

Nelson at Trafalgar – in 2014...



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Nelson: 'Order the signal, Hardy.'

Hardy: 'Aye, aye sir.'

Nelson: 'Hold on, that's not what I dictated to Flags. What's the meaning of this?'

Hardy: 'Sorry sir?'

Nelson (reading aloud): "'England expects every person to do his or her duty, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious persuasion, age or disability" – What gobbledegook is this?'

Hardy: 'Admiralty policy, I'm afraid, sir. We're an Equal Opportunities employer now. We had the devil's own job getting 'England' past the censors, lest it be considered racist.'

Nelson: 'Gadzooks, Hardy. Hand me my pipe and tobacco.'

Hardy: 'Sorry sir. All naval vessels have now been designated smoke-free working environments.'

Nelson: 'In that case, break open the rum ration. Let us splice the main-brace to steel the men before battle.'

Hardy: 'The rum ration has been abolished, Admiral. It's part of the Government's policy on binge drinking.'

Nelson: 'Good heavens, Hardy. I suppose we'd better get on with it full speed ahead.'

Hardy: 'I think you'll find that there's a 4-knot speed limit in this stretch of water.'

Nelson: 'Damn it man! We are on the eve of the greatest sea battle in history. We must advance with all dispatch. Report from the crow's nest please.'

Hardy: 'That won't be possible, sir.'

Nelson: 'What?'

Hardy: 'Health and Safety have closed the crow's nest, sir – no harness. And they said that rope ladders don't meet regulations. They won't let anyone up there until a proper scaffolding can be erected.'

Nelson: 'Then get me the ship's carpenter without delay, Hardy.'

Hardy: 'He's busy knocking up a wheelchair access to the foredeck, Admiral.'

Nelson: 'Wheelchair access? I've never heard anything so absurd.'

Hardy: 'Health and Safety again, sir. We have to provide a barrier-free environment for the differently-abled.'

Nelson: 'Differently-abled? I've only one arm and one eye and I refuse even to hear mention of the word. I didn't rise to the rank of Admiral by playing the disability card.'

Hardy: 'Actually, sir, you did. The Royal Navy is under-represented in the areas of visual impairment and limb deficiency.'

Nelson: 'Whatever next? Break out the cannon and tell the men to stand by to engage the enemy.'

Hardy: 'The men are a bit worried about shooting at anyone, Admiral. They're afraid of being charged with murder if they actually kill anyone. There's a couple of legal-aid lawyers on board, watching everyone like hawks.'

Nelson: 'Then how are we to sink the Frenchies and the Spanish?'

Hardy: 'Actually, sir, we're not.'

Nelson: 'We're not?'

Hardy: 'No, sir. The French and the Spanish are our European partners now. According to the Common Fisheries Policy, we shouldn't even be in this stretch of water. We could get hit with a claim for compensation.'

Nelson: 'But you must hate a Frenchman as you hate the devil?'

Hardy: 'I wouldn't let the ship's Diversity Co-Ordinator hear you saying that, sir. You'll be up on a disciplinary report.'

Nelson: 'You must consider every man an enemy, who speaks ill of your King.'

Hardy: 'Not any more, sir. We must be inclusive in this multicultural age. Now put on your Kevlar vest – it's the rules. It could save your life.'

Nelson: 'Don't tell me – health and safety. Whatever happened to rum, sodomy and the lash?'

Hardy: 'As I explained, sir, rum is off the menu. And there's a ban on corporal punishment.'

Nelson: 'What about sodomy?'

Hardy: 'I believe that is now legal, sir.'

Nelson: 'In that case.... kiss me, Hardy!'