

40th
ANNIVERSARY
1981-2021

The Nelson Dispatch



**Journal of
The Nelson Society**

Volume 14 Part 3 Summer 2021

The Nelson Society

Aims and Objectives

To advance public education in the appreciation of the life and achievements of Admiral Lord Nelson

President

The Honourable Peregrine Nelson Hood

Life Vice Presidents

Dr Keith Wood FRCP Raglan Tribe

Chairman

Graham Capel
Nyes Place, Rusper Road
Newdigate
Surrey RH5 5BX
T: 01293 871541, 07845 341781
E: chairman@nelson-society.com

Treasurer

Graham Capel
(as above)
E: treasurer.nelsonsociety@gmail.com

Vice Chairman

Chris Brett
203A Finchampstead Road
Wokingham
Berks RG40 3HS
T: 01184 370127, 07885 403874
E: chris.brett52@yahoo.co.uk

Secretary

Sue Morris
46 Faraday Road
West Molesey
Surrey KT8 2TQ
T: 07753 615948
E: susan.morris0410@gmail.com

Honorary Editor *The Nelson Dispatch*

Martyn Downer
Puttocks End
Anstey
Hertfordshire SG9 0DG
T: 07565 641347
E: martyn.downer@btinternet.com

Executive Editor, *The Nelson Dispatch*

Sue Morris
E: susan.morris0410@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

Sue Morris
E: memsecretary@nelson-society.com

Committee Members

Web Editor

Alan Cross
5 Eyebright Close, Horton Heath
Hampshire SO50 7PQ
T: 02380 601572
E: webeditor@nelson-society.com

Ronnie Kane

56 Kingsferry Court
Renfrew PA4 8RB
Scotland
T: 0141 886 5180
E: roninspain2010@gmail.com

Jeanette Ryder

2 Comley Court, Bell Street
Romsey SO51 8AL
T: 01794 521121
E: jeanetteyardley4@yahoo.co.uk

Paul Ganjou

Nelson House
78 New Cavendish Street
London W1G 9TD
T: 020 7631 2002
E: paul@ganjou.com

Brian Gibbs

579 Newbold Road
Chesterfield
Derbyshire S41 8AA
T: 01246 203924
E: briangibbs@hotmail.co.uk

Stephen Pask

4 The Square House
The Buttlands
Wells-next-the-Sea
Norfolk NR23 1EY
T: 01328 711878
E: sfapask@gmail.com

Coopted

Alastair Robertson
Ashleigh House
Nenthead Road
Alston
Cumbria CA9 3SN
E: alastair.f.robertson@googlemail.com

Secretaries of Regional Groups, Historian and Honorary Chaplain

East Anglia

Stephen Pask
(as above)

Portsmouth & South

Jeanette Ryder
(as above)

Scotland & North East

Ronnie Kane
(as above)

North America & Canada

Neil Olson
1105A Scarlet Oak Drive
Hudson, Ohio 44236 USA
T: 001-630-930-9940
E: nelson8@gmail.com

Historian

Lt Col Ray Aldis
Rosewood, Wylve Road
Hanging Langford
Salisbury, Wiltshire SP3 4NW
T: 01722 790716
E: randl@rippy.co.uk

Honorary Chaplain

Revd Terry Colling

The Nelson Society, founded 1981. Registered Charity No. 296 979

Website: www.nelson-society.com

The Nelson Dispatch

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Cover illustration: ‘The boy stood on the burning deck’, Print c 1913

EDITORIAL

‘The boy stood on the burning deck’ is—as the late Henri Lachèze observes in the first part of our excellent feature article: ‘The Remarkable Story Linking a Young Boy to Admiral Nelson and Napoleon Bonaparte’—one of the most cited and familiar poetic lines in British literature, up there with ‘lonely as a cloud’ and ‘To be or not to be’. It is also one of the most thoroughly misunderstood, with its author, and the rest of her poem, almost completely unknown today. Youth making heroic sacrifice is an extremely powerful and enduring image, and was often invoked during both world wars. I admit that for many years I thought the poem pictured sixteen-year-old Jack Cornwall VC at the Battle of Jutland. In fact, the true story is as extraordinary as the life of the woman who wrote it and we will discover more over the next two editions of the *Nelson Dispatch*.

Elsewhere there is good news on the long awaited re-opening of the famed Lord Nelson pub at Burnham Thorpe (with the tantalising prospect of a birthplace museum to follow) but also a concerning report on the removal of the magnificent Nelson collection at Monmouth from the Market Hall to the Shire Hall. Certainly the conservation and security of the collection at the Market Hall location was an urgent and pressing concern—and its display badly outdated and needing attention—but a move to Shire Hall risks consigning much of the collection to long term storage with uncertain access to visitors and researchers. The £250,000 earmarked by Monmouthshire County Council for preparing storage and display facilities at Shire Hall—a huge amount—may have been better spent at Market Hall if the real intention is to showcase the Nelson collection to the visitor benefit of the town, which I fear is probably not the case. If MCC is unable, or unwilling, to provide full display and access to the collection, gifted to the town by Lady Llangattock, it should be prepared to loan highlights—including its highly important, poorly catalogued and underutilised collection of Nelson papers and letters—to an appropriate institution such as the National Museum of the Royal Navy at Portsmouth. Otherwise, like the ill-fated Nelson Museum at Great Yarmouth, the many wonderful artefacts, relics and papers at Monmouth will disappear out of sight and, eventually, out of mind too.

Martyn Downer, August 2021

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

‘The blockade is lifted at last! However, the enemy is still there, lurking just over the horizon. So, it is still a time to be watchful and cautious. All lookouts remain on duty and observant, but we can stand down from general quarters alert, and relax a little.’ By the time that you will be reading this, we will be only a few weeks from the first Nelson Society event for 19 months. Our last event was the Battle of St Vincent lecture at The Union Jack Club in February 2020. Our renewed social calendar starts with our Battle of Copenhagen commemorative event on 19-21 September 2021 at the Royal Worcester ceramics city, organised by Robin Cade and Marina Deestan-Jones. I am very much looking forward to an enjoyable and interesting three days. It is only my second event as Chairman of The Nelson Society, now in my second year of office. I have seen the preview of our Auction of Nelson-related memorabilia, many items having been left to the Society by members from their personal collections. There are certainly some real bargains to be had, and a number of inexpensive items for you to ‘dabble with’. Good luck - I hope you enjoy taking part.

Only a month later, on 22 - 24 October we are holding our Trafalgar Weekend in the City of London. To date bookings are looking good, particularly for our Trafalgar Banquet at Drapers’ Hall when we expect up to 100 guests. Our principal speaker will be our own Art Historian and Author Martyn Downer. Martyn will give us a short talk on the famous Beechey portrait at Drapers’ Hall, but will talk more extensively on his and Chris Brett’s investigation into the apparently incriminating Nelson letter about slavery, which caused so much controversy recently. On behalf of The Nelson Society, they managed to establish it as a forgery all those years ago. The reverberations from the letter are still felt today with the defamatory allegations made against Lord Nelson in the popular press and in some anti-slavery movements, and by certain ill-informed and malicious reporters. It should be an interesting evening.

We are already thinking of next year. As you will read later in this issue, we have been invited to attend the commemoration of the 225th anniversary of the Battle of Santa Cruz in Tenerife, where Nelson lost his arm. Our visit will take place from 20-27 July 2022. We need to know how many members might attend, so please do register your interest as soon as possible.

We have invited Sir Alan Massey and Dr John Sugden to become Vice Presidents of the Society. They will be formally proposed at the AGM. Sadly, Lord Walpole died recently. He was an early member and held Membership Number 1805. He was President of the Society from 2004 – 2017.

Finally, do not forget that 2021 is the 40th anniversary of The Nelson Society. We are holding an anniversary luncheon at the Norfolk Club in Norwich on 28 November, the same date and venue where it all began 40 years ago.

Graham Capel, August 2021

PRIZE QUIZ

Thanks to all who submitted answers to our Prize Quiz by historian Ray Aldis. FIRST Prize goes to Robert and Maureen King of Plymouth who win a ticket to our Trafalgar Banquet on 23 October.

MIDDLE Prize goes to Tim Scott of Stourbridge who wins a ticket to our Copenhagen Dinner at Worcester on 19 September.

THIRD Category Prize goes to Paul Kocher of Hemel Hempstead who wins a dinner ticket for Pickle Night at Portsmouth on 13 November.

Well done to all. In addition, each winner will receive an inscribed and signed copy of Martyn Downer's book 'Nelson's Lost Jewel'.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

A warm welcome to new members Colin Hothersall, Victor Brownlees, Gary Morgan and Richard Patrick. We look forward to meeting you. New members are always very welcome and if you know of any potential new members and I can send them details. Thinking ahead to Christmas or birthdays, membership of The Nelson Society makes a good present for the enthusiast and we can arrange Gift Membership including a Welcome Pack with complimentary copies of our publications. The more members we have, the more events and activities we can arrange. Contact me for more information.

We are sorry to lose member and former Nelson Society President Lord Walpole, who passed away in May, and a separate obituary appears elsewhere in this issue. Sadly we also lost one of our few Netherlands members, Sylvia von Freytag Drabbe, a supporter since 2005, and I have just heard that Elizabeth Baker has passed away, she was a popular and dedicated member of 23 years who will be greatly missed.

Sue Morris, Membership Secretary



HONORARY MEMBER DR MICHAEL DUFFY

We are pleased to announce that Michael Duffy has accepted our invitation to become an Honorary Member of The Nelson Society. Michael was formerly Dean of Arts, Head of History and Director of the Centre for Maritime Studies at Exeter University. He was the Editor of *The Mariner's Mirror*, *The Journal of the Society for Nautical Research* throughout the 1990s, and has been Senior Vice President and Chair of Council of the Navy Records Society, on whose publications committee he still sits. In 2011 he spoke at The Nelson Society's Trafalgar Weekend in Bristol on 'Nelson and the West Indies'. His books on naval subjects include *The Military Revolution and the State 1500-1800* (1980); *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower* (1987); *Parameters of British Naval Power 1650-1850* (1992); *The New Maritime History of Devon* (1992, 1994) edited with S. Fisher, B. Greenhill,

D. Starkey and J. Youngs; *The Younger Pitt* (2000); *The Glorious First of June: a naval battle and its aftermath* (2003) edited with R. Morriss; *Touch and Take: the Battle of Trafalgar* (2005) for the 1805 Club; “*All was hushed up*”- *The hidden Trafalgar* (2005) for *The Mariner’s Mirror* Trafalgar Bicentenary edition (Vol 91, No2); and, with R. Mackay, *Hawke, Nelson and British Naval Leadership in the Age of Sail 1747-1805* (2009).

We welcome Michael and look forward to continuing our association with him.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2021/2022

All dates are now confirmed, but are subject to any further unforeseen changes in the Covid 19 situation. For information please contact committee members/organisers as indicated, and check the website for updates.

Battle of Copenhagen Commemorative Event, Worcester: 19-21 Sept 2021. Commemorative dinner and lecture, walking tour of Worcester, Auction, discussion and Film Show. See Spring ‘*Nelson Dispatch*’ for full details and Booking Form (Robin Cade). Places are still available - contact Robin as soon as possible on evergreen14@btinternet.com.

Trafalgar Weekend & 40th AGM, City of London: 22-24 Oct 2021. AGM on HQS Wellington, Trafalgar Dinner in Drapers’ Hall, City walking tour, visit College of Arms and Nelson’s tomb in St Paul’s Cathedral. See Spring ‘*Nelson Dispatch*’ for full details and Booking Form (Graham Capel). Closing date for bookings officially 31 Aug but contact us now if you still wish to book.

Pickle Night & Remembrance weekend, Portsmouth: 13 Nov 2021. Further information and Booking details below (Jeanette Ryder).

40th Anniversary Celebration Lunch, Norwich: 28 Nov 2021. Further information and Booking details below (Chris Brett/Sue Morris).

Battle of St Vincent Commemorative Luncheon and Lecture, London: 11 Feb 2022. At the Union Jack Club, near Waterloo Station. Speaker Michael Naxton on ‘The Orders and Medals bestowed upon Nelson and his fellow Flag Officers’. Booking details will be given in the Autumn ‘*Nelson Dispatch*’.

Battle of Copenhagen Commemorative Event, Chichester: 2/3 April 2022. Further details/Booking Form with the next ‘*Nelson Dispatch*’ (Brian Gibbs).

225th Anniversary of the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife: 20-27 July 2022. Visit to Tenerife to take part in the commemoration. Further details below – register your interest now (Alastair Robertson).

Battle of the Nile Commemorative Luncheon, Buxton: 30 July 2022. Details to follow in 2022 (Jeanette Ryder).

41st Annual General Meeting and Trafalgar Weekend, Norfolk: 22 Oct 2022. Details to follow in 2022.

**PICKLE NIGHT & REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND, PORTSMOUTH:
13-14 November 2021**

Jeanette Ryder

In commemoration of the journey of HMS *PICKLE* bearing the news of Trafalgar and Lord Horatio Nelson's death, The Nelson Society is again holding its annual Pickle Night Dinner at the Royal Maritime Club Hotel, in the 'Below Decks' function room, which is themed around the working areas of a navy ship, with iron beams, portholes, engine room features and comfortable seating space. The evening will cost £39.00 per person, with a new menu comprising a 3-course meal, half-bottle of wine per person, coffee/tea and port for the toasts.

The Bar will be open from 6.45pm and members are requested to arrive in good time to be seated at 7.30pm. We are happy to announce that the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Frank Jonas, is our Special Guest and will give a talk entitled 'Observations about the Old Pubs of Portsmouth'. The Lord Mayor was an apprentice in Portsmouth Dockyard in 1962 and his ancestor was a Bosun onboard HMS *Victory* in 1852.

Accommodation is available at the Royal Maritime Club Hotel, just a short walk from the Historic Naval Dockyard, at a discounted price of £112.50 Double or Twin incl. breakfast, and £95 Single incl. breakfast. Please telephone direct to the RMC Hotel: 02392 824231, quoting The Nelson Society. There are several other excellent hotels nearby and I can give you details if you contact me.

Please book your places using the enclosed Booking Form, with your dinner menu choices and a cheque payable to THE NELSON SOCIETY, sent direct to Jeanette Ryder at: 2 Comley Court, Bell Street, Romsey, S051 8AL.

Please indicate on the Booking Form if you are also interested in attending a Rustic Supper at 'Ye Spotted Dogge' on Friday 12 November. Seats are limited and Jeanette will contact you regarding places and costs of this additional event.

14 November - Remembrance Day Service and Parade

The Remembrance Day Parade will be held in front of the magnificent Portsmouth Guildhall on Sunday, 14 November. This is an impressive parade with many veterans and bands taking part, including the world famous Royal Marines Band, choirs, Marines and cadets. Portsmouth Guildhall is just a ten minute walk (or a short taxi ride) from the Royal Maritime Club Hotel. This is open to all, and would be a wonderful finish to our weekend in Portsmouth. There will be a guided walk with tea/coffee and VIP placing on the steps of Portsmouth Guildhall. If you wish to attend, please indicate on the Booking Form.

NEW YORK CITY PICKLE NIGHT, VIRTUAL EVENT: 5 NOV 2021

The American Friends of the National Museum of the Royal Navy are commemorating Trafalgar and Pickle Night with a special online gathering, which will take you to Portsmouth, England, and will be filled with surprises. Advance registration is required. Details on the website www.AFNMRN.org, or email info@afnmrn.org, or call our New York headquarters at +1 (212) 840-1166.

**THE NELSON SOCIETY'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION LUNCH AT THE NORFOLK CLUB, NORWICH
SUNDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2021**

Sue Morris and Chris Brett

This year The Nelson Society will be 40 years old on 28 November. On that date in 1981, the inaugural meeting took place in the Norfolk Club, Norwich, and 32 people attended the meeting. On the 40th anniversary of that event we will be holding a Celebration Lunch at the Norfolk Club, and the Chairman and Committee are pleased to invite members to attend.



The Norfolk Club is situated at 17 Upper King Street, in the centre of Norwich, between the Cathedral and the Castle and only a short distance from the railway station. A Private Members' Club founded in 1770, it is the third oldest Club in the UK and one of the only traditional county clubs still in its original building, a fine Grade 2 listed Georgian town house. We will have exclusive use of the Norfolk Club for the day.

After a welcome drink in the Bar from 12.00 we shall sit down in the Dining Room at 12.45 for a 3-course formal lunch followed by the

Address and Toasts. Guests will be presented with an advance copy of our new 'History of The Nelson Society' (available subsequently to all members).

This will be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the achievements of The Nelson Society over the past 40 years and we very much hope that you will want to join us on 28 November. All members are welcome to come, and depending on space, we hope to accommodate partners and guests too, but should there be a high demand, we are sure you will understand that we would like to give priority to members, and particularly veteran members and officials who have contributed to the achievements of the Society over the past 40 years. Especially welcome will be those who attended the original meeting in 1981 although we believe that only four of these remain, including two of our Founder Members, and there are perhaps only 10 people now who have been members for the entire 40 years.

Tickets cost £50 per person and if you would like to attend, please complete the enclosed Booking Form and send to Sue Morris. Priority will be given to bookings received before 30 September in case of high demand. Once we have confirmed your places we will inform you of the payment due.

In keeping with the special nature of the event and the Club Rules, the dress code for the event will be 'smart' (jacket & tie for gentlemen, no jeans or trainers). Limited accommodation is available at the Norfolk Club although the city of Norwich offers many alternative options if you wish to stay over.

Please ask if you require parking information. Further details on the Club website <https://www.thenorfolkclub.co.uk/home/>
For further information about this event please contact Sue Morris or Chris Brett.

