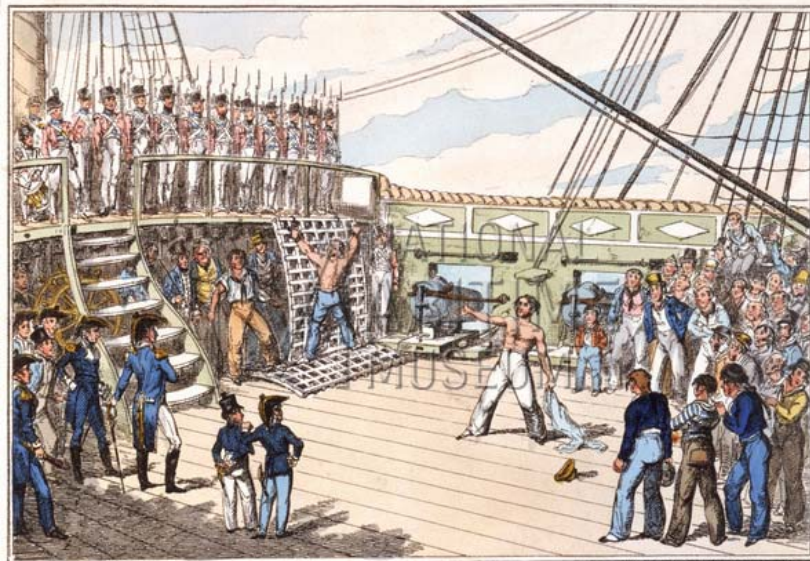


FLOG 'EM

The captain had great power over his crew. The rules were read out every month - some captains read them out on Sundays instead of holding a religious service. For less serious offences, 'grog' (rum) could be stopped or watered down and officers disgraced (demoted). The most common form of punishment was flogging which all the crew had to watch.



The Point of Honor...

The dreaded cry of 'All hands ahoy to witness punishment! At this signal the officers muster [gather] on the spar deck, the men on the main deck. Next came the prisoner guarded by a marine [a soldier who served at sea]. He was marched to the up to the wooden grating. His back was made bare and his shirt laid loosely on his back. The two quartermasters seized a hold of him and tied his feet and arms to the grating. The boatswain's mate (pronounced 'bosun') stood ready with their dreadful weapon of punishment, the cat 'o nine tails'. The cat 'o nine tails is made of nine cords, a quarter of inch thick and about two feet long, ending in fine cords.

The captain gives the word. Carefully spreading the cord it is brought down on the man's shoulders as hard as can be. After two dozen lashes the man's back looks like burnt roasted meat. Four dozen strokes have cut up the man's back and he hangs groaning.

Samuel Leech

Flogging was a frequent punishment in the Navy during Nelson's period. The whole crew other than those working the ship would be assembled aft on the quarterdeck to witness punishment

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London