

In the days of sailing ships, the seamen ate from “trenchers”. These trenchers had a rim round them to stop the food from spilling out. The rim was known as a “fiddler”. Any seaman who filled his trencher up so far that the food ran over this rim was, as a sign of his greed, was referred to as being “on the fiddle”, the origin of this expression.

Son-of-a-gun was the expression used when his mother gave birth on board ship. The tables on which the seamen ate were in the gun deck and were suspended above the gun. It was raised higher when the guns were prepared for action. The table would be where the child was born, hence the expression son-of-a-gun.

HMS Victory had some 42 Scottish Crew Members. The surgeon who treated Nelson was a young Scot, aged 24. There were a total of 18 nationalities among the crew, including Egyptians and Americans.

Mary Buick, a Dundee woman married to a seaman from Kinnettles in Fife on the ship, prepared Nelson’s body for preserving in the barrel of Brandy prior to his return home.

She and her husband are buried in Kilrenny Churchyard, Fife.