225th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE, VISIT TO TENERIFE: 20-27 July 2022

Brian Gibbs

The Nelson Society has been invited to be the guests of the Tertulia de Amigos del 25 de Julio 1797 (The Group of Friends of 25 July 1797) next year to join them in participating and witnessing their celebrations.

Next year sees the 225th anniversary of the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, in which many British lives were lost, a Royal Navy cutter was sunk, and where Nelson's right arm was shattered by gunfire and had to be amputated. Although the event is not widely known in Britain, in Tenerife it is the proudest moment in the history of the island.

Every year those perilous five days in July 1797 are commemorated by a series of events, ranging from a thanksgiving mass to St. James, or Santiago, the Spanish warrior-saint whose day is 25 July, when his image is paraded through the streets, to exhibitions, literary works, a concert, a stage play based on the attack, to the most spectacular of all, a re-enactment of the fighting in the city streets, with cannon fire and musketry echoing through the night.

There is an excellent permanent exhibition in the military museum that includes a huge diorama with an English commentary, a large selection of original British items in cases, including two flags, and, not to be missed, there are some of the fortifications of the day still standing.

An interesting itinerary of visits and events for those members who join the trip, has been arranged by The Group of Friends of 25 July 1797. The detailed itinerary will be emailed to all those who express interest in joining the visit. We need to know how many people are likely to want to take part, therefore **PLEASE REGISTER EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST BY SUNDAY 12 SEPT by email to: alastair.f.robertson@gmail.com**

For more information, please telephone Brian Gibbs on 01246 203924.

The Nelson Society group will depart on Wednesday 20 July 2022, from London Luton Airport with easyJet Flight EZY2037 at 14.20, and return on Wednesday 27 July easyJet Flight EZY2038 departing at 19.25. Individuals should make their own reservation/s.

The transfer to the Hotel from the airport, for those on Flight EZY2037 will be arranged by TEN TRAVEL. Members can choose to make their own flight and transfer arrangements to join the group at the hotel.

Hotel arrangements will be made by TEN TRAVEL, once we know who is joining the group, but members will need to pay their own hotel charges direct.

TEN TRAVEL is an agency based in Tenerife with links to The Group of Friends of 25 July 1797.

NELSON MUSEUM, MONMOUTH

In the last issue we reported a proposal to move Monmouth's museum and its important collection of Nelson memorabilia from the Market Hall to the town's historic Shire Hall. On 10 June it was announced that the move will go ahead as part of a £2.6 million project. We summarise below an email to Louis Hodgkin on 12 August from Rachael Rogers, Monmouth Museums & Arts Manager:

'The Museum is not closing but is moving to a different location. The feasibility report as to whether the museum could be accommodated in Shire Hall was approved by the Council in July. The Council has approved a phased approach to the delivery of the new museum within Shire Hall including funding to establish an initial phase. It is anticipated that this initial provision would be in place later in 2021. The work on security and environmental adaptations is particularly important in relation to the Nelson Collection. The nature of the collection means it is subject to much stronger security needs and elements of collection such as the Nelson letters require stricter environmental requirements than our more robust social history and archaeology collections. We anticipate therefore the need to improve security and environmental conditions to meet the needs of the Nelson Collection will take longer.

The collection is very much valued in the town and by the museum service and is regarded as very much part of the local story. We will develop the storytelling brief and the detailed plans for the longer term provision through a wide consultative process gathering visitor and community responses. We will also consult with groups such as the Nelson Society who have a specialist knowledge. This is an ideal opportunity to improve our interpretation of the collection. There is no intention to dispose of anything in the Nelson collection. In fact at the moment we are working through the collection, carrying out detailed inventories and improving our catalogue records, including adding professionally taken photographs to our database. We are also working with a paper conservator to carry out a project to improve the 'housing' of the Nelson Manuscripts. That is happening over this summer and into the autumn. We have also had some Covid Recovery funding to put our collections across all of our museums on line. <https://www.monlifecollections.co.uk/> There are currently around 50 Nelson items on there and he also appears on our 'People' page. There is still a lot of items in the Nelson Collection to add to this which we will be able to do as we work through the improvement of the database'.

LORD NELSON PUB, BURNHAM THORPE

Our East Anglia Secretary Stephen Pask reports that the 'Lord Nelson' at last reopened on 3 June after a five-year closure. Stephen says they have done a terrific job of modernising the pub without losing the 'Nelson Touch'. The interior has

new features including a dining space in the extension, but includes many original features including the hatch-style bar in the tap room and a restored mural of the



Battle of Trafalgar (pictured left). Woodforde's Head of Retail Mike Phillips said to the Eastern Daily Press "Every picture or print inside has some historical relevance, but we were at pains to avoid it becoming a Nelson theme park."

The pub was originally erected in 1637 as an alehouse called 'The Plough'. Nelson visited

many times during his 'five years on the beach' and when in 1793 he was finally given command of a ship, the *Agamemnon*, he laid on a meal at the pub for the villagers. In 1798 the pub was renamed 'The Lord Nelson', after his victory at

the Battle of the Nile. Since 2016 the pub has been registered as an asset of community value. It was bought in 2019 by Holkham Estates who have undertaken the restoration.



There are apparently some staffing problems (currently all over North Norfolk in the whole of the hospitality trade and at the height of the tourist season) but we are sure this will be only temporary, the pub is looking great and we will look forward to a future visit.



CONGRATULATIONS TO EMMA AND SUNNY

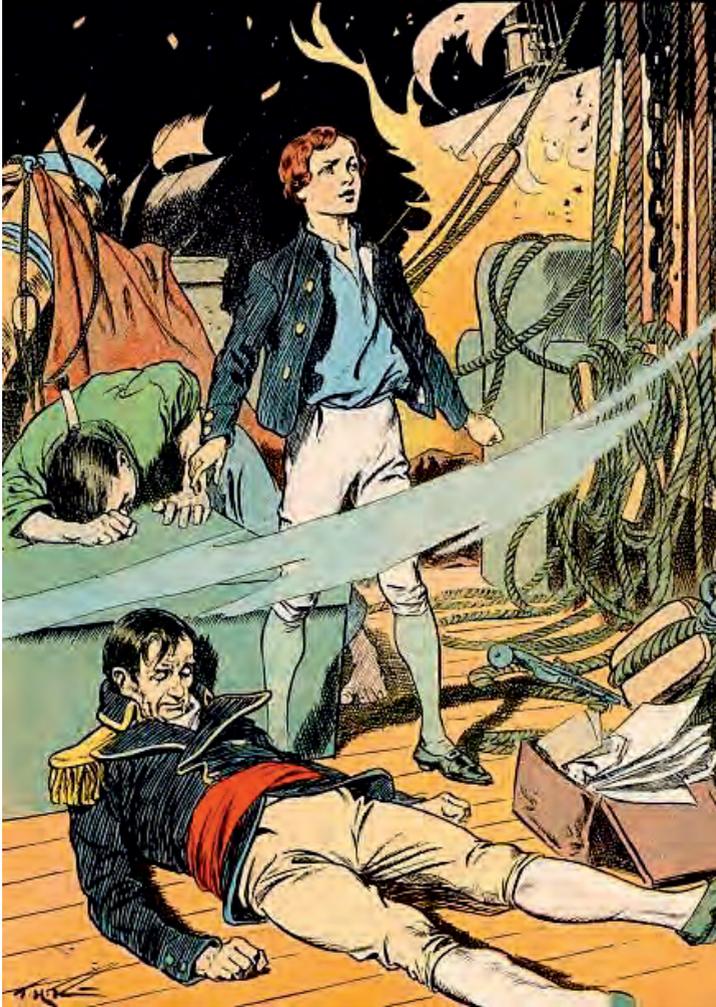
We are delighted to report that Emma Tribe (daughter of Raglan and Susan) and Sunny Ramgolam were married on 5 August, in the Lord Nelson Room at Merton House (Merton Registry Office). No doubt Nelson would have liked to know that his 5 times Great-Granddaughter was married so close to the house that he lived in with Emma Hamilton.

Our congratulations to the happy couple.

ARTICLES

THE BOY ON THE BURNING DECK The Remarkable Story Linking a Young Boy to Admiral Nelson and Napoleon Bonaparte

Henri Lachèze



Boy on the Burning Deck, print, circa 1913

About the author

Henri Lachèze 1939-2011 (Officier des Palmes Académiques)

HENRI LACHEZE was a diplomat and historian who gained recognition in France as an expert on little-known aspects of Napoleonic naval battles. Writing from a French perspective, he published in both French and English, (*La Revue Maritime, The Nelson Dispatch, The Naval Review* etc) and was often called upon to be guest speaker by English-speaking audiences at naval functions and historical societies. He gave a regular series of lectures in his native Aquitaine.

At the same time, he was a celebrated writer of Haiku verse and his fourth volume of collected poems in English and French was published to critical acclaim in the autumn of 2009. He was a recipient of the prestigious Manaichu Haiku prize in Tokyo in 2008 as well as numerous other poetry awards.

Henri Lachèze died in 2011 leaving behind an unfinished manuscript on the significance of the well-known poem *The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck*. His wife, Marie Lachèze-Ber undertook to edit and expand it into this present form. We are grateful to Marie for allowing *The Nelson Dispatch* to publish her late husband's work, which will appear in three parts over three issues. We previously published a shorter version of his work in *The Nelson Dispatch* Vol 8 Part 3 July 2003.

PART ONE

Foreword

As an amateur maritime historian with a specific interest in Napoleon's navy, I am often asked to address English-speaking audiences on the French perspective of some of the great naval confrontations between France and Britain. It no longer comes as any great surprise to me to see that many verifiable facts which may enhance, mitigate or diminish the glory and achievement of one side or the other, have been distorted, contradicted or quite simply omitted, and that the same event can be seen in many different lights.

Spending as much time as I do unravelling misconceptions and demonstrating that 'given facts' don't always reveal the truth, it was with great delight that in the course of my research into one of Napoleon's most important sea battles, the Battle of the Nile, I came across the poem which opens with the lines 'The boy stood on the burning deck' based on events during this battle. This poem commemorates a documented incident in the course of the 1798 Battle of the Nile which pitted the British fleet against the French during the Napoleonic wars, during which the captain of the French flagship, *l'Orient*, Luc Casabianca, perished together with his young son Giancante when the ship exploded.

Digging a little deeper into the background of this poem, I realised that it encapsulated perfectly the relationship between the English and the French. Although written when the Napoleonic wars were over, it is a faithful reflection

not only of popular sentiment at that time, but also of the divergence between the French and English perception of historical events.

Indeed, French and British historians will probably never fully agree on who did what nor on the true significance of a given event whether at Agincourt or Waterloo, Marignan or Fontenoy (and how many English readers will know about these last two, both ‘glorious victories’ of the French over the English?). However it is this historical relativity which makes the study of past events so interesting and contributes to heated discussions and lively debate.

Because I also write poetry, I was equally fascinated by the form and fortunes of this poem. Why does it have such a place in the affections of the British and what is it about its form that makes it so open to parody? Its fame on one side of the channel and total obscurity on the other is only to be expected because poetry rarely translates well from one language to another. But my exploration of the poem and the historical events on which it was based, took many unexpected twists and turns which together with some fascinating insights into the Franco-British relationship, presented me with a number of delightful surprises.

I am probably more qualified to write about the great naval battle which was the inspiration for the poem than on the poem itself, but it is such a classic and so worthy of comment, that I enlisted the help of two eminent Professors, David Crystal of the University of Wales, Bangor, and Professor Susan Wolfson of Princeton University. They enabled me to write this book with some views and analysis about the writing, publishing and subsequent fortunes of a poem which today is almost exclusively remembered for its first line.

I have endeavoured to place the poem within the fraught and controversial context of Nelson’s confrontation with Napoleon’s navy and to show how a bizarre sequence of events involving the hero of the well-known poem, brought together two great nations on either side of the channel.

From time to time in the course of my research, I came across snippets of information which although perhaps not directly relevant to this tale, I have included by way of amusement. It is a small indulgence and I hope you will find them as interesting as I do.

Throughout this book I refer to the great battle at its heart by its English name, ‘The Battle of the Nile’ although in French it is known as ‘The Battle of Aboukir’.

The poem

Casabianca

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle’s wreck,
Shone round him o’er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though childlike-form.

The flames rolled on - he would not go
Without his Father's word;
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He called aloud- 'Say father, say,
If yet my task is done?
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

'Speak, father!' once again he cried,
'If I may yet be gone!'
And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair;
And look'd from that lone post of death
In still yet brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,
'My father! must I stay?'
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapped the ship in splendour wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And streamed above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound -
The boy-oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part,
But the noblest thing which perished there
Was that young faithful heart.



'The boy on the deck' 20th century print – James Edwin McConnell

In 1826, an English poet Felicia Hemans published this poem which was to become one of the English-speaking world's most recognisable pieces of verse, with its first line: 'The boy stood on the burning deck'.

Today, some two hundred years later, it ranks with other memorable works famous for their first line such as Wordsworth's 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' and Shakespeare's 'To be or not to be'. Not many of us can complete the first line of this poem accurately, only a few can manage the second line, while fewer still are able to recite an entire stanza. However, whereas Shakespeare and Wordsworth remain household names, the author of the poem is totally unknown to the general public and the circumstances which inspired it are as obscure as its unrecognised hero.

This poem written by Mrs Hemans relates the last moments of Giancante Casabianca, the 12-year-old son of the ship's captain, Luc Casabianca, on board Napoleon's flagship *l'Orient* when it exploded during the Battle of the Nile on August 1 1789.

The poem itself mentions no names and gives no clue as to the historical context of the boy's death. It might legitimately be supposed therefore that the poem is the fruit of a Victorian poet's vivid, or morbid, imagination. Even the title is confusing since there seems to be no connection between the content of the poem and the title. Indeed, there is even a discussion relayed on the internet as to whether the title *Casabianca* is a misspelling of 'Casablanca' referring to the city in Morocco, or that the poem is of Italian origin. The truth of the matter is that beyond the first line no-one pays much attention to a poem which to modern ears sounds faintly absurd.

As we shall see, this poem is worthy of much greater respect and consideration than normally accorded to it, not only for its intrinsic worth as a model of Victorian verse, the merits of which we can leave to the scholars to

debate (and they do!), but also because it is about a real event, a real boy, in a real battle whose death occurred in circumstances which led to a series of events which are very surprising and make for a story worth telling.

Felicia Hemans (1793-1835)



Contemporary portrait - William Holl Sr

The poem's author, Felicia Hemans, usually referred to as Mrs Hemans, was born in Liverpool but lived in Wales during her childhood and always thought of herself as Welsh. She was fortunate enough to have had a mother who gave her an excellent home education, taught her many languages and recognised and encouraged Felicia's precocious talent for poetry. Felicia was not yet 15 when in 1808 she published two highly acclaimed volumes of poetry. These were followed in 1812 by a collection of poems on family life and thus began a highly successful and prolific, as well as lucrative, career as a much admired and lauded poet of her day.

She married Alfred Hemans, an army captain, at 19, had her first child within a year and had a further four children in the space of seven years, before being abandoned by him in 1819 when she was just 26. In 1831 she moved to Dublin to be near her brother where she died in 1835 at the age of 42.

Her almost instant success in 1812 coincided with the start of a very busy domestic life but this did not seem to impinge on her creativity. It was thought that Captain Hemans left her to live in Italy, not only because he had serious health problems and needed the sun, but also because Felicia's fast-growing family and amazing literary success left little room for him in her affections.

Finding herself alone, Felicia was in serious financial difficulty, but was determined to support herself and the family (which now included both her sister and her mother as well as the five boys), through her writing. Thus began a highly successful literary career including sonnets, odes, heroic verse, ballads and theatrical pieces. She wrote for book publication, ladies periodicals, history magazines and the theatre and her reputation soared. Her readership spread as far as the United States where an edition of her complete works was published in 1826.

Mrs Hemans' literary and financial success was due not only to her undoubted talent but also to an excellent business sense, recognising and feeding into a fast-growing readership as the middle classes became more leisured and women more literate. This new readership was hungry for new writings and her

work coincided exactly with the sentiments of the time. She wrote precisely what the public wanted to read on religious, patriotic and domestic subjects. Hers was the perfect bridge between the classical and the recent romantic style; her meter, rhyme and diction were classical and therefore recognisable and her subjects' tone and sentiment were romantic and therefore new and exciting. There is often a thread of tragedy in her work, underpinned by misfortune and a preoccupation with death, which may have been a reflection of her own circumstances, but also corresponded perfectly to the preoccupations of the time. She presented an ideal image of home, family, patriotism and valour, a world in which women could only be wives and mothers, a view which at that time was unquestioned and is strange given her own circumstances as a working mother. Throughout most of the Georgian, and later the Victorian period she was greatly appreciated, not only as the best-selling poet of the century, with a vast and appreciative public, outselling all the great poets of the age, but also as the recipient of a long list of literary prizes and awards.

Contributing to Mrs Hemans' success was her total support for the establishment at a time, during and after the Napoleonic wars, when in fact there was much dissent in England and a fanatical dislike of France and everything French. She was a perfect echoing chamber of the contemporary press and popular sentiment, a woman's voice alongside those of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats who were all of course familiar with her work. It is therefore hard to comprehend why Mrs Hemans should have sunk into obscurity while her fellow poets are still much read and admired. Already by the end of the 19th century her work was seen as conventional and trivial, well written but as Sir Walter Scott commented, 'too many flowers and too little fruit'. Indeed, Mrs Hemans joined the ranks of many authors with a vast and loyal readership such as Enid Blyton and Barbara Cartland in England and similar writers in France, but whose work is dismissed in literary circles, as being 'too easy to read' and 'of little intellectual value'.

