

The Trafalgar Connection **A Family Journey From Rhode Island to** **Bitterne, Southampton**

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My grandfather lived in Bitterne and when I was very young, he told me that an ancestor of ours was present at the battle of Trafalgar. I had little interest at the time but in recent years as I became interested in genealogy, I decide to check out his claim.

My grandfather's middle name was Almy which I was told, was his mother's maiden name. Armed with such little information and with little expectation of finding anything of interest I put his name into Google and the 'Find My Past' website and see what it would come up with. From that little information I traced my family back to a George Almy of Stoke Damerel, Devon. I also found the following information in the National Archives.

George Almy aged 30 born in Newport, (Rhode Island) America.

Ship: HMS Pickle.

Rank/Rating: Acting 2nd Master and Pilot.

Ship's pay book number: (SB 98)

10 March 1805.

(Unfortunately, I have been unable to trace any information on his American roots)

From that I was then able to extract more information from various other sources and realised that my grandfather's claim was true, and HMS Pickle and his great grandfather were actually quite important in regard to the aftermath of the Battle of Trafalgar.

The Pickle was the ship that brought the news to England that Nelson had died aboard HMS Victory and that the French had been defeated at Cape Trafalgar.

It is thought that George Almy (born c1775) joined the Royal Navy in Jamaica and in early 1805 joined the Pickle before the ship returned to Plymouth and headed for the waters around Southern Spain. The Pickle was a schooner, a small sailing ship, and had a crew of around thirty-five officers and men. Because of her size and manoeuvrability, she was mostly used for carrying messages and despatches to the rest of the fleet.

Much of the information regarding the Pickle's activities has been taken from George Almy's log, which is held in the National Archives, Kew.

During the Battle of Trafalgar, which began on 21st October 1805, Pickle took no active part. It continued its normal duties plus picking up prisoners and transferring them to more suitable ships that could accommodate them.

On the 24th October Admiral Collingwood instructed the Pickle's commander Lieutenant Lapenotiere to convey his despatches to the King and the Nation, the sad news of Nelson's death and the success of the fleet at Trafalgar. It was always regarded as a great honour for the crew of any ship picked be the bearer of such important news back to Britain.

The Pickle arrived in Falmouth bay on 4th November and Lapenotiere left for London soon after. He reached the Admiralty on Wednesday 6th November after an arduous journey by stagecoach.



George Almy, after the drama of Trafalgar, continued in the Royal Navy. On 5th January it was reported that he was injured in action with the Pickle against the “Favourite” a French Privateer. His injuries were so severe that he was discharged from the ship in late February.

In September 1807 George married Susanna Easton the sister of Able Seaman William Easton a fellow crew member of the Pickle. Their son William, my ancestor was born in Devon in June 1817 one of six children to George and Susanna Almy.

In November 1807 the Secretary to the Admiralty granted Almy an award of two years pay compensating him for the injuries he had received. He must have recovered somewhat as he is recorded as being posted to three more ships although it is believed that these ships were not involved in active duties.

In April 1815 he was declared unfit for duty the record stating “The loss of right arm, gunshot wound and rupture” and at that point probably left the navy. He was also awarded a Navy pension recognising his contribution in bringing the Collingwood despatches back to England.

Susanna Almy died around 1825 and George married a second time and had two more sons. He died in 1836.

William Almy, his son, joined the Navy as a fifteen-year-old but only served eight years before becoming a coastguard boatman. He Married Sarah Furze in 1841 and spent approximately twenty-five years as a coastguard being posted to Kimmeridge and then to Parkstone, both in Dorset.

In the 1861 census William and Sarah were living in Mill Road, Parkstone (Poole). They had, by then, a total of ten children and on the night of the census it included my great grandmother Abigail who was born in 1854.

By 1871 William and Sarah had moved to the Isle of Wight and were living on the High Street, Yarmouth where the Family of William George Kelsey also lived. Their son George probably met Abigail Almy there as they later married in Southampton in 1877.

In 1877 Abigail's mother, Sarah Almy, died aged 59. Her father continued living on the island for some years but by 1891 was living in St Denys, Southampton.

In 1901, William Almy the son of George Almy, the Trafalgar hero, was living in Brintons Road with daughter Abigail Kelsey, son-in-law George and four of his five grandsons including my grandfather Raymond. William Almy died in 1903.

George Kelsey died in 1907 and his widow continued living in Brintons road until her death in 1944. Incidentally, one of my grandfather's brothers continued living in the house until 1967. Perhaps some will remember the house. Viewed from the top deck of a Bitterne bound bus a poster with the slogan "Why kill for food?" was displayed in one of the upstairs windows for many years.

After serving with the Royal Garrison Artillery during WW1 my Grandfather, with my Grandmother, continued living at various addresses in Southampton until WW2 when, to avoid the night-time bombing, they evacuated to Colden Common. After the war they settled in Bitterne where they lived for the next twenty years. The rest of our small family also settled in Bitterne and where I spent my school years.

As far as I know, no great deeds of heroism or claims to fame has touched our side of the family since those heady days of Trafalgar. Perhaps some of the many descendants of George Almy have stories to tell of dedicated service to crown and country.

Finally, regarding the Almy family in America. A William Almy sailed with his family to America around 1635 in the ship 'Abigail' and settled in Rhode Island some years later. I can find no family connection although I will keep trying as I believe there must be some information out there that connects my George Almy to others in Rhode Island.