



Glossary of Terms

Below are new words for our Glossary of Terms based on AB Barlow's activities the last couple of weeks. To see all the terms from AB Barlow's past activities, please scroll down.

Battle of Cape St. Vincent – one of the first battles of the Anglo-Spanish War (1796-1808). The battle was a decisive English victory and saw four Spanish ships of the line captured by the British; two by Horatio Nelson

Battle of Flamborough Head – a battle fought during the American War of Independence during which Captain John Paul Jones captured the British frigate *Serapis* even as his own ship, *Bonhomme Richard*, sank out from under him

Boarding – the act of sending sailors or soldiers from one's own ship to an enemy ship for the purpose of capturing the other vessel. In modern context, boarding can also occur for more peaceful purposes such as a safety or customs inspection

Brig – a ship with two masts, both carrying square sails. Also, a jail located on board a ship

Cutting Out – the act of attacking a ship from small boats filled with sailors or **marines**. Often used as a surprise tactic

Fighting Top – a platform part way up a ship's mast used as a firing position by sharpshooters during a naval engagement

First-Rate – the largest warships in the now-obsolete Royal Navy ranking system. Generally, first-rates mounted around 100 carriage guns

Frigate – a small, fast warship; usually built for maneuverability and speed over firepower

Gangway – traditionally, a narrow passage connecting a ship's **quarterdeck** and forecastle. Also a ramp or staircase that provides access to a ship's deck.

Marines – naval infantry charged with keeping order on ships and taking part in sea fights.

Nelson, Horatio – a British naval hero famous for his revolutionary tactics and stunning victories during the Napoleonic wars. Killed at the **Battle of Trafalgar**

Quarterdeck – a raised platform set aft of a ship's mainmast. Generally, the quarterdeck was the portion of the ship from which the officers issued their commands, both in battle and at all other times

Xebec – a type of ship built for Mediterranean waters with a long bowsprit and aft-set **mizzen**. Xebecs generally carry at least one lateen rigged sail

#tallshiptuesdays



Words from Previous Glossary of Terms

Aft – near the stern; toward the rear of the vessel

Aft Cabin – often called the captain’s cabin, a large cabin at the stern of the vessel

Anchor – the device by which, when dropped to the bottom, the vessel is held fast

Battle of Lake Erie – an important naval battle in the war of 1812, in which American commodore Oliver Hazare Perry defeated a British squadron

Battle of Trafalgar – a major naval victory for the British over the combined forces of the French and Spanish during the Napoleonic wars

Belay – to make fast or tie off a line

Belaying Pin – a wooden or metal pin to which lines are secured aboard ship

Binnacle – a box near the helm containing the compass

Boarding Pike – a long-handled spear-like weapon used for repelling an enemy boarding party

Boatswain/Bosun – officer in charge of a ship’s deck department. Supervises the hands working on deck and sees to some aspects of ship maintenance

Boom – a spar used to extend the foot of a fore-and-aft sail or studding sail

Bow – the front of the ship, the rounded part of a vessel forward

Bowsprit – a large and strong spar, standing from the bow of a vessel

Careening – intentionally grounding a ship so that work can be done on the hull. Used especially when dry docks are not accessible

Cask – a barrel used for storing provisions aboard ship

Chafing Gear – pads, mats, ropes and other materials tied around pieces of rigging to protect them from rubbing on spars and other parts of the rig

Cleat – a piece of hardware with a ‘horn’ at either end, often affixed to a ship’s deck, rail, or to a dock, to which line can be made fast

Coiling – the act of placing a line or rope into a series of loops for ease of storage

Copper – a type of metal used to protect the hulls of ships from marine growth

Cordage – a general term for line or rope

Deck prism – a prism of glass fitted into the deck to allow light into the compartment below

Dirk – a very short sword, traditionally carried by midshipmen in the Royal Navy

Docking – the act of poking holes in biscuits prior to baking to prevent them from rising and to allow the moisture to escape

Dry Dock – a basin for working on the hulls of ships. The dry dock is filled with water and the ship floated in. Then the water is pumped out, giving access to the hull below the waterline



Dunderfunk – a foodstuff made of pounded biscuit, molasses, beef fat and water mixed together and baked brown in a pan

Figure Eight – twisting line into the shape of the number ‘8.’ Also, a type of knot often used as a stopper knot

Fore – toward the front of the vessel, used to distinguish the forward part of a vessel or things in that direction

Foxes – pieces of scrap line made by twisting together several strands or yarns

Galley – a type of ship propelled mainly by oars (although galleys may carry sails as well). Also, a ship’s kitchen

Gantline – a line rove through a single block on a mast used for raising sailors, tools, pieces or rigging, or other necessary items aloft

Guns – armament with a naval carriage; the original *Providence* had 12 four-pound guns and 14 small rail guns