Be that as it may, in the 21st century, Mrs Hemans' only widely-known work is *Casabianca* and this is all the more intriguing because it is hard to see why the subject should have inspired Mrs Hemans. At a time of rabid anti-French feeling, the subject was himself French and lost his life not in commendable victory but in terrible defeat.

Where Mrs Hemans learnt of the incident aboard *l'Orient* remains a mystery. She was only five years old at the time of the Battle of the Nile although she saw and remembered the victory fireworks in Liverpool. The poem was published 28 years later. Perhaps in the course of her historical research she came across newspaper reports of the time or the poet-historian Robert Southey's *The Life of Horatio, Lord Nelson* published in 1813, which gives a detailed account of the battle. However she came to learn of Giancante Casabianca, his destiny fitted in perfectly with her view of filial piety, tragic human destiny and noble patriotism.

Cornelia Knight (1757-1837)

Of course Felicia Hemans was not the only woman poet of her time although without doubt the most popular and illustrious. Nor was she the only literary



figure to be inspired by the Battle of the Nile. Another lady of letters was Cornelia Knight (sometimes referred to as Ellis Cornelia Knight).

Her life had strange parallels to that of Felicia Hemans, as she had been left in 1775 with no resources when her mother died and, like Felicia, she had to write to make a living. She too moved in literary circles and had contacts with some of the great women writers of her day such as Fanny Burney and Madame de Staël. One of her poems was even set to music and performed by Joseph Haydn. Sadly, it has to be said, both poets have today slid into obscurity almost in equal measure.

Portrait 1793 - Angelica Kauffman

Her pertinence to our story is that she was a personal friend of Lord Nelson and happened to be living near Lady Hamilton in Naples when news of Nelson's victory at Aboukir arrived. As a friend of the family, she heard first-hand accounts of the battle and joined in the ecstatic celebrations.

Although she did publish a poem about the battle to the glory of Nelson, which she called a 'Pindarick Ode', an elaborate poetic form typical of the Greek poet Pindar and a frequent genre in 18th-century British poetry, it gives us no new insights of events and is almost incomprehensible to the modern reader. Apparently, it was so even to her own editor, J F Kay, who wrote (while nevertheless publishing her work), 'She gave nothing to the world but a few fugitive pieces. She was in truth anything but an imaginative person and her works have little to attract the present generation.' Another critic describes her as a 'prim romantic'.

Nevertheless, as a writer of 'loyalist', i.e. pro-government, poetry, she was a respected writer and hailed by naval officers in her day as 'Nelson's Poet Laureate', but I doubt if many of them actually read her poems, a few typical lines of which I quote below (from *Battle of the Nile*, 1798):

*Nor earth nor sea the baneful tempest spares;
Tyrrhenian waves receive their numerous prows,*

*Corrupting gold in torrents flows,
 Their standard insurrection lifts on high,
 Treason, alarm, mistrust their way prepares,
 And as far as rage impels- their banners fly;
 When lo! from Ocean's trophied mansions come
 The Sons of Neptune to pronounce their doom.*

Ironically Cornelia ends her poem with a call to arms '*Britannia's palms shall break the guilty charm, Rouse latent valour and bid Europe arm*' which uses exactly the tone and appeal to patriotic heroism which was the hallmark of French Republican rhetoric.

It is her autobiography, published posthumously, with its acute observations of the Regency court which she joined in 1805 as companion to Queen Charlotte and then in 1812, to Augusta the Princess of Wales, rather than her poetry, which ensures her an entry in Wikipedia!

Parody

The poem *Casabianca*, is above all known through its many parodies. What exactly is it about this poem that makes it subject to caricature even now, two centuries later, as we can see below?



'Blair at the Helm' Daily Telegraph 2005

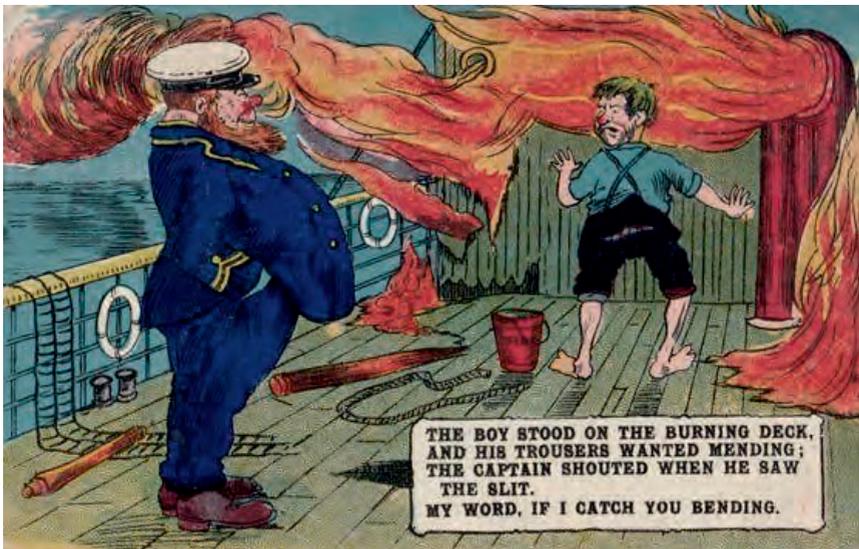
Interestingly, another of Mrs Hemans' poems, *The Stately Homes of England* has also been frequently parodied and 150 years after it was first published, Noel Coward included it in a successful West End play thereby establishing the catchphrase 'Stately Homes' in the English language.

A parody is an exaggerated imitation of an author's work or style with the express purpose of turning the solemn and pretentious into something amusing and entertaining, immediately understood by everyone.

Not being a linguist myself, I turned to Dr David Crystal, an authority on such matters, for some explanation as to why Mrs Hemans' poems came to be so ridiculed. He observed that for a parody to be effective, the original must be easy to memorise, preferably short and with a familiar or striking cadence. From a linguistic viewpoint this means a line of no more than five feet, the optimum length for easy recall. He points out that *Casabianca* with its very short lines similar to centuries-old English nursery rhymes, fits the bill perfectly. It has a definite rhyming metre a.b.a.b., which is easy to imitate and recite.

Secondly, the original work must be recognisable to the listener or reader, otherwise the satire is lost on them. In the Victorian era the growing readership would have known Mrs Hemans' poems and recognised the original behind the parody. *Casabianca* became a standard poem taught in schools on both sides of the Atlantic and recited well into the 1950's, so it was very familiar and memorised by generations of schoolchildren.

Thirdly, it must ridicule high flown sentiment in a comic or entertaining manner, even including nonsense or incongruous words or phrases to contrast with the flowery and self-important tone of the original. Mrs Hemans' poems, written expressly to laud noble feelings of courage, sacrifice and duty were later seen as sentimental and moralising and therefore became an easy target of ridicule.



Comic Verse Postcard - 20th century

The English have a long tradition of parody, satire, and mockery which is less evident in France. Whether in nursery rhymes, limericks, or cartoons, from Lear

to Lewis Carroll and Noel Coward, it has long been seen as inoffensive good fun to deride moral superiority through humour combined with a touch of nonsense, as is evident in the following examples:

Casabianca

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Melting with the heat
His big blue eyes were full of tears
His shoes were full of feet

The boy stood on the burning deck
The flames around him red
They burnt his feet and made him dance
So he stood upon his head.

The boy stood on the burning deck
The flames round him did roar
He found a bar of toilet soap
And washed himself ashore.

The Stately Homes of England

Mrs Hemans' original:

The stately homes of England
How beautiful they stand
Amidst their tall ancestral trees
O'er all the pleasant land
The deer across their greensward bound,
Through shade and sunny gleam;
And the swan glides past them with the sound
Of some rejoicing stream.

Noel Coward's version:

The Stately Homes of England
We proudly represent
We only keep them up for Americans to rent
Though the pipes that supply the bathroom burst
And the lavatory makes you fear the worst
It was used by Charles the First
Quite informally
And later by George the Fourth
On a journey north.
We'll fight
For the Stately Homes of England.

(To be continued. Parts 2 & 3 will cover: **The poem's hero, The circumstance of his death, The vital link, The legacy.**)

THE LAST WITNESS

John Sugden

It is sometimes said that we live as long as anyone remembers us. If such is the case then Horatio Nelson must have many years ahead of him, judging by the amount of ink still spilled about almost every facet of his life and character. But if we seem in no immediate danger of forgetting Nelson, one poignant moment slipped by completely unnoticed long, long ago. It was brought home to me again last year, in one of those inconsequential conversations that sometimes accompany a round of drinks in a local tavern, or after-dinner glasses of port. “Just who was the last person who actually saw Nelson, with his own eyes I mean?” someone almost as grizzled as myself asked. I must admit that I had considered that question before, when winding up my biography of the admiral, but I wasn’t any nearer to a convincing answer. It is, of course, a complete unknowable. How could anyone ever know that he or she was the only surviving witness to such a far-travelled and much acclaimed human being?

But for all that, the idea is worth turning over, because it bears upon the unreliability of memory, that personal but treacherous archive constantly at work revising and reinventing our past, as well as the beguiling but generally misleading influence of hand-me-down traditions. The problems of such source materials are well illustrated by the claim that Anne Melton was the last person in the Nelson country of north-west Norfolk to have actually seen the admiral. That particular story originally came to my attention reading James Hooper’s *Nelson’s Homeland*, a not uninteresting little volume published in the Trafalgar centennial year of 1905. On page 25 we are told that “the last witness of Nelson’s visits to his homeland was old Mrs Ann Melton, who died at Docking 9th August, 1879, aged 101.” Now, James Hooper was a local Norfolk historian of some reputation, who contributed to such august works of the day as *Notes and Queries* and *The Dictionary of National Biography*, but in this instance I believe he had been seriously misled.

We will start with Anne Melton herself. Her claim to have been a centenarian is verifiable. As Anne Buck she was baptised on 31 July 1777 in St. Martin’s Church in Oak Parish, Norwich, the daughter of John and Diane Buck, and on 12 October 1797 we find her marrying John Melton at Stoke Ferry, situated six or so miles southeast of Downham Market. Both bride and groom were literate. A daughter, Susan, was baptised the following 4 March. The census of 1841 placed Anne in Fakenham, but at the time of her death it was said that she had been living at Docking, where she died, for seventy-three years. Anne passed away in August 1879, leaving, it is said, four surviving children aged between 55 and 70, and forty-two grand and great-grandchildren. Brief obituaries in the newspapers, such as that in ‘The Norfolk Chronicle’ for 16 August 1879, remarked upon her relatively physical well being for one of such an advanced age, but none that I read said anything about Nelson.

Moreover, there was no obvious link between Mrs Melton and Nelson. Anne would have been only fifteen years of age when Nelson left that part of Norfolk for good in 1793, and while Docking was only six miles (as the crow flies) from Burnham Thorpe, the admiral's birthplace, Anne apparently only lived there from about 1806. It is possible, of course, that she chose to retire to Docking because she had existing connections there, but neither the dates nor the circumstances as I know them really fit. So, while the old lady put to rest in 1879 certainly dated back to Nelson's time, there appears to be no evidence that she ever met him.

The most likely explanation of the claim that Mrs Melton was 'the last witness' is that James Hooper had run into befuddled local memories. Pages 23 and 24 of his book suggest that Hooper based his assumptions upon local traditions. He asserts that Nelson and Lady Hamilton visited Brancaster, a small seaside village some miles west of Burnham Thorpe, where one of the admiral's relatives, William Bolton, served as rector between 1804 and 1840. Hooper informs us that 'universal local tradition' particularly remembered Emma with affection, and that a woman of Burnham Market was in possession of a 'valuable jewelled ring' that her ladyship had bestowed upon the wife of Simms Reeve, an eminent citizen of Brancaster. The ring had passed to the sister of Reeve, who still treasured it in Burnham Market. Here, then, was the likely source of the confusion, for Emma and her daughter Horatia did visit William Bolton at Brancaster, most notably in 1806, circumstances recorded by several authors (for example Winifred Gerin, in *Horatia Nelson* [1981], 126-31, and Charles Lewis, in *Nelson* [Cromer, 2005], 122-24). Unfortunately, the famous admiral was not present on these visits, for reasons every Nelson enthusiast will know. Somehow the tradition about Lady Hamilton had incorporated the absent Nelson, and Hooper either created the error or simply passed it on.

Having erroneously put Nelson in Brancaster in, say, 1804 or 1805, Hooper may easily have assumed that Mrs Melton of Docking, a village some five miles to the south, would have seen him. But his dates betray him in respect of both persons. Nelson was not in Brancaster in those years, and it is not even clear that Anne was in Docking at that time. The mistake may also, of course, have come through people who remembered Anne Melton. Perhaps the old lady used to speak of meeting Lady Hamilton, which is indeed plausible, since both appear to have been in the Brancaster-Docking area in 1806. Possibly her listeners just confused the story in later years, instantly linking the admiral to his lady as if they were inseparable.

However, if Anne Melton must step down as the last witness, who might fill her place? Clearly, on some forgotten day, in some forgotten place, the last person to have known, or even seen, Nelson must have taken his or her last breath and broken the living link with England's most revered hero. We will never know who that person was, but we can identify some of the last survivors.

Obvious possibilities exist among the boys serving in Nelson's last fleets, but the likelihood is that most of these had no personal acquaintance with Nelson.

David Shannon and Huw Lewis-Jones have written of the last surviving officers to have been at Trafalgar, the former in ‘Trafalgar’s Last Survivors’ (*The Nelson Dispatch*, Vol 5 [1995]: 116-24) and the latter in ‘Trafalgar’s Old Boys’ (*The Trafalgar Chronicle*, 17 [2007]: 181-92), but the problems in naming any of them as witnesses to Nelson the man are illustrated by the case of James Fynmore. Born in 1793, James served with his father in the *Africa* at Trafalgar, apparently as a signal midshipman. And perhaps he eventually outlived all other officers of that victorious fleet, for he died at home (53 Blenheim Grove, Camberwell) in the spring of 1887 aged a venerable ninety-three years. But whether he ever met, or even saw, Nelson is questionable. There is no evidence that he did.

One who almost certainly saw Nelson, if only briefly, was William Ward Percival Johnson, who spent about three days in the *Victory* in October 1805. Johnson was baptised at Little Baddow in Essex on 13 July 1790, and served in some mysterious capacity in Nelson’s flagship, perhaps as a temporary guest. He later claimed to have been sponsored by Emma Hamilton, and to have been in the ship during the battle of Trafalgar, but neither assertion has been verified. Johnson lived a long life, and died on 26 December 1880. Those who buried him on 3 January were putting to rest one of the last surviving ‘professional’ witnesses to Britain’s famous hero.

However, we have stronger candidates from the non-naval side. Inevitably, the last surviving witnesses to Nelson would have been children who encountered him in his final years. Most importantly, we have the admiral’s beloved daughter, Horatia, who died on 6 March 1881 at the age of eighty years. Horatia probably had little if any memory of her father. She had not reached her fifth birthday when she was last with him, and most of those years he had been at sea. So although she was a witness to Nelson, she was hardly a conscious one. Horatia carried to her grave vivid and somewhat unhappy memories of her mother, Emma Hamilton, but if she persuaded herself that she remembered her father, it was likely to have been wishful thinking.

We do, however, have at least one credible contender for the position of being Nelson’s last known witness. James Hudson spent his life in the neighbourhood of Nelson’s old estate of Merton in Surrey. In census records he repeatedly gave his birthplace as Wimbledon, and he was likely the James Hudson born to Henry and Elizabeth Hudson and baptised in St. Mary’s church on 4 August 1793. At the same church James married Maria Cribb, a local girl ten years his junior, on 23 September 1816. The groom was literate, but Maria signed a wedding document with a mark. She was the daughter of Francis and Hannah Cribb. Francis Cribb’s principal claim to fame was his role as Lord Nelson’s factotum at Merton Place.

James and Maria Hudson enjoyed many decades in Merton, where he worked as a copper plate engraver. The couple can be found in repeated Victorian census records, giving their address as High Path. The census records and the baptismal registers of St. Mary’s church attest to a substantial family, including

sons Matthew, Frank and John, and several grandchildren. James Hudson died in January 1889, aged ninety-five, and was buried in St. Mary's on the twelfth of that month. He had been very proud of an early acquaintance with the famous admiral, and passed the satisfaction to his son, John, who recalled in later life that he had "often shook hands with his father, who once shook hands with Nelson." At the age of eighty-five John Hudson, then himself blind in one eye, spoke of his father's connection to Nelson during the national centennial celebrations of the battle of Trafalgar in 1905. The piece appeared in 'The London Daily News' of 21 October 1905 under the caption, 'Mr. Hudson of Merton. Inherited Memories of Nelson'.

John Hudson's anecdotes of Nelson may be the last to be recorded of any value, although oral testimony about events happening long ago is almost invariably inaccurate in detail, and often totally fallacious, and these particular contributions have the additional problem of having come second-hand from father to son. There is also a persistent tendency of witnesses to embellish or invent dealings they have had with a famous or legendary personage, and few came more recommended than Lord Nelson. Nevertheless, John Hudson gives the impression of being an honest man, genuinely savouring a time and a place that had passed. Like his father, he was distressed at the changes the modern world had visited upon old Merton, deflowering its natural beauty, and reducing much of it to rubble and wasteland, and he nostalgically showed his reporter around the sites of the admiral's vanished estate. "Somewhere here," he said, "was the subterranean passage that went under the public road, connecting the two parts of the estate. It takes a slanting course, and in my day the entrance on the other [northern] side [of the highway] was still in existence. You went down steps to it. Over there, where those shops are, was the shrubbery that Nelson was so fond of."

