Port Erin bay in 1798 and pressed into the Royal Navy by the schooner HMS Spider. Callister was well educated and could write, and so was promoted to the rank of Yeoman of Signals. His notebook records his journey to the West Indies aboard HMS Captain, and the fact that there were numerous other Manxmen on board, presumably pressed at the same time.

BELOW: A Carval recorded in the notebook of Thomas Callister, Royal Navy 1798-1802.

BOTTOM: Thomas Callister's notebook.



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Article adapted with additional historical data from Megaw article listed above.

Web Sources

The National Archives has a site on which you can look for persons who served at Trafalgar www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/trafalgarancestors and a number of guides for Service and Pensions Records which include the Napoleonic period.

Some documentary sources on Manx involvement are also available on

<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/>

The Manx National Heritage Library holds a wealth of various and extensive source material. Staff at the library and throughout Manx National Heritage are always pleased to hear from anyone with an interest in Manx history.

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