Trafalgar Cemetery

This cemetery was consecrated in June 1798, seven years before the battle of Trafalgar.  It was then known as the Southport Ditch Cemetery, and was sometimes regarded as a part of the old St.Jago’s Cemetery, which was situated at the other side of Charles V Wall. The association with the battle of Trafalgar does not seem to have been made until many years after the event.

Southport Ditch, outside Southport Gate, formed part of the town defences at least as far back as Spanish times: it appears in the 1627 map of Gibraltar by Luis Bravo in the British Museum, as a “Fosso” just south of “Puerta de Africa” (Southport Gate). The western half of the ditch, which had been used as a market garden in the nineteenth century, was filled in when Referendum arch was opened in 1967.

The cemetery was used for burials between 1798 and 1814, and thereafter fell into disuse, although there is one isolated tomb from 1838 near the far north-east corner (no.60 in the plan on the south wall). Earlier gravestones from St.Jago’s cemetery were set into the eastern wall in 1932, and there are also a few free-standing stones, some of which date back to the 1780s, which have been transferred over the years from the Alameda Gardens.

Although the name of the cemetery commemorates the Battle of Trafalgar, only two of those who are buried here actually died of wounds suffered in the battle (Lieut. William Forster of the Royal Marine Corps of H.M.S. Mars and Lieut. Thomas Norman of H.M.S. Columbus-grave numbers 121 and 101).  Most of those who died at Trafalgar were buried at sea, and Lord Nelson’s body was transported to London for a state funeral.  Wounded seamen were brought to Gibraltar, and those who died later of their wounds were buried just to the north of Charles V Wall, on the opposite side of Trafalgar Cemetery, a small plaque was recently placed there to commemorate the site.

Many of the tombstones in the cemetery commemorate the dead of three terrible yellow fever epidemics in 1804, 1813 and 1814.  Also buried here are victims of other sea battles of the Napoleonic Wars - the Battle of Algeciras (1801) and actions off Cadiz (1810) and Malaga (1812).

One tomb with an indirect connection with Trafalgar is number 103, that of John Brugier, purser of H.M.S. San Juan Nepomuceno. The San Juan Neponucemo was originally a Spanish warship, and was one of the prizes captured at Trafalgar. After the battle, she was towed into Gibraltar where she served as a supply hulk for a decade after her capture at Trafalgar. This attractive stone has a touching inscription from Brugier’s brother officers, who knew their Hamlet:

*“Give me that man  
that is not Passion’s slave and I will wear him  
in my heart’s core, ay in my heart of hearts  
as I do thee.”*

**Some other interesting inscriptions are:**

Number 98 - Edward Caulfield, who died of wounds in 1808:

*“Honored where known  Endearing where allied  
Much loved he liv’d  and Much lamented died”.*

Numbers 85 and 86 - Thomas Worth and John Buckland of the Royal Marine Artillery, “The brightest ornaments of their Corps”, who were “Killed by the same shot on the 23rd  November, 1810 while directing the Howitzer Boats in an attack on the enemy’s flotilla in Cadiz Bay”.

Number 32 - a naively illustrated stone on the south wall by the entrance.

Number 91 - Robert Monsoon “A young man of amiable manners and sincerity”.

Grave numbers 46 and 47 are those of Helen Charlotte Smith and Lieut. Holloway, the Garrison Engineer, and grandchildren of Sir William Green, who as Chief Engineer of the Garrison in 1770 founded the Company of Military Artificers which later became known as the Royal Engineers.

For some years a ceremony has been held every year in the cemetery on Trafalgar Day in remembrance of those who gave their lives in the great victory.

Responsibility for the upkeep of the cemetery was entrusted by the Government of Gibraltar to the Gibraltar Heritage Trust in 1990. Trafalgar House plc and its subsidiary, the Cunard Steam Ship Co. supported the Trust’s efforts between 1990 and 1992 with a generous grant.

In 1992 a monument, consisting of an anchor donated by the Royal Navy and an inscription quoting Admiral Collingwood’s despatch in which he reported the victory at Trafalgar and the death of Nelson, was unveiled by the then Governor, Admiral Sir Derek Refell.

THE FIRST NEWS OF THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR. THE DESPATCH FROM VICE-ADMIRAL COLLINGWOOD TO LT.GEN.FOX, THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF GIBRALTAR, AND PRINTED IN THE GIBRALTAR CHRONICLE

**GIBRALTAR CHRONICLE EXTRAORDINARY**

Thursday, October 24, 1805 - Price Twelve Quarts  
EURVALUS, AT SEA, OCTOBER 22, 1805

*Sir,*

*Yesterday a Battle was fought by His Majesty’s Fleet, with the Combined Fleets of Spain and France, and a Victory gained, which will stand recorded as one of the most brilliant and decisive, that ever distinguished the BRITISH NAVY.*

*The enemy’s Fleet sailed from Cadiz on the 19th, in the morning, Thirty-three sail of the Line in number, for the purpose of giving Battle to the British Squadron of Twenty Seven, and yesterday at Eleven A.M. the contest began, close in with the Shoals of Trafalgar.*

*At Five P.M. Seventeen of the Enemy had surrended, and one (L’Achille) burnt, amongst which is the Sta Ana, the Spanish Admiral Don D’Aleva mortally wounded, and the Santissima Trinidad.  The French Admiral VILLENEUVE is now a Prisoner on board the Mars; I believe THREE ADMIRALS are captured.*

*Our loss has been great in Men; but what is irreparable, and the cause of Universal Lamentation is the Death of the NOBLE COMMANDER IN CHIEF, who died in the arms of Victory; I have not yet any reports from the Ships, but have heard that Captain’s DUFF AND COOK fell in the Action.*

*I have to congratulate you upon the Great Event, and have the Honor to be, &c., &c.*

*His Excellency, the Right Hon.*

*The Hon. Gen. H.E. Fox, &c.,&c.*

*Source: Gibraltar Heritage Trust, Gibraltar - April 1996*