His stories are not, in my view, without interest. According to John, his father James, when a boy of ten, eleven or twelve, "often" saw Nelson, which is likely, since the admiral enjoyed walking, and attended the local church regularly. John recounted two of his father's anecdotes. Indicating a road that once traversed the northern part of Nelson's estate but now passes between Haydons and Merton Roads, he continued:

"Over there ... is Quick's Road. I knew it just as a narrow country lane with high hawthorn hedges on both sides. My father [James Hudson] used to tell me of a curious meeting he had in that lane with Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton. They were walking slowly together, and my father, who was a boy at the time, was with his mother [Mrs. Elizabeth Hudson]. She, poor thing, was not quite right in her mind, and was never allowed out alone, and it seems that when she saw the lady and gentleman on ahead a sudden whim took her, and she ran after them and asked for help, as someone was going to injure her. When my father came up, he found them listening patiently to what the poor thing was saying, and then Lord Nelson, who, of course, saw what was the matter, took my father aside and gave

him a shilling, and told him to look after his mother very carefully, and always be kind to her.”

The other anecdote concerned Nelson’s final departure from Merton in 1805. James Hudson was among a crowd of local people who gathered to wave the hero a farewell. According to Mr Hudson’s son, Nelson was about to board his post-chaise when he saw the lad James in the crowd, and paused to shake hands with him and say good-bye. This was presumably the handshake that James habitually passed to his children.

James Hudson learned more about Nelson after he married a daughter of Francis Cribb, formerly Nelson’s employee, in 1816. As recounted by their son John, old Cribb had been “a great favourite” of the admiral. Francis Cribb used to say that he had a conversation with Nelson the very morning that he left Merton for the last time. They discussed the laying out of part of the estate, and, business out of the way, Cribb confided that his wife was expecting another child. Nelson gave him some money to buy a christening frock, and said that if the child was a boy Cribb should call him Horatio, and if he was gifted with a girl, she should be named Emma. In the event, the infant proved to be a girl, and Cribb dutifully named her after Lady Hamilton. This part of John Hudson’s 1905 recollections can, at least, be subjected to a level of verification, for in the registers of St. Mary’s church we find the entry ‘Emma Cribb, daughter of Francis and Hannah, was baptised November 24, 1805, and received into church March 30, 1806.’ Little Emma, in fact, inherited the longevity that this family seem to have enjoyed. In 1841 the census found her with her husband, Henry Ladd, occupying a property in ‘Nelson’s Fields’ in Merton, and she died at the age of 81 in 1887.

James Hudson may not have been the last witness to Admiral Lord Nelson, but on this showing he is the last known to me. Perhaps Nelson aficionados in The Nelson Society can come up with other names, and I am prepared to stand my candidate down, but this is as far as I can go at present.

A FEMININE VIEWPOINT: CAROLA OMAN AND FANNY NELSON **John Maynard**

The publication of John Sugden’s monumental two-volume biography of Nelson, *A Dream of Glory* (2004) and *The Sword of Albion* (2012), rendered all other biographies largely irrelevant. It was the first major work for more than half a century, and with interest in Nelson continually throwing up new insights and newly discovered documents there was plenty of material to draw on. The previous significant biography was Carola Oman’s *Nelson*, published here in 1947, but 1946 in America where there were probably fewer post-war restrictions on materials. In the Introduction to *A Dream of Glory* Sugden is very complimentary to Oman, “...tackling her subject in the round, the man as well as the commander, with a mature and balanced eye. Today, almost sixty years after Oman completed her book, it stands with Mahan’s as one of the two touchstones

against which all other biographies must be measured.” And A T Mahan’s 1897 *Life of Nelson* was judged by Sugden to fall short in limiting itself to Nelson’s naval career, the commander but not the man. High praise indeed for Oman.

All this would have passed me by except that my son who frequents charity shops came across a copy of Oman’s book and decided I ought to have it. That was a few years ago, and I have dipped into it from time to time, but with the enforced leisure of lockdown I have now read it properly and thoroughly agree with Sugden’s opinion. With its modest size it is also a lot more manageable to read in bed than one of Sugden’s tomes!

As the daughter of a noted Oxford don, Oman was well equipped to deal with the history, but she was a novelist as well as a biographer and brought a sharper focus to the personal stories within the bigger picture. The quantity of private letters and diaries which she must have tracked down and digested is simply breath-taking. Without being in any way derogatory, her account could perhaps be described as gossipy. It really is full of human interest.



Now I must confess to having a soft spot for Lady Nelson as I regularly walk past her house on my way into town. She made her home in Exmouth from 1803 with a handsome house on The Beacon. This new development was soon the town’s most prestigious road, high up looking out across the Exe estuary to the sea. Today number 6 is known as Nelson House with a blue plaque on the front railings. Unfortunately the plaque is incorrect in giving the date of Lady Nelson’s death as 1829, it should be 1831. Lady Byron who came to live at number 19 was another abandoned wife!

No doubt readers of the *Nelson Dispatch* will be familiar with the main facts of Fanny’s life. She was baptised Frances Herbert Woolward, Herbert being her mother’s maiden name. Born into a life of wealth and comfort on the island

of Nevis, right from the start she was no stranger to adversity. Her mother died while she was young, and her father just before her eighteenth birthday. She married Doctor Josiah Nisbet just a few months later, came to England with him and their new baby, only to be widowed at twenty. But the wealth which she should have inherited never materialised. She made her way back to Nevis to stay with her widowed uncle who was president of the island council, and became a competent hostess to his guests, among whom was young Captain Nelson. Fanny married him in 1787 and made her way once again from the warmth of the Caribbean to England and a chilly Norfolk Rectory. It was an unkind transplanting of a tender bloom and Fanny did not thrive, but it is clear that there was a real warmth of affection and devotion between the two. In the autumn of 1797 after losing his arm in Tenerife, it was Fanny who was on hand to treat Nelson's wound for three months until it finally began to heal.

At the Battle of the Nile Nelson was lucky to survive a serious head wound, and was still tired and unwell when he arrived back in Naples. Now it was Emma Hamilton who was at hand. Any man far from home, tired and stressed, is going to appreciate the kindly attentions of an attractive woman. There is no harm done so long as the boundaries of propriety are respected. It soon became clear that Nelson and Emma were going well beyond those boundaries. In Nelson's defence the word was put about that he had found a measure of affection which he had failed to find with his wife. This propaganda was seized upon by Emma and used very spitefully against Fanny, contributing to the destruction of Nelson's marriage. In her account of all this Oman does not condone Nelson's infidelity, but she does seem to acquiesce in the view that despite Fanny's repeated expressions of affection and commitment she had failed as a wife.

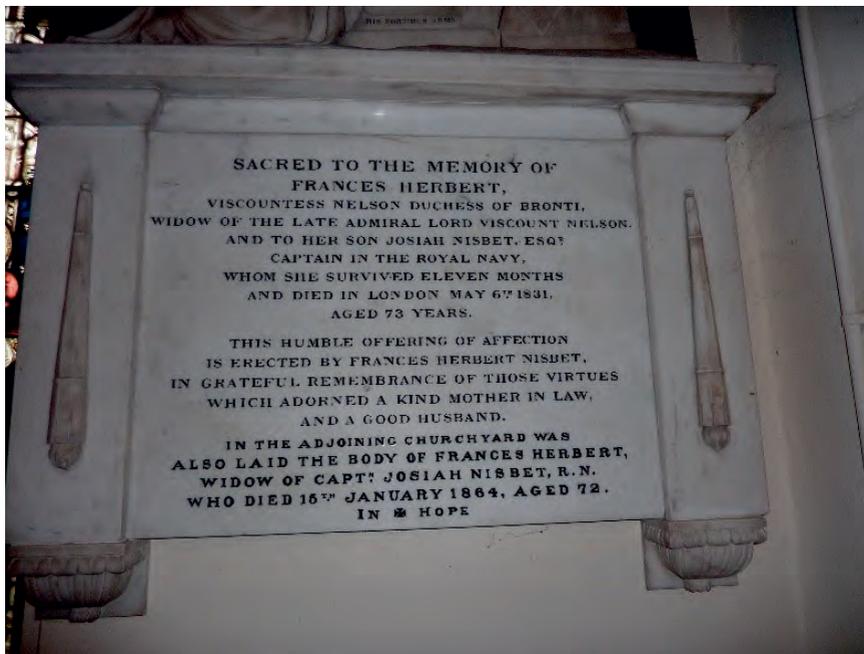
It seemed to me that Fanny deserved better than this, but no one had seen fit to stand up for her. She was not likely to have a biography of her own when her image had been so diminished in Nelson's story, but turning to Wikipedia what I did find was quite remarkable. The information may be familiar to old hands as it came to light twenty years ago, but it was new to me. This was a collection of 72 letters written by Fanny to Alexander Davison, which was discovered by Martyn Downer in 2001 and subsequently acquired by the National Maritime Museum. In October 2003 the Journal for Maritime Research published an article by Colin White entitled *The Wife's Tale: Frances Lady Nelson and the break-up of her marriage*, in which he analyses the contents of the letters.

Oman mentions Fanny writing to Davison for help and advice, initially as a trusted mutual friend, but then in desperation as she tried to maintain her relationship with her husband. This put Davison in a more and more difficult position until in the end he abandoned Fanny and stood by his long-time friend. White's article shows Fanny in an altogether more kindly light than the cold, shrewish caricature that was being put about, and some incidents which reflected badly on her he shows to be exaggerated or even fabricated. The whole article is

available online and needs to be read, especially in view of the proposed Netflix production which will glorify Nelson's mistress!

The blue plaque outside Nelson House speaks of Nelson's attachment to his step-son Josiah Nisbet. Nelson certainly did all in his power to further the young man's naval career, but in truth Josiah was not cut out for the job. Eventually he settled in France, was successful in business and married well. His mother spent time with the family there. According to her granddaughter Frances (also known as Fanny) on one occasion she said, "When you are older little Fan, you may know what it is to have a broken heart."

Nelson remained the love of Fanny's life, a life she lived out with dignity. She died in 1831, and since Exmouth was originally just an outlying hamlet of the ancient parish of Littleham with no parish church of its own, it was at Littleham that she was buried, and Josiah as well who died the previous year. Josiah's wife erected a handsome memorial to them both inside the church.



Editor's note:

Neville White recently contacted us to say he had visited the grave of Lady Nelson and Josiah Nisbet in the churchyard of Littleham parish church. The grave is in generally good order but the inscription is now quite hard to read. We contacted the 1805 Club who previously restored the grave, and they are considering adding a stainless steel plaque to permanently record the inscription.

Another female buried at Littleham is Nancy Perriam who was a powder monkey – naval slang for boys who filled shells and cartridges with gunpowder on board ships of war. While female sailors were not unknown, they usually went to sea initially in male disguise. Nancy lived in Tower Street, Exmouth until 1865, when she died in her 98th year. As a powder monkey Nancy worked alongside the gunners on board the *Crescent* and the *Orion* and her sewing skills apparently earned her a berth in the Navy alongside her sailor husband. The ‘Powder Monkey’ pub in The Parade, Exmouth commemorates her. (See *Nelson Dispatch* Vol 7 Pt 5 page 297 regarding the re-opening of pub in 2000).

NELSON VERSUS GUTIERREZ: THE MEMORY OF THE ‘GESTA’ OF 25 JULY 1797 IN THE HISTORICAL-ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE

Ana Maria Diaz Pérez

Outgoing President of the Tertulia de Amigos del 25 de Julio, Tenerife

In this very unusual year, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic that we are experiencing, during which this frequently tragic situation has led to so many deaths around the world (deaths that are always in our hearts), I wish to remember, through the pages of the *Nelson Dispatch*, the 224 years that were completed in July, since the defeat of the British squadron under the command of Rear-Admiral Horatio Nelson, in the waters of the bay of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. The commemoration takes the form of a virtual tour of the historical-artistic heritage of the city of Santa Cruz that relates to the event, so we drew up a rough itinerary for those readers who wish to accompany us in imagination.

We start at the Military Museum, located on the Calle San Isidro in the Centre for Military History and Culture of the Canary Islands, where a visit to the former Almeyda Barracks provides us with a reconstruction of the event which interrupted the tranquillity of the islanders more than two centuries ago. The centrepiece is a large model of Santa Cruz as it was in the late eighteenth century, with a voice narrating the sequence of events as they are highlighted by a spotlight. Among its many exhibits illustrating the event, the museum displays the flag of the attacker’s frigate the *Emerald*. In addition, various artists reflect in their works different scenes from this historic event. Several paintings hang on the walls of this interesting building, as well as in other locations, such as the Palace of the Captain General of the Canary Islands, situated in the Plaza General Weyler.

When the British fleet attacked Santa Cruz, the coastline at that time was protected by a series of fortifications, more than twenty in number, which with the passage of time have been disappearing. One of those that remain standing is the circular tower of San Andres, in the town of San Andres (1706). Today it is partially ruined due to the flooding of ravines, produced by various storms over the 18th and 19th centuries that undermined its foundations. On our imaginary tour we now stop just outside Santa Cruz, at the Castillo del Santo Cristo de Paso Alto,

built in the 17th century, which lost part of its structure during the 1950s, when the main road leading to the town of San Andres was built. Near this fort is the Battery of the Risco de La Altura, named for its location (the Cliff or Crag of the Heights), which was erected after Nelson's attack on the instigation of General Gutierrez, opposite which, on the other side of the Vale Seco (the Dry Valley), the ridge of Mesa Ramonal, in the moment of the offensive, the English ascended and were repelled by the Spanish.

Then we come to the centre of Santa Cruz and the underground vestiges of the Castillo de San Cristobal with its interpretation centre of the same name, located in the Plaza de Espana, which houses the cannon called 'El Tigre' (The Tiger), an artillery piece which, local legend has it, snatched Nelson's right arm above the elbow. The shot was fired by Lieutenant Grandi from the Santo Domingo battery (no longer existing), attached to the Castillo de San Cristobal. Also known as the Castillo Principal, this sixteenth-century fortress (1578) was demolished in 1928, having been one of the most powerful military constructions to be built in the Canary archipelago. However, some artists took care to



*Juan Botas Ghirlanda "Embarcadero del Castillo de San Cristóbal", (c.1900).
Oil on paperboard, 22 x 29 cm. Salas Cabrera Pinto Exhibition, La Laguna (2017).*

Private Collection. Exhibition curator: Dra. Pilar Carreño Corbella

reproduce the image of the fort on their canvasses, such as the case of Juan Botas Ghirlanda who left us an unusual perspective in one of his paintings, pictured above.

With regard to public spaces and monuments, the Plaza de la Pila (today La Plaza de la Candelaria) is preserved, through which the defeated English

troops paraded in order to re-embark, in whose upper part stood the Marble Cross (1759), the eponymous symbol of the city made by the Malaga sculptor Salvador de Alcaez. A fountain (1706) is now seen in its place with the receptacle (pila) which gave its name to the esplanade. In the lower part of the square is the marble Triunfo de la Candelaria (1778), in honour of the Virgin of Candelaria, the patron saint of the Canary Islands, sculpted in Genoa by Pasquale Bochiardo. On the right-hand side of the square looking uphill and next to the Pila stands the Palacio de Carta, which, in the 19th century, was the headquarters of the Captain General of the Canary Islands (1853 to 1881). The ownership of this beautiful house, built in 1752 in the Baroque style, which was the residence of the Rodriguez de Carta family, has recently been transferred to the city council by the regional government of the Canary Islands for its restoration, and, according to plans, the subsequent installation of a tourist information office and the future museum of the history of the capital.

As already commented upon, all over the world human beings are fighting against the same enemy, a virus that we cannot see, whereas the battle that took place in 1797 was between the peoples of two countries, England and Spain, of Anglo-Saxon and Latin origins respectively. History has told us about the many confrontations that occurred between these nations, but the Battle of Santa Cruz was atypical, the circumstances were quite different, with the great British navy against a small contingent of a local population. Moreover, Nelson and Gutierrez, although they were two seasoned fighters with their respective triumphs in other battles, were different in their ages: the English sailor was 38 years old, and the Spanish general was 68 years old, so that in the heat of hostilities the former was overcome by the impulse of his youth and the latter by the seniority that his long life had given him. Finally, there was the strange capitulation, with its exchange of gifts of food - beer and cheese by the loser, and the winner responding with a barrel of wine.

After the British incursion, with its combat and subsequent surrender, the capitulation was signed by Captain Samuel Hood and ratified by Captain Thomas Troubridge, before General Gutierrez in the Castillo San Cristobal. The major protagonists never got to know each other in person, since the wounded enemy, Nelson, had been transferred by boat to his flagship, *Theseus*, anchored in the Atlantic waters that bathe the coast of Santa Cruz. And it is worth noting that the defeated commander himself took charge of delivering the capitulation document to Cadiz.

History is History and it is not possible to change what happened; it is also true that we cannot judge the past with today's mentality, regardless of the ethical evaluation made of the facts. That is why after this bellicose event, it seems curious to us that there was no distancing between the two peoples, quite the opposite, since it served with the passing of time to strengthen ties of cordiality, and the English presence in Tenerife has been constant.



