

THE CHAIRMAN'S DISPATCH

Beyond Trafalgar

At the close of my last Dispatch I left you all to savour the unscripted words of Sir Isaac Heard, Garter Knight at Arms, as Nelson's coffin was lowered into the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral: 'The Hero, who in the moment of Victory, fell covered with Immortal glory'.

The Club's special service and 'funeral' Evensong at St Paul's Cathedral on 9 January 2006 quite remarkably captured the spirit of these words. One club member concluded that it had been "a spectacular event for The 1805 Club". I hope that all of you who were lucky enough to be there would agree. It has undoubtedly enhanced the Club's status and prestige and even the cathedral was taken aback by the power of the occasion.

For me, it was the most moving of all the Trafalgar bicentenary events and the one that will stay vivid in my mind for the rest of my life. The emotional attachment I felt to the original funeral as I recited Sir Isaac Heard's words in the gloom of the Nelson Chamber, with the Admiral's elegant tomb immediately behind me, flanked by Sea Cadets and HMS *Victory's* Cutter Crew, was overpowering:

'Thus it has pleased Almighty God to take from this transitory life the most noble Lord Horatio Nelson...'. The silence from over 100 people standing reverently close by was palpable. '...Viscount and Baron Nelson of the Nile and Burnham Thorpe in the County of Norfolk, Baron Nelson of the Nile and of Hillborough in the said county, Knight of the most Honourable Order of the Bath...'. I could see water glistening in the eyes of many of the 'mourners'. '...Vice Admiral of the White Squadron of the Fleet and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels in the Mediterranean...'. Tears were now flowing down cheeks. '...Also, Duke of Bronte in Sicily, Knight Grand Cross of the Sicilian Order of St Ferdinand and of Merit, Member of the Ottoman Order of the Crescent, Knight Grand Commander of the Order of St Joachim...' And so to the impulsive words, '...The Hero, who in the moment of Victory, fell covered with Immortal glory', followed by, 'Let us trust that he is now raised to a bliss ineffable and a most glorious immortality'. It felt like *this* was the funeral. At the end nobody moved. Nobody wanted to be the first to break the spell.

How Colin White managed to contain his emotions as he delivered his superb lecture about Nelson's religious faith 200 hundred years to the very moment the coffin descended to the crypt I cannot imagine!

As Heard's words left my lips it became clear that after more than ten years of celebrating the bicentenaries of Nelson's achievements we were on the brink of an incredible threshold. This was indeed the defining, poignant moment. There was a powerful sense of something unique, a sense of awe, and a true sense of loss. Not only were we all a part of Nelson's 'most glorious immortality', we were also among those privileged to be its caretakers. So while there was a sense of closure there was a sense of aspiration and optimism about the future as well.

The 1805 Club's work does not suddenly come to an end because it is 2006! No other organisation conserves the monuments and memorials from the era of the Georgian sailing navy. In fact, because of the interest aroused by the bicentenary of Trafalgar and Nelson's death we are needed even more. This interest is demonstrated by the growth in Club membership, which in 2005 at last exceeded 500 – the target we set ourselves five years ago under Colin's chairmanship. This is an important landmark in the Club's progress. May I extend a warm welcome to all our newest members and assure the membership as a whole that the Club will continue to strive to reward your valued support with exciting intellectual and social activities even as it gets on with its core business of conservation.

In this context there is good news to report. Thanks largely to the skill and hard work of Chris Gray, our redoubtable fundraiser, the Club has received grants totalling £11,450 from the Manifold Trust, Leche Trust and Francis Coales Trust. This has allowed us to progress the conservation work on three of the seven Trafalgar Captain graves, namely Captain Charles Bullen (*Britannia*), at St. Mary's Church, South Stoneham, Southampton; Captain Thomas Dundas (*Naiad*), at St. Nicholas Church, Hurst near Reading; and Lieutenant John Richards Lapenotiere (*Pickle*), at Menheniot Church, Cornwall. At the time of writing the work is underway and this is therefore an opportunity for me to also thank Graham Simpson and our surveyor, John Kerr, for all they have done to bring the projects to fruition. The conservation work is being carried out by Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey. Their past experience includes work at King's College, Cambridge, Norwich Cathedral, Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey.