Gunwale – the top edge of a ship’s hull

Hand, Reef & Steer – traditional qualifications of an able seaman, to hand is to take in or furl a sail and to reef is to shorten sail and to steer is to take a turn at the helm

Hardtack – one of many names for an unleavened biscuit made of flower and water, and sometimes salt, eaten at sea by Sailors

Helmsman – the Sailor stationed at the ship’s helm (wheel) in charge of steering and keeping a straight course

HMS Beagle – a Royal Navy 10-gun brig-sloop famous for conveying naturalist Charles Darwin around the world

Hull – the structure of a ship, including bottom, sides, and deck

Idler – any member of a ship’s company not required to stand regular watch. In many navies, this often included warrant officers, such as the surgeon, gunner, and cook

Jibboom – the boom rigged out beyond the bowsprit to which the tack of a jib is lashed

Kink – an undesirable twist or bend in a line

Lay – the way in which a rope’s strands are twisted together (for example, a rope that is laid right-handed has its strands twisted together to the right)

Line – a piece or rope being employed for a specific task aboard ship (for example, a sheet or halyard)

Locking Hitch – a simple knot used for making a line off to a cleat or belaying pin

Main deck – the largest deck on a vessel

Main hold – cargo hold, also holds provisions, spare parts and sailors

Marline – light, two-stranded line; often tarred and used for seizing

Marlinespike – a tapered metal spike used to separate strands of rope, untie knots and as a handle for hauling away on seizings, whippings, etc.



Mast – a spar set upright from the deck to support rigging, yards and sails

Merchant Service – the industry concerned with commercial shipping ventures (i.e., non-military)

Midshipman – the most junior commissioned officer rank in many navies

Mizzen – the aftmost mast on a ship of three or more masts. On a two masted vessel, the aftmost mast is only the mizzen if it is shorter than the other mast.

Pin Rail – a rail - either free-standing or build into a ship bulwark - that holds belaying pins

Pitch – a sticky substance used to caulk the seams of ships. Also the motion of a ship at its transverse axis.

Port – the left side of a vessel, looking forward, used in place of “larboard”

Purser – officer-in-charge of the ship’s finances, including purchasing provisions such as biscuits, salt, meat and rum

Quarter Deck – raised deck toward the stern where navigation and command of the vessel take place

Rating – denotes a Sailor’s rank, responsibilities and rate of pay (i.e., able seaman, ordinary seaman, boy, etc.)

Rigging – the lines and ropes that hold the masts, spars and sails

Rudder – a flat, hinged protuberance near the stern of a ship that allows it to steer

Sail Making – the work of mending, replacing and sewing sails; the sail maker would often advise on how best to set and trim sails

Scotch Coffee – burnt biscuit dissolved in hot water

Sea Chest – a large box used by Sailors to hold their worldly possessions; sea chests were much more common in the merchant and whaling services than in the Navy, where space was limited, and Sailors generally used sea bags instead

Seamanship – the skills and techniques used in handling a ship at sea

Seizing – method of binding two ropes or objects together involving wrapping them tightly with line

Shrouds – a set of ropes reaching from the mastheads to the vessel’s sides to support the mast

Spar – the general term for all masts, yards, booms, gaffs, and other such timbers

Spike Hitch – a simple knot for transforming a marlinspike into a handle for pulling line tight

Splice – weaving together to strands of separate ropes to form one longer rope

Starboard – on the right side of the boat, looking forward

Stern – the aft end of a vessel

Steward – in navies of the 17th – 19th centuries, a member of the crew assigned to work as a sort of servant or helper for senior officers

USS Constitution – the oldest commissioned naval vessel now afloat; one of six frigates authorized by the Naval Act of 1794; the ship is also known as Old Iron Sides



Tiller – a bar of wood or iron put into the head of the rudder, by which the rudder is moved to steer the vessel

Travel Lift – a type of mobile crane that can lift a ship out of the water and move it to a secure location for maintenance

Warrant Officer – an officer who does not hold a commission, but is a specialized professional (gunner, purser, chaplain, etc.)

Watch – both the work groups a ship's sailors are divided into, and the length of time that each group works

Watches – division of labor aboard ship; the ship's company is broken into several (usually three) watches, which take turns sailing the ship, standing by and resting

Weevils – small beetles known to infest ship's biscuits

West Indies – the Caribbean, including the Greater Antilles, Lesser Antilles and the Lucayan Archipelagos

Whale Oil – a substance obtained by boiling whale blubber. Useful for a variety of applications, including as lamp oil and as a protective coating for ships

Whipping – a type of binding used on the ends of rope to prevent them from fraying or unraveling

Windlass – the machine used in merchant vessels to weigh the anchor

Yards – long spars affixed horizontally across the masts, which hold up the ship's square sails