A perfect example of this presence is the exotic Sitio Litre in Puerto de la Cruz, a mansion built in the eighteenth century by Mr John Paisley, an exporter of Canarian wines to England and British Consul from 1766 to 1769. The house is preceded by a garden with beautiful, leafy vegetation, in which we discover a striking orchid garden, which constitutes one of the main attractions of this Tenerife oasis, with

an atmosphere that invites reflection in the midst of its tranquillity. That same placidity was enjoyed by some famous English people, the surgeon William Wills Wilde, the father of Oscar Wilde, the painter Marianne North, the surrealist Eileen Agar, the writer Agatha Christie, and others, when they visited this idyllic place, owned by our fellow Tertuliano John Lucas since 1996. In short, it is a captivating leafy glade, the closest thing to the biblical earthly paradise.

It could never have been anticipated that the British attack of 1797 on a Spanish territory, and the determined defence in reply to it, would unite, in the second decade of the 21st century, the Nelson Society of London and the Tertulia de Amigos del 25 de Julio of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. The connection is based on mutual knowledge about this historical event and friendly exchanges between the members of both associations. This relationship became physically evident in May 2019 during the visit that several Tertulianos and their wives made to Great Britain, taking in London, Greenwich, Portsmouth and Bath. The people of Tenerife are very proud of their victorious General Antonio Gutierrez, just as the English are proud of Rear Admiral Horatio Nelson. Even though this time Nelson did not achieve victory, and even experienced his first and only defeat, this does not prevent him from being recognised as one of the most courageous and famous sailors in history.

We hope that The Nelson Society can fulfil its intention to return our visit by coming to Tenerife in 2022 where we are waiting for you, and we can remember that event together, only this time from the defensive side, via the historical-artistic heritage of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. And do not forget to return to the island with the obligatory journey to the highest peak in Spain, the World Heritage Site, the volcanic mountain of ‘El Teide’.

For details of The Nelson Society’s proposed visit to Tenerife in July 2022 and to find out how to register your interest, see page 136 of this issue.

The new President of the Tertulia is Don Luis M. Garcia Rebollo.

We look forward to seeing Luis and Ana Maria in Tenerife next year.

CAPTAIN JOHN PERKINS RN

Ray Aldis

The record of Captain John Perkins RN itself puts him head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries. Having started his service in 1759 as a 10-year-old carpenter's servant he eventually retired in 1804 as a post captain, having taken over 300 enemy vessels as prizes along with some 3000 prisoners (all his service took place in the Caribbean). The factor that made him unique, however, was that he was the 'mulatto' son of an enslaved woman.

At the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 he was discharged from the Navy but then began learning how to be a civilian pilot in the Caribbean area. In 1771 he was signed on as a pilot with the Royal Navy, but his new career was short-lived as he caused a ship to run aground, was court-martialled, found guilty and ignominiously discharged. Despite this, some four years later he managed to get himself re-employed with the Navy, again as a pilot, his former misdemeanour obviously forgotten. This time, however, his career began to take off and in 1778 he was made an acting lieutenant and given command of a 10-gun schooner named *Punch*. Apart from successfully harassing enemy shipping he developed the skill of acquiring and passing on valuable intelligence for his senior commanders. As a reward for his success he was given command of the 14-gun sloop *Endeavour*. It was not long before Perkins' exploits began to be reported by the newspapers back in Britain although, interestingly, the one thing not mentioned about this accomplished Naval officer was his colour.

By 1780 Perkins had come to the notice of the CinC in Jamaica, Admiral Rodney, who wrote to the Admiralty:

"I must therefore desire you will please represent to their Lordships, that on my arrival at Jamaica, I found Mr. Perkins lieutenant and commander of the Endeavour schooner — that he bore an excellent character and had done great service."

At the end of the war in 1782, like many others, Perkins was put on half pay. During this period he twice visited England but did not like it as he 'could not bare the cold'. Although Perkins did not marry, he kept himself busy fathering nine children by three different women.

During this otherwise peaceful interval there were signs of discontent in some of the French Caribbean colonies, particularly on San Domingue (now Haiti). Wishing for information on the situation there the Navy turned to Lt John Perkins, their only black officer and a fluent French speaker. Perkins was covertly inserted ashore on San Domingue and soon began to report back. What exactly Perkins got up to is shrouded in mystery but eventually he was caught by the French Authorities and charged not only with spying but also with gun-running for the rebellious slaves. He was almost certainly headed for the gallows, but Perkins was too valuable a man to lose. The Navy sent a delegation to negotiate his release which, fortunately, they were able to do.

At the outbreak of war in 1793 Lt Perkins took command of HMS *Spitfire* a fast, newly captured French 6-gun schooner. With his experience as an expert pilot, Perkins was once again given an intelligence gathering role, one for which he was by then ideally suited. For the next seven years, in command of a series of small ships, Perkins operated with great success all over the Caribbean. In 1797 he was made master and commander and in 1800 he was promoted to post captain with command initially of the 32-gun frigate *Meleager* and then HMS *Arab* (22). There is more than a touch of irony in that on the Caribbean islands white men were ill-treating captured slaves, whilst offshore, on one of his majesty's ships, a black captain was not only impressing white sailors but also having some of them flogged. However, by this time John Perkins was so well thought of that the Governor of Jamaica wrote:

"By the gallant exertions of this officer some hundred vessels were taken, burnt, or destroyed, and above three thousand men added to the list of prisoners of war in favour of Britain; in short, the character and conduct of Captain Perkins were not less admired by his superior officers in Jamaica, than respected by those of the enemy."



*HMS Tartar (32), commanded by
Captain Perkins 1803-1804*

On the 1st January 1804 Haiti gained its independence and Perkins, commanding HMS *Tartar* (32), was much involved in facilitating negotiations between the British Envoy, Edward Corbet, and the new Haitian leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Perkins also became involved in supplying weapons to the new regime, although not all of his trading in arms and ammunition was strictly legal! Unfortunately, in March 1804, matters took a turn for the worse and Dessalines ordered the slaughter of the island's remaining white French inhabitants. Perkins was sent on a humanitarian mission to rescue as many as he could. This he did, but was horrified at what he found on his arrival, writing: *"scenes of cruelty and devastation have been committed as is impossible to imagine or my pen describe."*

At the end of 1804 Perkins was ordered to Nova Scotia. Having already experienced the cold of England, he certainly wasn't prepared to face what Canada had to offer. He therefore resigned and with his considerable wealth from prize money he bought an estate in Jamaica where he lived, with his slaves, until his death in 1812.



Author's note: The above is only a very brief outline of the career of an extraordinary man, the only black commissioned officer in the time of Nelson's navy. For a detailed and fully referenced account of Perkins life, available online, I would strongly recommend a Sheffield Hallam University paper written by Douglas Hamilton and entitled: *'A most active, enterprising officer': Captain John Perkins, the Royal Navy and the boundaries of slavery and liberty in the Caribbean.*

(Left) A portrait often seen accompanying articles on John Perkins, but the style of the uniform clearly indicates that it cannot be him (it is in fact of the Haitian rebel leader Toussaint L'Ouverture with whom Perkins almost certainly had dealings)



Signature of Captain John Perkins from the logbook of HMS Arab, 1800, held at the National Archives, Kew, London.

NELSON ON THE STAGE
Alastair Robertson

One hundred years after Nelson's 'Year of Destiny', on Tuesday 19 January 1897 the St. James's Gazette reviewed the performance of a new stage play:

'NELSON ON THE STAGE'
THE FORTHCOMING PERFORMANCE.

'As the St. James's Gazette was responsible for the first announcement regarding the approaching performance at the Avenue Theatre of a new drama dealing with Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton, it may not be out of place if we now supplement the bare statement of the fact with a few additional details. On account of the interest belonging alike to the subject itself and to the leading artists engaged in its interpretation, the production of the piece is likely to rank among the principal theatrical events of the season. Obviously, therefore, it would be unfair to discount curiosity by mentioning more than the salient features of the story, while indicating briefly the manner in which the author has turned history to account. And first it may be as well to correct any error which has crept into print, to the effect that Mr. F.J. Harris will produce the piece. This is not so. Although Mr. Harris's name figures at present as manager on the programme of the Avenue, all credit arising from the forthcoming venture is due to Mr. King and to Mr. Roskyn, two gentlemen who even now control the financial destinies of the theatre. Nor is the enterprise in any sense a resumption of management, as has been declared, by Mr. Forbes-Robertson, whose services have simply been secured for the part of Nelson. We may add in this connection that during the past few days Mr. Robertson has succeeded in making arrangements which preclude all necessity of his having to go on tour, thus leaving him free to retain his role throughout the run of the piece.

'In the life of Amy Lions – or, as she came subsequently to be known, Emma Harte – three men play leading parts. All three appear in the new drama, which also includes a number of minor characters. Let us here mention the principal of these, along with their representatives –

Horatio Nelson.....	Mr. Forbes-Robertson
Sir William Hamilton.....	Mr. Nutcombe Gould
Hon. Charles Greville.....	Mr. Arthur Elwood
George Romney.....	Mr. Ben Greet
Mrs. Cadogan.....	Mrs. E.H. Brooke

'With, as we have already noted, Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Lady Hamilton herself. Of the early career of Emma the play takes little or no cognizance. The author passes over without notice the period during which she acted as nurserymaid at Hawarden, nor is her first introduction, accomplished under the most unhappy circumstances, to life in London depicted. Even the

Featherstonehaugh episode does not attract his attention, the action of the first act takes place in Romney's studio, where the great painter, whose life was to have so miserable a termination, is surrounded by well-known specimens of his art. Here it is that Emma Harte, the fascinating mistress of Charles Greville, comes to sit for her portrait, accompanied either by her protector or her mother. "Think of her," writes Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson, "as a slight lithe girl whose 'beautiful and uncommon mouth' struck Gavin Hamilton as perhaps the most remarkable of all her facial attractions – the girl whose profusion of auburn hair on being 'let down' used to drop even to her feet. Sir William Hamilton used to speak of Emma as sitting or going about in her hair; and he might well talk of it as a costume, for at Naples she sometimes went to the water-gardens and garden-parties with the ends of her long tresses playing about her heels." Contrary to historical accuracy, Nelson appears in this act a few seconds before the fall of the curtain, thus supplying an effective conclusion; although, as a matter of fact, he and Lady Hamilton met for the first time at Naples, on the occasion of his visit to that place in 1793.

'The scene of the second act is also placed in London; its culminating point being the rupture of relations between Greville and his mistress. Naturally, a dramatist who desired to retain for his characters the sympathy of an audience would hardly dare to rely on an episode so discreditable to all parties concerned as that presented by the sordid bargain made by Sir William and his nephew for the transfer of the fair Emma. The author has found a way out of the difficulty by taking the well-known "Ranelagh" incident as the basis of a quarrel between Emma and Greville which is supposed to lead to their separation. It will be remembered how on one occasion Emma was conducted to Ranelagh to watch the gay crowd and to enjoy the singing. Herself the possessor of a magnificent voice, she was moved, after listening to a favourite vocalist, to burst into song, greatly to the annoyance of her companion. The cause may, perhaps, appear somewhat slight to account for the important issues to which it led; but as it is doubtful whether Greville was ever really in love, it may possibly be considered sufficient for the purposes of the drama. When the curtain again rises it is upon the brilliant crowd assembled at the British Embassy in Naples, by invitation of Sir William and Lady Hamilton, to do honour to the victorious hero of the Battle of the Nile. Here, for the first time, we meet with Nelson, as his image remains most clearly stamped on the public mind, bereft of an arm and of an eye. "She fell," he wrote almost pathetically to his wife at the time, referring to Lady Hamilton, "into my *arm* more dead than alive." Of the magnificent fete given on the occasion an excellent impression will be afforded at the Avenue, the naval uniforms alone costing something like £500. A dainty minuet is to be danced; and altogether the spectacle will be of unusual splendour. At this point, moreover, history has supplied the playwright with a most dramatic climax in the unexpected outbreak on the part of Josiah Nisbet, Nelson's step-son, who, in a

drunken sally, insults Lady Hamilton and taunts her with her past misconduct. The intervention of Nelson in her defence leads up to an exciting curtain.

‘Merton Place is the scene of the last act, in which Nelson bids adieu to his “brave Emma.” In this the dramatist shows no inclination to adopt Southey’s view of the final interview between the two, preferring to exhibit Lady Hamilton in the light of a woman anxious for her lover’s honour rather than for her own happiness. “If there were more Emmas, there would be more Nelsons!” The sentiment is exactly of the kind to elicit a responsive cheer from a popular audience. Thereafter comes the moment when Lady Hamilton, like all England, is eagerly awaiting the news which is to tell of victory or defeat. A most pathetic scene occurs between Mrs. Cadogan and her daughter, who, falling asleep, witnesses in a vision the scene, realized upon the stage, of Nelson’s death in the cockpit of the Victory. This, be it understood, will be acted as well as depicted after Maclise’s well-known painting. Such, then, is a bare outline of the drama, which it is hoped will be ready for production by Saturday, February 6, and which, as we have said, cannot fail to excite the liveliest interest and the greatest curiosity. Of Mrs. Campbell’s fitness to realize the beautiful Lady Hamilton there can hardly be a doubt. Nor need there be any uncertainty regarding Mr. Forbes-Robertson’s ability to play Nelson, although perhaps he is a trifle too tall for the character. Let us recall for a moment the appearance of England’s great naval hero as he was in 1793. “Of mean stature and unimposing presence, Captain Nelson had the bearing of a man who, without immodesty, believed in himself, and knew that the time was at hand when the belief would be shared in by others. Though his hair was lank, and his long visage would not have misbecomed a clever mechanic, he had a noble forehead, strange and penetrating eyes, lips singularly expressive of resoluteness, and a voice that, when he was stirred by emotion, declared him to have been made by nature for a chieftain and leader of men.” In respect of this last qualification, Mr. Forbes-Robertson has assuredly no superior, and very few equals, upon the English stage.’

BRISBANE OF BRISBANE

Ronnie Kane

The Brisbanes of Scotland were a family of great antiquity and reputation as well as being powerful and influential. Their chief was styled ‘Brisbane of Brisbane’. Brisbanes fought at Culloden but their history can be traced back centuries earlier. During the 18th and 19th centuries this family would serve their country well. Generations of young Brisbane men served in the Royal Navy and Army. This is, in part, their story.

Admiral John Brisbane was born c1735, the second son of Thomas Brisbane and his wife Margaret, at the family home, Brisbane House, Noddessdale, Largs. He had a distinguished career serving under both Admirals Rodney and Robert Digby (uncle of Admiral Sir Henry Digby).



'The Pencil' on the foreshore at Largs, home town of Admiral Sir John Brisbane

He married Mary Young, daughter of Admiral Young, on 11 June 1759 and had five sons: Commander John Douglas Brisbane who drowned on one of the prizes from the Battle of the Saintes in 1782 which foundered; Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Stewart Brisbane who was killed commanding a corps with great distinction on San Domingo in 1795; Commander William Henry Brisbane who died in 1796 having been poisoned by French prisoners at Gibraltar; Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Brisbane; and Commodore Sir James Brisbane. He also had six daughters one of whom married

Admiral Sir James Douglas. It is, perhaps, Charles and James whose careers will be of most interest to our Society members as they, at different times, served both alongside and under the command of Nelson.



Portrait of Sir Charles Brisbane

Charles Brisbane was born c1769 in England, the fourth son of Admiral John Brisbane and his wife Mary. In 1779 he entered the Navy under the auspices of his father on board HMS *Alcide* (74) and was present at the Moonlight Battle off St. Vincent (16 Jan 1780) and the relief of the Great Siege of Gibraltar.

Towards the end of 1781 he was placed on board HMS *Hercules* (74), Captain Henry Savage, and was present at the Battle of the Saintes off Dominica on 12 April 1782, during which he was badly wounded by a splinter that struck his chest. This injury caused him to walk almost doubled up for nearly a year until

he was restored to good health. (His brother, Captain John Douglas Brisbane, having taken possession of a French prize at the battle, drowned when that ship foundered.) Brisbane was promoted lieutenant on 22 November 1790. In 1793 he was serving aboard the frigate HMS *Meleager* (32), Captain Charles Tyler, and went out to the Mediterranean as part of the fleet under Lord Hood which occupied the City of Toulon on 27 August 1793. Brisbane was employed on shore at Toulon during the occupation of the city. By his zeal and exertions, principally in establishing batteries, he attracted the notice of Lord Hood, by whom he was shortly afterwards appointed to the command of Fort Pomet, one of the most dangerous out-posts, about five miles from the city. He assisted in the repulsing of the French until it was found necessary to destroy the enemy ships in the harbour and to evacuate the city. Brisbane was then ordered to make the best withdrawal in his power from the post he commanded. The republican troops were pouring down in considerable force and were within a very short distance when he stopped to set fire to a trail of gunpowder leading to five hundred barrels of gunpowder. The resulting explosion blew the fort apart. Initially, it was supposed that he and his men had died in the blast, but Brisbane's judgement had been sound and after surmounting many difficulties they effected their withdrawal without loss.