Chris Gray is now concentrating on raising funds for the conservation of Captain Thomas Capel's (*Phoebe*) grave at Kensal Green, London; and Captain Henry Bayntun's (*Leviathan*) tomb at All Saints Church, Weston, Bath. The Club will use its own funds to conserve the graves of Captain Sir Edward Berry (*Agamemnon*), at St. Swithins Church, Walcot, Bath; and Captain Richard Grindall (*Prince*), at St. Nicholas Church, Wickham, Hampshire. The total cost of the conservation work for all seven Trafalgar Captain graves amounts to £26, 835.

The Trafalgar Captains and other legacies of the Trafalgar bicentenary will be ever present and Nelson will continue to be at the very heart of everything we do. Yet, we are fortunate that the Club's charitable objects allow it to spread its influence and activity beyond Nelson and Trafalgar. We have been doing so for years of course, and few joined the Club solely because of 2005. Our shared interests go much deeper than that. Consequently, we shall build on our achievements attained throughout the Nelson Decade and harness not only the naval story during the remainder of the Napoleonic Wars, but also look at some of the key events of the era that influenced Nelson, such as the 225th anniversary of the Battle of the Saintes (1782) in 2007.

Moreover, between now and 2010 we are in the 'Collingwood Years'. Napoleon's abandonment of plans to invade England and his stunning victory over the Austrians at Austerlitz on 2 December 1805 meant that the Mediterranean theatre assumed an even higher strategic significance just as Collingwood was taking the mantle from Nelson as Commander in Chief. In 1828, Thomas Creevey summed up the crucial role Collingwood played between 1805 and his death in 1810, when he wrote that: 'Collingwood alone by his sagacity and decision, his prudence and moderation, sustained the interests of England and eternally defeated the projects of France. He was, in truth, the prime and sole minister of England, acting upon the seas, corresponding himself with all surrounding states, and ordering and executing everything upon his own responsibility.'

Indeed Captain Hugh Owen RN has proposed that Collingwood was the most important admiral in active service between the death of Nelson in 1805 and Jellicoe's command of the Grand fleet in 1914. The Club will be looking more closely at this, Collingwood's forgotten career.

HMS *Collingwood* is one of the Club's corporate members and in recognition of our work, including The Trafalgar Captains, and strengthening links with the establishment, Commodore Adrian Nance RN OBE, Commodore of HMS *Collingwood*, invited members of Council to join Collingwood descendants at a special dinner in the Wardroom on 9 February. This was followed (early!) the next morning by attendance at Divisions as over 100 young sailors passed out of one of the many intensive training courses run by HMS *Collingwood*'s Maritime Warfare School (MWS) The MWS is the largest naval training organisation in Western Europe. At any one time it is training 10 per cent of the Service and has an annual throughput of 35,000 officers and ratings, both regular and reserve, for the evolving navy. Such is the quality and reputation of its courses that it also trains officers from the navies around the world. Commodore Nance highlighted the similarities between Collingwood's leadership approach and the spirit informing training at MWS today.

The link the Club has with HMS *Collingwood* reaffirms the relevance of its conservation and research work to the contemporary world. In the coming years the Club expects to fortify its links with the Royal Navy, the Royal Naval Reserve and the Sea Cadet Corps.

In my last Chairman's Dispatch I asked you to send in pictures, details and reflections of your involvement in the Trafalgar bicentenary commemorations. Your response has been wonderful. We have gathered sufficient material, to produce an eight page special Trafalgar celebration supplement with this issue of *The Kedge Anchor*. Meanwhile, you are welcome to continue to send in your photographs and descriptions of your personal experiences of the events you organised or went to.

May I remind you that the next Annual General Meeting of the Club is on Saturday, 22 April at the Old Royal Naval College Greenwich. This is one of the highlights of our calendar and I hope that we shall see you there. Among other things it will be an opportunity for you to discuss 'Beyond Trafalgar'. I'm delighted to announce that after the meeting Commander P. Blanchford RN Retd. will deliver this year's Cecil Isaacson Memorial Lecture. His subject is Lieutenant Lapenotiere's journey from Cadiz to the Admiralty. It is based on a wealth of original and fascinating research and contains a few surprises!

With all good wishes,

Peter Warwick