When Lord Hood decided to take the Island of Corsica from the French, Lieutenant Brisbane was placed in command of 100 men to effect a landing at San Fiorenzo to enable a body of troops, commanded by Lieutenant General Dundas, to be disembarked. The heights of Fornelli were vigorously attacked and carried by assault on the night of 17 February 1794. During the siege of Bastia, under the command of Captain Horatio Nelson, Brisbane had charge of a small battery and, like Nelson, sustained a head injury which deprived him of the sight of an eye, his left eye. Lord Hood officially acknowledged the good work of Lieutenants Gore, Hotham, Stiles, Andrews and Brisbane, writing '..... (they) *have an ample claim to my gratitude; as the seamen under their management worked the guns with great judgement and alacrity; never was a higher spirit or greater perseverance exhibited; and I am happy to say, that no other contention was at any time known, than who should be most forward and indefatigable in promoting his Majesty's service; for although the difficulties they had to struggle with, were many and various, the perfect harmony and good humour that universally prevailed throughout the siege overcame them all.*'

Subsequent to the action with the French fleet at the Battle of Genoa, on 14 March 1795, Brisbane was advanced to commander and given command of HMS *Moselle* (24), under the immediate orders of Commodore Nelson, and as such in the autumn was tasked to escort two troop transports from Gibraltar to Barbados. While on his passage to the Caribbean, he fell in with a Dutch fleet sailing south in the Atlantic and, deciding to shadow them to determine their purpose, he sent the transports forward. When he realised the Dutch were making their way to the Cape of Good Hope, he crowded on sail to forewarn the

Commander-in-Chief on that station, Sir George Keith Elphinstone. The Dutch fleet anchored in Saldanha Bay, by which time Elphinstone's fleet was boosted by the arrival of Admiral Thomas Pringle's fleet. On 18 August 1795 the Dutch, bottled up in Saldanha Bay and acknowledging they were an inferior force to the British, surrendered. Brisbane was promoted by Sir George to the command of HMS *Oiseau* (36), a captured Dutch prize, and also received the thanks of the Admiralty. He had numerous commands in the years that followed, mainly in the West Indies. Following a refit of his frigate HMS *Arethusa* (38) in Jamaica and in company with HMS *Anson* (38), Captain Charles Lydiard, on 23 August 1806 they captured the Spanish frigate *Pomona* (38) whilst off Havana.



HMS Arethusa and HMS Anson in the capture of the Spanish frigate Pomona off Havana, Cuba on 23 August 1806

In effecting this capture they sailed very close to a shore battery which opened fire on them. In the course of the action ten gunboats, which had come to the *Pomona*'s assistance, were destroyed. The battery was also destroyed; it is thought by an accident involving the furnace used for heating shot. Two sailors were killed and thirty-two injured including Captain Brisbane. The captured frigate was taken into the Royal Navy as HMS *Cuba*.

Brisbane, in command of a squadron, was sent to reconnoitre the Dutch-held island of Curaçao and find out whether the inhabitants were disposed to an alliance with Great Britain. On 1 January 1807 he determined to take the island by a coup-de-main. Commodore Brisbane informed his captains and took sole responsibility for the decision upon himself. He was the first to scale the walls

of Fort Amsterdam. He also struck the Dutch flag. In less than four hours the island had been brought into the possession of the British by a force of about eight hundred effectives. The delighted Commander-in-Chief, Vice Admiral Dacres, who had calculated that a force of no less than ten ships of the line and a land force of ten thousand would be necessary to capture the island, expressed his approbation of the gallant conduct of the captors: *“Whilst I contemplate the immense strength of the harbour of Amsterdam, and the superior force contained in the different batteries opposed to the entrance of the frigates, I know not how sufficiently to admire the decision of Captain Brisbane in attempting the harbour, and the determined bravery and conduct displayed by himself the other three captains, and all the officers and men under his command.”* So wrote Dacres to



the government. Brisbane was rewarded for this feat with a gold medal and a knighthood. At the latter end of 1808 he was appointed Governor, Captain-General and Vice-Admiral of the island of St. Vincent and its Dependencies. He was made a K.C.B. on 2 January 1815 and attained his flag rank on 12 August 1819. He held the post, without any further service at sea, until his death on the island in December 1829.

He married Sarah, daughter of Admiral Sir James Patey, on 14 June 1793. They had two sons: one entered the army, Major Charles Bailey Brisbane and another joined the navy, Captain John William Douglas Brisbane. They also had two daughters.

Captain Charles Brisbane at Curaçao, by James Northcote 1807 (detail, courtesy of Maj Gen Monro)

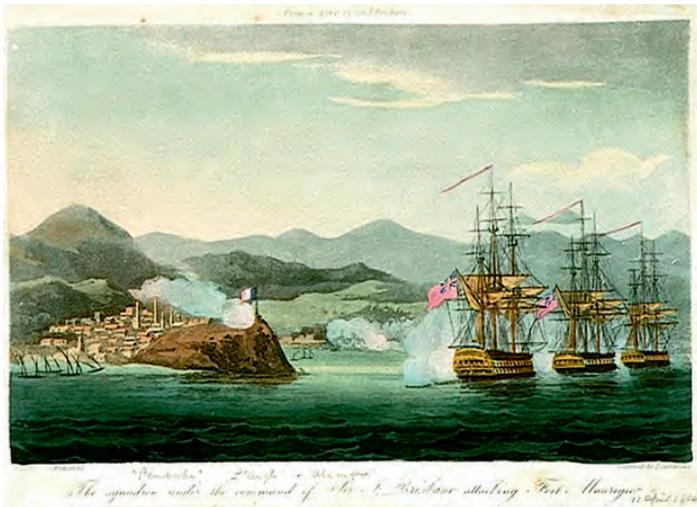


Memorial to Sir Charles Brisbane and his wife Sarah in St Mary's Church, Stanwell

James Brisbane was the fifth and youngest son of Admiral John Brisbane. He was born in 1774 and entered the navy aboard HMS *Culloden* (74), Captain Thomas Rich, as a midshipman in 1787 during the Dutch armament. In the spring of the following year he moved into the frigate HMS *Andromeda* (32) commanded by HRH Prince William Henry and followed him into HMS *Valliant* (74) at the time of the Spanish armament. At the memorable Battle of 'The Glorious First of June', in 1794, Brisbane had the honour of serving as a signal midshipman on HMS *Queen Charlotte* (100) bearing the flag of Lord Howe. In September of that year, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant and was serving on HMS *Sphinx* (20), on 16 September 1795, at the taking of the Dutch-held Cape of Good Hope by Admiral Sir George K Elphinstone and Major-General Alured Clarke, after which he transferred into HMS *Monarch* (74) bearing the Vice Admiral's flag. Following the capture of the Dutch fleet at Saldanha Bay on 18 August 1796, Brisbane was promoted to commander of HMS *Daphne* (24) in which he accompanied the Commander-in-Chief on his return to Europe. The *Daphne* was

paid off in September 1797 and he was put on half-pay. Early in 1801 Brisbane was appointed to HMS *Cruizer* (18) on the North Sea Station attached to Sir Hyde Parker's Baltic fleet. He was under the command of Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson who used the *Cruizer* and her commander to take soundings and make charts of the approaches to Copenhagen. Lord Nelson, in a private letter to the Earl St. Vincent, praised Brisbane's "unremitting exertions" and mentioned him as highly deserving of promotion.

He was posted captain dating from 2 April 1801 (Battle of Copenhagen), and given command of HMS *Saturn* (74), the flag ship of Rear Admiral Totty. At the renewal of hostilities in 1803 Brisbane was appointed to the command of the Sea Fencibles on the coast of Kent. In 1809, following a spell on the Irish Station, he was appointed to HMS *Belle Poule* (38) in which he convoyed a large fleet of merchantmen to the Mediterranean. He was thereafter directed by Lord Collingwood to assume the command of the squadron tasked with the blockade of Corfu and watching the entrance to the Adriatic Sea. In February 1809 he captured the French frigate *le Var* (32). Brisbane remained in the region participating in the capture of several Ionian Islands until 1811. Later, after a short spell in the Channel Station, he was appointed to the newly built HMS *Pembroke* (74) and again ordered to the Mediterranean in 1813. With HMS *Aigle* (36) and *Alcmene* (32) under his orders, at about 10am on 11 April 1814 he espied twenty sail of French vessels off Cape delle Melle which then ran ashore under the guns of Fort Maurigio. After a brief exchange the French colours were hauled down and a white flag hung out.



HMS Pembroke together with the Aigle and Alcmene capture twenty French ships at Fort Maurigio, 1814

On 27 August 1816 Brisbane commanded Lord Exmouth's flag-ship HMS *Queen Charlotte* (100) at the reduction of Algiers. This victory enabled the release of almost three thousand enslaved Europeans and allowed the great powers to abolish slavery of Christians, thereby ending the Corsairs' centuries-old trade of enslaving Europeans. On 2 October 1816 Brisbane received a knighthood.



The bombardment of Algiers

On 22 January 1825 he was made Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies Station and sailed there as Commodore in 1826. This was in the latter stages of the First Anglo-Burmese War in which he enjoyed success in riverine operations in conjunction with the army. During the campaign he contracted dysentery from which he did not recover. He died on 19 December 1826 on HMS *Warspite* in Sydney Harbour.

He married, in 1800, Jemima Ann Ventham and by their union had one son, Commander James Stewart Brisbane and two daughters.

Footnote: When the Brisbanes died out in 1933 it was the Ewart line (related to the Brisbanes by marriage) which inherited. Today the senior living Brisbane descendant is Major General Seymour Monro, Lord Lieutenant of Morayshire, by virtue of his Ewart grandmother. The author has been in contact with the Lord Lieutenant and is indebted to him for his assistance

Sources:

Royal Naval Biography by John Marshall; *The Scottish Nation, The People of Scotland* by William Anderson; thepeerage.com; en.wikipedia.org; *Nelson: A Dream of Glory* by John Sugden.

USS CHESAPEAKE IS IN PORTSMOUTH!

Graham Capel

In July 2020, I was in Portsmouth delivering some Nelson memorabilia. There I met the recipient's father who was a historian on the Seven Years' War, but was very familiar with Nelson. In conversation he asked me what I knew about the USS *Chesapeake*. I told him the usual knowledge that the engagement with HMS *Shannon* was one of the most devastating and rapid ships' actions, certainly in the American War of 1812. He then said, "I grew up in a house not far from here which was built with timbers from the USS *Chesapeake*." In the 1970s, he had lived in a house on an old dairy farm in Catisford outside Portsmouth. It was open farmland all around. His parents' house had some huge oak beams in the living room, and a beam over the inglenook fireplace, all made of ship's timbers from USS *Chesapeake*. Also two oak settles either side of the fireplace were apparently cannon seats from the gun placements either side of the portholes. Apparently when the house was built in the 1930s, the builder had bought some ship's timbers from the Chesapeake Mill at Wickham, also not far away.

I had to see this. I located the house in Catisford, now part of a densely populated housing estate. It was unusual, to say the least! It was a 1930's house across the width of the plot. Nothing unusual, but at the front, a two-story portico had been built extending forward, making an attempt at a grand impression on this rather ordinary house. The portico was obviously built from reclaimed oak, and it had been 'dressed up' with herringbone diagonal bricks between the oak panels and even an ornamental brick circle with the bottom of a wine bottle set in. Very unusual. I did not think that the brickwork was very old and neither was the wine bottle bottom, but the oak framing certainly was. I talked to the owner, who said he had only lived there for five years but had been told that it had been built using some timbers from the Chesapeake Mill at Wickham. He said that there were two huge beams across the living room ceiling and confirmed that the two settles either side of the fireplace were still there, now used as bookshelves. He knew nothing about the sea battle or that *Chesapeake* had been an American ship. He only knew of the Chesapeake Mill and had no idea how it got its name. Neither did I, but I was going to find out. After I left, he was going to look up the battle between the *Chesapeake* and the *Shannon* on the internet.

I then set off to find Wickham. It was a small village about ten miles north of Portsmouth in lovely countryside. What I found was a picture postcard English village, once the seat of the Wykeham nobility which is where the name Wickham came from. There was a village square surrounded by historic houses and cottages with a good proportion of hostelries. Down the hill from the village was the Chesapeake Mill, standing on a small stream. Why Chesapeake? It was closed, as were the hostelries in the village due to lockdown, but there was a sign board outside which I read to learn its history.



The house in Catisford



The Chesapeake Mill at Wickham

There has been a mill in Wickham, at least since the time of the Domesday survey in 1086. The present building dates from 1820. It was built using timbers salvaged from the USS Chesapeake which was captured by the English frigate HMS Shannon in 1813 off Boston. Although the chief timbers of the Mill came from this American ship, beneath the ground floor remain beams from the previous mill. After being used by the Royal Navy, USS Chesapeake was broken up in 1819 and sold at auction in Portsmouth, where it was bought by John Prior to build a new Corn Mill in Wickham. The mill was designed around the length of the deck beams from the ship. Many of the timbers still bear battle scars along with American Carpenters' marks. Grinding ceased in 1986 and the mill was closed in 1991. Please visit the heritage room inside the mill for more history of USS Chesapeake and Wickham including old photographs and memorabilia.

I most certainly will. It is currently used for multiple stalls selling local goods, antiques, etc. I shall also sample the hostelries in Wickham. Where else will I be able to walk on the deck planks of an American 18th-century frigate unless I go to Boston, USA to see the USS *Constitution*, the second oldest ship still in commission?

The battle between HMS *Shannon* and USS *Chesapeake* took place outside Boston Harbour on 1st June 1813. History records that the British Captain Philip



*Shannon v Chesapeake
(courtesy Stephen Pask)*

Broke taunted the Bostonians to send out their frigate to do battle. Captain James Lawrence had only been made Captain of USS *Chesapeake* for 11 days. Eventually, he responded to the British, and the people of Boston came out from the town gaily singing ‘Yankee doodle dandy’ and took vantage places on the headlands to watch the contest. It lasted 11 minutes. Captain Broke had been training his gun crews for months for just such an action.

As the two ships closed, *Shannon's* broadsides raked *Chesapeake* in the first few minutes. Captain Broke led the boarding parties and the ship was taken in just 11 minutes from start to finish. Of the *Chesapeake's* crew of 379, 146 were killed or wounded. I wonder what the Bostonians went home singing, if they sang anything at all? Captain Lawrence died of his injuries after uttering his last words "Don't give up the ship". He did not live to see the surrender. Captain Broke suffered a severe head wound from a cutlass strike during the boarding action. This opened up his scalp exposing part of his brain. He was not expected to live, but he did, and after recuperation in Halifax, he returned to England, but never served at sea again. The damaged USS *Chesapeake* was towed to Halifax where the battle damage was repaired to make her seaworthy as a British prize ship. She was entered into service as HMS *Chesapeake*. I do not know what further action she saw, but it could not have been much. She was repaired the year after the battle in 1814, and then sold out of service in Portsmouth in 1819 – only five years' service including crossing the Atlantic after the war was over. To be sold at auction for a building construction would seem to show that she was no longer seaworthy as a vessel. She may not have been adequately repaired for long service and may have been used for a few years as a Prison Hulk for French prisoners on the mud flats in the Portsmouth backwaters.

Footnote: *Chesapeake* was one of the original six frigates whose construction was authorised by the *Naval Act of 1794*, but she was not launched until December 1799. *USS President* was broken up in 1818, *USS Congress* was broken up in 1834, *USS Constellation* was broken up in 1853 and some timbers are on *Sloop of War USS Constellation* in Baltimore. *USS United States* was broken up in 1865. *USS Constitution* is in Boston.

NOTES AND QUERIES

GEORGE III IN WEYMOUTH

From Nigel Hughes: Catching up on some reading I read with interest Chris Brett's article in the *Nelson Dispatch* Vol 14 Part 1 p59 regarding the plaque on the Cutter Hotel in Weymouth.

Whilst researching the Navy career of my second cousin (5 x removed) Luke Brokenshaw, who was later to be appointed first Master of the brand new third-rate HMS *Revenge* in April 1805, wounded at Trafalgar, I discovered that during 1801 Luke served as Master's Mate to his elder brother Samuel, Master of the fifth-rate frigate *Fortune* (36), Captain the Rt. Hon. Lord Amelius Beauclerk.

The Master's Log of *Fortune* (ADM 52/3030 piece 10) recorded that between early July and early October 1801 as part of a small squadron *Fortune* was in attendance to King George III and the royal yacht *Royal Charles* in Christchurch Bay, Dorset. A 21-gun salute was fired each time the King embarked or disembarked, which was frequently daily,

occasionally twice in a day. The tone of the Log entries noting each salute gives the impression that this repetitious ceremony became rather tedious, the wording of successive entries becoming more terse as time passed.

On release from this no doubt prestigious but unexciting service, *Fortunee* returned to her station in Cork, cruising south to the Azores and escorting inbound and outbound convoys in the Western Approaches.

I hope this may be of interest.

NELSON'S SUPER WEAPON

From Louis Hodgkin: Reading the latest *Nelson Dispatch* prompted me to send a postscript on John A Nixon's article 'Nelson's super weapon'.

The Carronade arose from a publication by Benjamin Robins published in 1747 *A proposal for increasing the strength of the British Navy by changing all guns from 18-pounders downwards into others of equal weight but of a greater bore*. These ideas were developed by Melville and Gascoigne of the Carron Company. It was the Carron Company which raised the obelisk memorial to Nelson in Glasgow.

Benjamin Robins (1707-1791) was born in Bath a Quaker, was a graduate of Leiden and described as a mathematician. He tested Newton's theories and designed a 'Ballistic Pendulum' (éprouvette) to establish velocity and range. He described his findings in *New Principles in Gunnery* for the Royal Society in 1743. No stranger to the Navy, Robins wrote the official report of Anson's circumnavigation for £1,000. His final career was as Chief Engineer for the East India Company, and he died in Madras in 1791.

A fuller account appears in the Dictionary of National Biography.

WEBSITE ENQUIRY – THE MYSTERIOUS MISS WHEATLEY

Ray Aldis and Lily Style

Our website (www.nelson-society.com) and our Facebook page (The Nelson Society UK) both receive regular enquiries from followers from around the world and our team of experts do their very best to answer them. One recent contact was from a lady in Australia who sent the following:

Hello - my maiden name was Wheatley - the Wheatley family in the late 1700's to early 1800's were much involved in the Admiralty/Navy ending with William Wheatley being appointed Librarian to the Admiralty and his sons entering the Navy. There was always a whisper that the Wheatley family had a connection with Horatio Nelson - I have a water-coloured etching of him. I have recently read that a Miss Wheatley taught music/singing to his daughter and sang at his funeral. Do you have any more information on her, even her Christian name? Would much appreciate hearing from you.

*Thanking you,
Louise Davies*



We asked the enquirer for any further information she had on her Wheatley ancestors from the Nelson era and a copy of the 'water-coloured etching'. The matter of the etching was easily resolved. It was a copy of an 1801 portrait in oils of Nelson by John Rising (see illustration left). Of William Wheatley (born 1783) we were told by Louise that he entered the Royal Navy in 1798, and served for two years and nine months reaching the rank of petty officer. On leaving the Navy he was employed by the Admiralty, in a series of posts, for the rest of his working life: as a clerk in the Slops Office, Superintendent of the Rope and Twine department and finally as Librarian to the Admiralty.

William was twice married and had eight children (six sons and two daughters). The sons would have been too young to have served with Nelson. William died in 1831.

The questions we were left with were: Did Miss Wheatley teach Horatia music and singing? Did she sing at Nelson's funeral? Was she related to William Wheatley of the Admiralty and therefore an ancestor of our enquirer? What was her Christian name?

Nelson Society Historian Ray Aldis forwarded the enquiry to Lily Style, Chair of the Emma Hamilton Society. She was able to find an eye-witness account of Lady Hamilton's first encounter with Miss Wheatley in the 1826 *Reminiscences of Michael Kelly, of the King's Theatre and Theatre Royal*. In writing of his June 1811 play, *The Royal Oak*, Kelly recalls:

'Connected with my recollections of this play, is an anecdote relative to my deceased friend, Lady Hamilton, so characteristic of that talented, but unfortunate woman, and at the same time so demonstrative of her warmth of feeling, that I cannot suffer it to pass unrecorded.

I had composed a plaintive ballad in the second act for a Miss Wheatley (formerly a pupil of Attwood's), who possessed a fine deep contre alto voice—the poetry was descriptive of a warrior, who had fallen in recent battle. Upon the fifth representation of the new play, Lady Hamilton, with a party of friends, occupied one of the stage boxes, appearing all gayety and animation. Scarcely, however, had this ballad commenced, when she became tremulous and agitated; and at its conclusion, upon the encore being loudly demanded, she exclaimed, "For God's sake, remove me—I cannot bear it." Her terrified friends withdrew her from the box, whence she was immediately conveyed home in a fainting condition'.

Kelly elaborates on the circumstances of Lady Hamilton recruiting Miss Wheatley as Horatia's music tutor:

'The following morning, Miss Wheatley received a note from her Ladyship, (to whom she had previously been unknown), inviting her to her house, where, after complimenting her upon the force and feeling with which she had given the melody, she added, "The description brought our glorious Nelson with such terrible truth before my mind's eye, that you overwhelmed me at the moment, but now I feel as if I could listen to you in that air for ever." She prevailed upon her visiter [sic] to repeat the ballad no less than four times at the piano-forte, "as if increase of appetite grew by what it fed upon."

Eventually, so powerful became this sentiment, that she induced Miss Wheatley to retire from the stage altogether, and accept, under her roof, the post of musical governess to the young Horatia Nelson, who had been confided to her Ladyship's guardianship. Not a day afterwards elapsed, but the favourite song was put in requisition. I published it under the title of 'Rest, warrior, rest'. It was generally esteemed one of my happiest efforts...'

The precise identity, however, of the Miss Wheatley who tutored ten-year-old Horatia remained elusive. As Kelly's account provides no forename, it was impossible to know which, if any, baptism or other record pertained to her. Fortunately, a substantial clue to her identity is provided in a 1993 *Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, whose 'Miss Wheatley' entry tells us she was first noticed on the bill for an elaborate Drury Lane pantomime in February 1795 and that, in November 1797, a publication called 'The True Briton' reported her as 'not quite 15 years old' (suggesting she was born in late 1782, or early 1783). The 'European Magazine', writing about her that same month, said 'her voice is well-toned and powerful, and she seems to have made some progress in the science of music. As an actress her defects are general. On the whole, however, we must set down the appearance as the most promising of the season in this line.'

According to her biographical entry, 'she continued at Covent Garden in the winter seasons until 1804-5. *The Thespian Dictionary* of 1805 reported that she performed in summers at Richmond, Brighton, &c. She was also at the Haymarket Theatre frequently after her first appearance as Jaqueline in Davy's new comic opera *What a Blunder!*'

However, there is no mention of her singing at Nelson's funeral, and no wider evidence has come to light to support this. Furthermore, Kelly's account tells that she first met Lady Hamilton in 1811. If she did sing at Nelson's funeral, it would not have been through a personal connection to Nelson's close kin.

Helpfully for us, The 'European Magazine' (as quoted in the biographical dictionary) identifies Miss Wheatley as 'sister to the gentleman who played Laertes' in Hamlet at Covent Garden on 25 September 1797. More helpfully still, the next entry in the biographical dictionary is for Frederick Wheatley, who 'came

on stage for his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre on 25 September 1797 playing Laertes in Hamlet'. So, Miss Wheatley's brother was a fellow stage performer named Frederick, who, in the words of 'The Monthly Mirror', had 'a good figure, and an expressive countenance, though rather gloomy and forbidding.' Miss Wheatley's brother Frederick emigrated to America and was in New York by 1804. He married a well-known actress named Sarah Ross and had



three children, all of whom took to the stage: 'Julia, who succeeded as an operatic contralto, retiring in 1840; Emma a well-known actress who died on 16 July 1854; and William Wheatley (5 December 1816 - 3 November 1876), [pictured left], one of the most prominent and effective American theatrical managers in the middle of the nineteenth century.'

Here at last is a scattering of pointers to help trace the Miss Wheatley whom Lady Hamilton employed as Horatia's music tutor. I contacted Frederick Wheatley's descendants – cousins named Jennifer and David Wheatley Smith – through a genealogical website. Their inherited family lore recalls Frederick Wheatley's date of birth as Christmas Day 1779,

although they had conflicting accounts of this having been in either London or Ireland.

A search of baptismal records returned a likely match: Frederick, son of William and Mary Wheatley, born 24 December 1779, christened at St Leonards, Shoreditch, Middlesex, on 23 January 1780. A Christmas Eve birthday could, I think, have easily come to be associated with Christmas Day celebrations, especially as many of the European nationalities who settled in New York, such as Norwegians, Danes and Swedes, celebrate Christmas on its eve.

Records for the enquirer's naval ancestor William Wheatley (1783 – 1831) tell us his father was 'William Wheatley of the Navy and Elizabeth'. This means that if, as Frederick's likely baptism record says, our elusive Miss Wheatley's parents were named William and Mary, she could not have been a close cousin to the querent's ancestor (in other words, their fathers, both named William, could not have been brothers).

Shoreditch baptism records tell of two siblings for Frederick Wheatley: a brother named William born 22 January 1778, and a sister Mary born 17 June 1776. Mary, however, seems an unlikely fit for the Miss Wheatley who tutored Horatia, as she would have been twenty-one when 'The True Briton' reported, in November 1797, that Miss Wheatley was not quite 15 years old. It feels improbable for a newspaper to have identified a grown woman as a fourteen-year-old in this context.

Shoreditch, during the eighteenth century, had been a sought-after 'des res' for the wealthy, with residents having included the Governor of the Bank England

and the founder of the East India Company. Its popularity had, however, begun to wane by the time of Frederick Wheatley's birth on Christmas Eve 1779, as the upper classes migrated to new builds in the West End. We do not know whether Frederick's parents were well off, and he and his sibling's theatre employment suggest that they were not. However, then as now, families of all incomes moved home, and not all 18th-century clergymen recorded parents' names in their records. A baptism record from the neighbouring parish of St Sepulchre, Newgate, jumps out as a likely candidate for Horatia Nelson's future tutor: Martha Wheatley, whose parents' names are not given, was born on 30 April 1783, meaning she would have been fourteen and a half when 'The True Briton' said Miss Wheatley was 'not quite fifteen'.

It is worth bearing in mind that not all parish records have survived for the convenience of modern-day researchers, and it may be that the true baptism record of the Miss Wheatley who tutored Horatia has been lost to oblivion, but could Martha, baptised in St Sepulchre in 1783, have grown up to be the contralto who so moved Lady Hamilton with her rendition of 'Rest Warrior Rest' that she employed her to tutor Horatia?

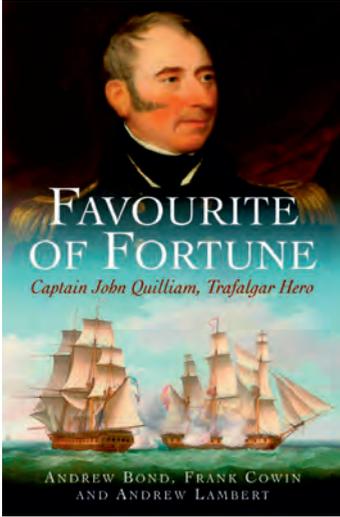
Miss Wheatley's biographical dictionary entry tells that she was 'first noticed when her name was added to the list of Attendant Females on the bill for the third night of the elaborate new pantomime *Alexander the Great* at Drury Lane on 16 February 1795.' If this was Martha Wheatley, she would have been not quite twelve years old. According to an article posted on Cambridge University's website, the eighteenth century saw children as young as five appearing on stage. Theatre was a source of employment for many minors, and Emma, Lady Hamilton had herself worked in the entertainment industry as a young teen. According to biographer Flora Fraser, at age thirteen, Emma worked as a costume hand for a Drury Lane theatre. There is also a popular legend that she gained employment as a classically-dressed dancer in a high-end clinic named the 'Temple of Health' before she was fifteen. So, it seems feasible that the Newgate-born Martha Wheatley could have taken to the boards as an eleven-year-old, just as Miss Wheatley's biographical dictionary entry implies.

In conclusion, records appear to confirm that Lady Hamilton did indeed employ a Miss Wheatley as a music tutor for Horatia Nelson, and that this took place in 1811. However, no evidence for Miss Wheatley singing at Nelson's January 1806 funeral has emerged. A 1993 biographic dictionary of 18th-century London stage performers tells us that Miss Wheatley was born in late 1782, or early 1783, and identifies her brother as Frederick Wheatley, whose probable parents were William and Mary (not to be confused with the pre-Georgian royal couple!) This makes it unlikely that the querent's naval ancestors were close kin to Horatia's music tutor. We cannot be certain of Miss Wheatley's Christian name, but Martha Wheatley (baptised in St Sepulchre, Newgate in April 1783) seems the most likely candidate according to available records.

BOOK REVIEWS

FAVOURITE OF FORTUNE. Captain John Quilliam, Trafalgar Hero.

Andrew Bond, Frank Cowin and Andrew Lambert. xvi, 182pp, 16 col, 16 b/w illus, 7 maps. Seaforth Publishing, Pen & Sword, 2021. ISBN 978-1-3990-1270-6. Hardback, £25.



Mention John Quilliam and most people will only know of him from Trafalgar when, as a quick thinking First Lieutenant he, with the Master, Thomas Atkinson, rigged *Victory's* steering from the gun-room after her wheel was shot away. But Quilliam's Trafalgar only occupies pp. 74-85 here in the story of a remarkable Manx-man whose naval career reads almost like those of the fictional heroes of 'Nelson's navy'. He fought at Camperdown and Copenhagen before Trafalgar but he began his naval career aged 14 in 1785 and it lasted until 1815 when he came ashore on half pay, 'the oldest frigate captain afloat', and died in 1829. Quilliam is much celebrated on the Isle of Man with the Quilliam Group formed in 2015, and a splendid stained glass window commemorating him is in St Columba's

church, Arbory. Arising out of Professor Andrew Lambert's lecture on Quilliam's service after Trafalgar at the annual Trafalgar commemorations on the Isle of Man, it was suggested that he expand it to a full biography. However, he generously suggested that it should be a tripartite enterprise. Fortunately, Quilliam's naval career can be traced in detail through the survival of much documentary evidence, muster books, pay books and even courts martial papers where he was involved, and his many involvements with ongoing naval matters and institutions after he 'went ashore' in 1815. His talents were recognised by Nelson and many other captains and admirals.

So many books on 'Nelson's navy' are concerned with the higher ranks and major engagements. Here, fortunately due to a dedicated interest by the authors and an incredible and substantial number of archival documents surviving, is the real backbone story of a 14-year-old who, by his own intellect and dedication to his chosen profession, rose steadily to eventually retire as a much loved and vaunted frigate captain.

Quilliam's career literally encompassed The Seven Seas; he was afloat everywhere from China to the Mediterranean, the Baltic and to Newfoundland. Like many frigate captains he acquired prize money but it was as third lieutenant

aged 28 at the engagement of HMS *Ethalion* (38) with the bullion-laden Spanish frigate *Thetis* (36) off Cape Finisterre that made his fortune (about £340,000 in modern money). Returning back to Man after an eight-year absence, unlike many of his contemporaries he invested part of his prize money in properties in the island. He then returned in March 1800 as second lieutenant to the recently completed *Amazon* (38) and was on her at Copenhagen when he first met Nelson who came aboard.

By 1806 he had made flag captain and had his portrait painted by Benjamin West for inclusion in his painting 'The Death of Nelson'. At the same time he was actively managing his properties and had become a member of the House of Keys on the Isle of Man.

An interesting event recorded in some detail was a courts martial not, as so often, for the loss of a ship in various circumstances, but initially in relation to an altercation between Quilliam and Lt Thomas Bennett. This subsequently led to Bennett vindictively requesting Quilliam's courts martial on four charges: neglect of duty; 'Wasteful expenditure of His Majesty's Stores'; 'unofficerlike conduct in calling the Boatswain a Savage and a Negro', and neglecting the ship's company over prize money due for the *Jane*. Obviously stressful for Quilliam he was nevertheless exonerated by an admiral and 12 post-captains. Their view of Bennett's allegations against a senior officer is reflected in his later career: four years 'on the beach', then appointed to a tiny 10-gun brig, *Cygnets* in 1819 but then stalled to wait to reach captain rank until 1828.

Quilliam's last foray was to be 'At and about the island of Newfoundland', on *Crescent* (42) as part of Vice Admiral Sir Richard Keats's fleet of 14 charged with intercepting American privateers or warships, and even sailing as far south as Antigua in the West Indies before returning to Plymouth. By that time, 1815, the French war was nominally over, Bonaparte had been stopped at Waterloo, and Quilliam, returning in convoy, wrote 'requesting their Lordships to cause my name to be inserted on the Half Pay List'.

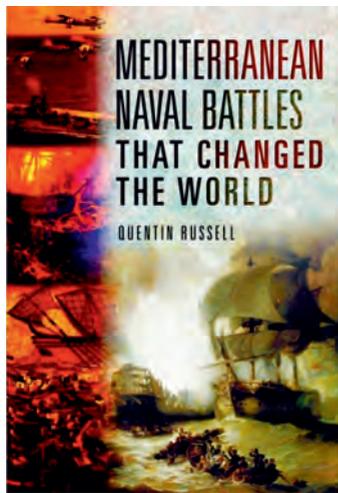
Two notable features of the book are its presentation in 25 short but succinct chapters that set Quilliam within his time and a useful Glossary, and the seven excellent and clear maps are amongst the best to be seen in any naval biography. There is an excellent detailed index but, curiously, there is no entry for Quilliam where an analytical entry would have been useful.

This is an excellent biography and although the product of three authors it reads seamlessly and is highly recommended.

An additional note. Quilliam was the only Manx-man on board *Victory* but the overall contribution made by the Isle of Man to the British fleet at Trafalgar has been little recognised, even as an aside by the present author in this book. There was at least one Manx-man born carried on board every one of Nelson's 27 ships at Trafalgar except for Lt James Warring, HMS *Ajax*; born in Westmorland but he moved to Man, died and was buried there. There were some 66 sailors and three Royal Marines of Manx birth at Trafalgar and the most Manx-men were on

HMS *Conqueror* with nine men. See the reviewer's 'Manxmen in Nelson's Navy at Trafalgar', *TND* vol. 12, pt 1, Winter 2015, pp. 47-55. And, not least many years ago when lecturing on a Mediterranean cruise, he found that he had a descendant of Quilliam amongst the passengers. **Peter A. Clayton**

MEDITERRANEAN NAVAL BATTLES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD. By **Quentin Russell**. 236pp, 42 b/w illus, 7 maps. Pen & Sword Maritime, 2021. ISBN978-1-52671-599-9. Hardback, £25.



In antiquity the Mediterranean was, save for the Straits of Gibraltar at its western end, virtually a land-locked lake, and remained so until the opening of the Suez Canal at the eastern end in November 1869. With its capricious nature of violent storms, it claimed untold thousands of ships and even more lives that met a watery grave. Man is a puny creature when pitting himself and his ship against the will and might of the Mediterranean, and the fate of belligerent nations swung in the balance of history on the outcome of their battles in it. Although many of those ships were lost by the forces of nature, others perished by the hand of the warring nations that, in their turn, influenced history and the world we have today. Only one of the six battles described in this book, Nelson and The

Nile, is really the direct focus for Nelson Society members, but seen in the context of its five companion battles described, and the wider background to Mediterranean naval history, it will be very illuminating.

Dr Quentin Russell has chosen six notable naval battles fought at the eastern end of the Mediterranean over a span of 2000 years, each of which was highly significant at the time and changed history in the years that followed – had the victory achieved at the time gone the other way, the world we have at present would be substantially different. The six battles range in date from Salamis in 480 BC (Greeks defeating Persian expansion); Actium, 31 BC (Octavian, later Augustus, defeating Antony and Cleopatra); Lepanto, 1571 (when the Christian alliance defeated Ottoman expansion in the last great galley battle); Aboukir Bay, 1798 (Nelson and The Nile thwarting Napoleon's dream of an eastern empire); Navarino, 1827 (a European coalition defeated the Turkish navy to create an independent Greek state, and was the last great sea battle fought under sail); and Cape Matapan and the Battle for Malta, 1940-42 (British naval supremacy defeating the Italian navy and the Axis powers). Each battle is described in detail, and was indeed a turning point that 'Changed the World'. Each is set in context, has similar text length and is supported by a clear map, and a detailed and highly

readable text. The battle described is provided with a short focused bibliography, although it is curious that several important ancient authors on Salamis and Actium are cited in editions over 100 years old (one even 1777, not of easy access!) and they are all available in modern editions, notably in the Penguin Classics.

The Introduction, ‘The Contested Sea’, pp. 1-15, ranges broadly over the naval history of the Mediterranean so that the six featured battles can be appreciated in the broader canvas. Chapter One, pp.17-42, then outlines the development of naval warfare in the Mediterranean. Thereafter each battle is addressed in turn and set in its context before the actual conflict is described in detail and the historical consequences, which brings the focus of Nelson Society readers to Aboukir Bay 1798 (The Nile), pp. 129-57. Although our members will obviously be well aware of the battle, the succinct presentation of the run-up to it and the reasons for it, followed by a concentrated detailed description, is very useful.

However, our readers will immediately react at the statement on p. 154 regarding the excavations on Nelson’s Island by Dr Paolo Gallo, ‘who was able to positively identify one body, that of Commander James Russell’. This was done not by Gallo but by Nelson Society past-Chairman and archaeologist the late Dr Nick Slope, who went out on behalf of the Society to assist Dr Gallo and who identified Russell, publishing his interim reports in *The Nelson Dispatch*. He also traced a descendant of Commander Russell who was able to attend his official reburial with full Naval honours in Chatby Commonwealth War Cemetery in Alexandria in April 2005. Nick Slope’s excavations were published posthumously as *Excavating Nelson’s Heroes. A Story of Their Rescue and Reburial* (2019).

Dr Russell remarks at the end of the chapter, referring forward to Trafalgar, that ‘Nelson achieved another victory and a hero’s death, Villeneuve, another defeat. Rather than face Napoleon’s ire once more, Villeneuve committed suicide.’ The forepart is obviously true, the latter hardly so. Villeneuve was captured when the *Bucentaure* struck, he attended Nelson’s funeral on his parole and then was exchanged back to France. There, in a hotel room in Rennes, on 22 April 1806, his body was found with six stab wounds in his left lung and one in his heart, hardly meriting the ‘official’ verdict of suicide; more likely he was assassinated on Napoleon’s orders, as the contemporary British press opined.

These last comments notwithstanding, as they must be brought to the notice of Nelson Society members, Dr Russell’s book is highly recommended and it will certainly make our members aware of how so much of our modern world depends on Nelson at the Nile, and the three major Mediterranean battles that preceded him.

Peter A. Clayton

COCHRANE, BRITANNIA'S SEA WOLF. Donald Serrell Thomas, first published 1978.



Thomas, Lord Cochrane by Peter Stroehling 1807

Over the years I have read several biographies of Thomas Cochrane who was one of the most charismatic and brave naval heroes of the Napoleonic Wars and afterwards. He was the character which Patrick O'Brian, C.S. Forester, to name but a couple of authors, emulated in their historical novels, but the real life that Cochrane led was almost beyond the realms of believable fiction.

A few months ago, a retired dentist friend at the Church where I minister, thrust a paperback book into my hand. It was entitled '*Cochrane Britannia's Sea Wolf*' written by Donald Thomas and first published in 1978. My friend knew of my association with The Nelson Society and insisted that I would enjoy reading it. Leading a very busy life, and as I have mentioned, I had read several other biographies, I put it on my pile of books to peruse when I had time. The Coronavirus lock-down was my reason for reading it and I have to admit that it far surpassed other descriptions of his life which I have read. I cannot really say that this is a 'book review' as it was published so long ago, but it is still in print and available as a paperback. It is published by Cassell Military Paperbacks, has 384 pages and is available at £9.99. Sadly it is not illustrated apart from a few campaign maps, but I would highly recommend any members like me who have missed it, to get a copy.

Cochrane was born into a slightly impoverished Scottish aristocratic family on 14 December 1775, and from his early days in the Royal Navy showed a desire to learn practical seamanship, whilst always wanting to further his education. His undoubted naval skills, however, were always conflicting with his radical democratic political ideas and his ability to pick a fight with virtually anybody in authority. Whilst fighting the French and Spanish at sea made him a national hero, his taking on the Royal Navy's hierarchy and the political establishment almost brought him total disgrace and financial ruin.

His first ship as a midshipman was captained by his uncle, Alexander Cochrane, which gave him some influence, but it was to be a Lieutenant Jack Larmour, who had risen from the ranks, who taught him real seamanship and also

a distaste for men with ‘parliamentary influence’. Such officers often saw their way to higher office through sycophancy rather than skill and bravery. Larmour pointed out that ‘parliamentary influence had never got a ship off the rocks of a lee shore’.

Donald Thomas describes Cochrane's sea adventures superbly. It is obvious from his description of various actions that Cochrane was not only a great ship's captain, shown in seamanship and bravery, but he had an instinct for combat. The Royal Navy at this time was not only powered by patriotism but by the desire for prize-money, and he was needy. Some of Cochrane's distaste for officers with ‘parliamentary influence’ was fuelled by the fact that he considered them shy of combat, as they were generally wealthy and knew that they would have advancement through their contacts. Cochrane's desire and success in securing prizes not only helped his financial situation but made him popular with his officers and crew, who also benefited. Cochrane met Nelson on several occasions in Palermo in 1799 and they got on well, but during a conversation about battle tactics and manoeuvres where Cochrane was expounding standard naval answers, Nelson growled, “Never mind the manoeuvres always go at them”. Cochrane thought that it was the best advice he had ever received, which must have spurred him on, as the next few years saw him achieve great success and a fair amount of wealth. Cochrane married Katherine (Kitty) Barnes who was a beautiful 16-year-old orphan girl with no inheritance, and 20 years younger than him, much to the annoyance of his rich uncle, who disinherited him when he eloped to Scotland with her. It was to be a good marriage and she bore him six children and supported him through good times and bad.

Cochrane's main character flaw, or perhaps attribute, was his confrontational manner with his superiors in the Navy. Donald Thomas pays great attention to this and his relationships with senior officers, civil servants and politicians, which in general were problematic. Cochrane was idealistic and wanted to see a better Navy, a Navy free from the corruption, internal politics and petty bureaucracy that, in his eyes, held it back from more dramatic victories. His liberal radicalism was not unique at the time in a world which was evolving at a dramatic rate from agrarian to industrial society, but sadly he found it hard to compromise his views to align them with others with radical views.

Cochrane found fame and fortune and was very popular for his anti-establishment opinions, winning seats in Parliament when Parliament was not anything like what we see now, although the establishment was far too powerful to be greatly worried by him.

Cochrane's criticism of Admiral James Gambier after the Battle of Basque Roads was to precipitate his downfall. Cochrane had greatly damaged the French Fleet of Admiral Allemande by using fire ships and explosive vessels, causing such panic that the French grounded many ships of the line in the shallows, at the mercy of the British. Although Cochrane attacked as best he could with his frigate and small ships, he was frustrated that Gambier would not commit his battleships

to totally destroy the enemy. His criticism caused Gambier to demand a court-marshal, where with a friendly court and an inability of vital incriminating evidence to be called against him, he was duly acquitted. Cochrane's enemies, of which there were now many, were further enraged by his activities in highlighting the corruption and nepotism of the prize-money courts. They finally got their man when he was caught up in a Stock Exchange share fraud, which Donald Thomas insists was almost certainly an establishment stitch-up. His trial, that reads worse than that of communist dictatorships, ended with a prison sentence, a fine and the degradation of being stripped of the Order of the Bath and being dismissed from the Navy. Cochrane maintained his innocence all his life and was reinstated to the order by personal decree from Queen Victoria in 1847, 33 years after his degradation by the Prince Regent.

Following his degradation Cochrane was offered a post as Vice-Admiral of Chile. He went there with his wife Kitty with the intent of assisting the emerging independent state to overcome their Spanish colonial masters. It was a complex political and military adventure which he again fulfilled with great bravery, but politically he struggled to bring much unity. With Bernardo O'Higgins he also helped to liberate Peru and then went to assist Brazil with their independence struggle with the Portuguese. It is thought by some, including Donald Thomas, that Cochrane had plans to extricate Napoleon from his exile in St. Helena to become a dictator of a United States of South America. This theory does not hold a lot of water but it may have been a dream of a deposed emperor who had a lot of time on his hands. One episode that Donald Thomas fails to mention was Cochrane's friendship with Maria Graham during his time in South America, who was a beautiful author and translator who had recently been widowed.

He was then asked to assist the Greeks with their independence endeavours against the Ottoman Empire. Although his intervention did not bring about a conclusive result and was perhaps his least successful enterprise, it did bring Britain, France and Russia into the fray, which culminated in the Battle of Navarino which ended the war with the defeat of the Turkish and Egyptian fleets.

On return to England, Cochrane protested his innocence of the Stock Exchange fraud to the Duke of Clarence, but to no avail, before leaving the country to live in Italy for some years for the sake of Kitty's health. In 1830 when the Duke succeeded to the throne as William IV and the government of Wellington fell to the Whigs who instituted parliamentary reform in 1832, Cochrane had thoughts of returning to Parliament, but on the death of his father he was elevated to the title of the 10th Earl of Dundonald. With the political evolution taking place, and with Kitty's intervention, he swallowed his pride and accepted a pardon, which allowed him to be accepted back into the Royal Navy at the rank of Rear-Admiral. Finding favour with Queen Victoria when she reigned and many of his old adversaries had died, he became Admiral of the Fleet and accepted the honorary title of Rear-Admiral of the United Kingdom. His last active service was as Commander-in-Chief of the North American and West

Indies Station from 1848-51. He offered to serve in the Crimean War but was passed by due to his age and perhaps too aggressive tactics for that conflict.

Cochrane was the true Victorian boy's hero, but he was also a very clever inventor and engineer. He was a strong advocate of the use of steam powered ships when the conservative nature of the Navy hierarchy would not countenance steam in warships. He devised bombardment vessels to support the landing of troops, and also advocated the use of stink vessels (poison gas) that would be floated into harbours along with the explosive vessels he had already used. These inventions were passed over by the Admiralty, but although Donald Thomas does not mention it, together with Mark Isambard Brunel, he invented a tunnelling shield which led the way for major tunnelling projects in the 19th century.

Cochrane, the 10th Earl of Dundonald died on 31 October 1860 and was buried in the nave of Westminster Abbey. His Knight of the Bath banner which had been ceremonially evicted from the Henry VII Chapel at Westminster in 1814 was never replaced due to Lord Palmerston's intransigence. It had been found in a curiosity shop and was replaced the day before his funeral at the insistence of Queen Victoria.

Cochrane's legacy as a brave servant of Britain cannot be disputed, and his contribution to the freedom of Chile, Peru and Brazil is still celebrated in those countries to this day. However, his radical politics and his desire for reform of the Navy and Parliament made him many enemies. His involvement with the Stock Exchange fraud is still a cause for much debate amongst historians and authors, but I personally think that his trial could not be called regular and his punishment was out of proportion to the possible offence. This book is a fitting tribute to a great heroic figure who should take his place with all the greats of our naval heritage.

Terry Colling

Editor's Note: Digitisation and publication of the Greek section of Lord Cochrane's Family Archive. The Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation, in collaboration with Lord Thomas Cochrane's descendants and the National Records of Scotland, is undertaking a project of digitisation and publication of the Greek section of his archive, which remained sealed since his death.

Lord Thomas Cochrane was a British Navy officer and a philhellene during the Greek Independence War of 1821. Having been appointed by the Greek National Assembly of Troizina Commander in Chief of the Greek naval forces, he took an active role in the campaign between March 1827 and December 1828. The project began in January 2021 and is expected to be concluded in three years, when it will be available in the Foundation's Digital Archives website. The Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation is actively participating in the 'Bicentennial Initiative 1821-2021' celebrating 200 years since the Greek Revolution, in collaboration with many important cultural institutions of Greece.

See <http://www.laskaridisfoundation.org/en/bicentennial-initiative-1821-202/>

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OBITUARY

LORD WALPOLE 1938 – 2021 President of The Nelson Society 2004-2017



We are sorry to report the death of Robert Horatio, Lord Walpole (known as Robin) on 8 May 2021 aged 82. The 10th Baron Walpole of Walpole and 8th Baron Walpole of Wolterton, he was a descendant of England's first prime minister, also Lord Robert Walpole. The Walpole family was related to Nelson's family via his mother Catherine Suckling, and the family name Horatio/Horace derived from the first Prime Minister's younger brother Horatio.

Lord Walpole had lived at Mannington Hall, near Aylsham, Norfolk since 1969. A former politician crossbencher in the House of Lords, educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, Lord Walpole was active in Norfolk public life and was an enthusiastic advocate for the arts, in particular with the Norfolk County Council Museums Committee and also as President of the Sheringham Little Theatre. Lord Walpole joined The Nelson Society in its early days and was given the honorary membership number '1805'. During his time as President of The Nelson Society, he attended many Nelson Society events, AGM's and Trafalgar Dinners including the HMS *Victory* Dinner in September 2005, with his wife Laurel, Lady Walpole. In 2004 Lord Walpole hosted a luncheon at the House of Lords for the Comune of Bronte delegation from Sicily and members of The Nelson Society, and in October 2006 he and Lady Walpole welcomed a party of Nelson Society members to lunch and a tour of their other home Wolterton Hall (which was sold in 2016). One of Lord Walpole's final duties as President of The Nelson Society was to officially open in 2016 the newly rebuilt Nelson Health Centre on the site of the old Nelson Hospital in Merton. More recently he and Lady Walpole were guests at a Norfolk Members' Luncheon in Norwich in 2019.

We extend our sympathy to Laurel and their family.

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Membership is open to anyone who is interested Nelson, his life and times. Members are sent free quarterly issues of *The Nelson Dispatch*, and are able to participate with their guests in our varied programme of events, luncheons, lectures and visits to relevant places of interest. Contact the Membership Secretary, whose details appear on the inside front cover of this issue, for details of how to apply, and current subscription rates.

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Any contributions, whether fully researched articles, short features, queries or letters, will be welcomed. Please send material initially to the Executive Editor, Sue Morris. Ideally, material should be sent in **by email, as a plain Word document** which we will lay out. Any references should be included as end-notes. (Please additionally send as a pdf, if your article includes figures or tables so we can check it is accurately displayed). Illustrations and photographs are very welcome and should be sent separately as jpeg files **numbered and identified with detailed captions**. Articles should ideally conform to our house style and 'Notes for Contributors' are available on request. Please contact the Executive Editor for advice on any of the above.

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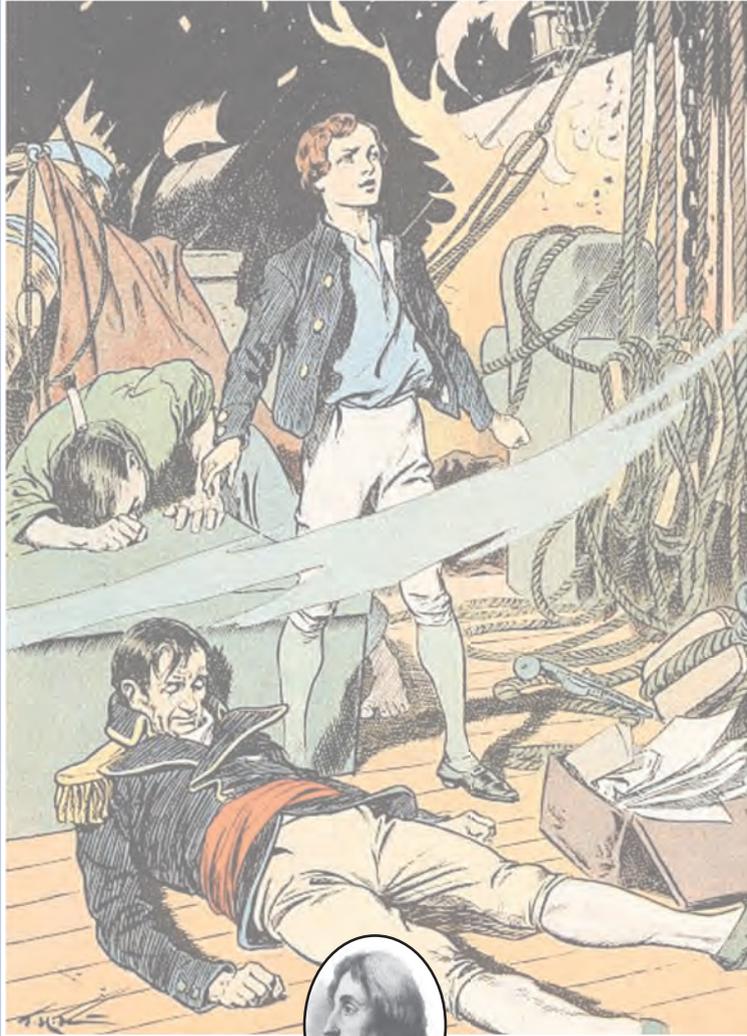
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