

**40th**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
**1981-2021**

# The Nelson Dispatch



**Journal of  
The Nelson Society**

**Volume 14 Part 4 Autumn 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

Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey KCB CBE    Dr John Sugden    Raglan Tribe    Dr J Keith Wood FRCP

#### 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, Honorary Chaplain and Historian

#### 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: nolson8@gmail.com

#### Honorary Chaplain

Revd Terry Colling

#### Historian

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

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

Website: [www.nelson-society.com](http://www.nelson-society.com)

# The Nelson Dispatch

Volume 14 Part 4 Autumn 2021

## ARTICLES

<b>THE BOY ON THE BURNING DECK (PART TWO)</b>	
Henri Lachèze .....	230
<b>AN UNCOMFORTABLE VICTORY – COPENHAGEN 1801, A STRATEGIC OVERVIEW</b>	
Gareth Glover.....	242
<b>A TICKET TO IMMORTALITY</b>	
Susan Amos.....	248

## REPORTS

<b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 23 OCT 2021</b>	
Sue Morris .....	200
<b>SERVICE FOR SEAFARERS, PORTSMOUTH 12 SEPT 2021</b>	
Jeanette Ryder .....	207
<b>BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN EVENT, WORCESTER 19-21 SEPT</b>	
Graham Capel.....	209
<b>TRAFALGAR DAY, PORTSDOWN HILL, 21 OCT 2021</b>	
Jane Smith.....	213
<b>TRAFALGAR WEEKEND, LONDON 22-24 OCT 2021</b>	
Jenny Newbold .....	214
<b>PICKLE &amp; REMEMBRANCE EVENTS, PORTSMOUTH 12-14 NOV</b>	
Jenny Newbold.....	224

## REGULAR FEATURES

Editorial.....	194	From the Chairman.....	199
Membership Matters.....	203	Events and Notices.....	204
Newsround.....	227	Reviews.....	252
Obituaries.....	255		

© The Nelson Society 2021 and authors as named, all rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission of the publisher. All articles are the views and opinions of the author and do not necessarily represent those of The Nelson Society.

*Cover photo: A new statue of Nelson at Burnham Thorpe (S Morris)*

## EDITORIAL

With your indulgence, for this edition of the ‘Nelson Dispatch’ I thought I would publish in full the talk about Nelson and the Slave Trade which I recently delivered at our wonderful Trafalgar Night dinner. The subject is fraught but the issue is pressing and so—with apologies to those readers who have already heard it—I think it should be published to show that, as a Society, we have drawn a line in the sand against further unwarranted, unfounded and inaccurate attacks against Britain’s greatest naval hero:

‘Four years ago I spoke in this same hall as the guest of the Worshipful Company of Tobacco Pipe Makers and Blenders. The focus of my talk then was the magnificent portrait of Nelson hanging next door, which was ordered by the Drapers after granting the admiral freedom of their company following the Battle of the Nile. I had intended, and indeed had been invited to do so by our Chairman, to do much the same this evening. But much has changed since that affable evening with the tobacco pipe makers and blenders. They have been forced to change their coat of arms from depicting black tobacco growers to heraldic beasts, and the Corporation of London, where we sit, has been canvassing the removal from the Guildhall of statues of politicians with links to the transatlantic slave trade. Whilst we were locked down, a cultural tsunami has been gathering force reassessing the historic fabric of the country in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The first waves of the approaching flood washed up on our own shores in August 2017 when The Guardian published an article by Afua Hirsch entitled ‘Toppling statues? Here’s why Nelson’s column should be next’. In the piece Hirsch described William Wilberforce as “unquestionably a force for good” while Nelson “was what you would now call, without hesitation, a white supremacist”. Nelson’s crime was to use “his seat in the House of Lords and his position of huge influence to perpetuate the tyranny, serial rape and exploitation organised by West Indian planters, some of whom he counted among his closest friends.”

Despite repeated requests, Hirsch has never given her source, or responded to questions on her central accusation that Nelson used his influence to (as she repeated in a subsequent television interview) “lobby, very actively, in the House of Lords in support of the plantation owners”. In fact, Nelson spoke only on six occasions in parliament, never touching on the subject of slavery. In the same interview, Hirsch labelled Nelson “a racist”.

The principal, indeed the only source for Nelson’s views on “hypocritical” Wilberforce and the Slave Trade is a letter he penned to Jamaica plantation owner Simon Taylor in June 1805. The letter was leaked and published after Nelson’s death ahead of the vote on parliament to abolish the slave trade in 1807. In a fraught debate the letter was explosive and appeared to show that Nelson actively

supported the plantation owners and the anti-abolitionists, a stance which has convicted him today as a “white supremacist” by Hirsch and others.

But the published letter was a fake. Two years ago I found in an archive of papers a manufactured copy of the Taylor letter with a forged Nelson seal and signature. Nelson did write to Simon Taylor, but after Trafalgar, Taylor, a leading anti-abolitionist, had arranged for the letter to be cynically doctored and published to support his cause. Comparison with Nelson’s retained copy of the letter in the British Library shows some 25 changes, all in the anti-abolitionists’ favour. Taylor and his cronies were more than happy to exploit Nelson’s posthumous fame for their own political reasons – a motivation incidentally which is shared by Afua Hirsch. Indeed, there is delicious irony that Hirsch has fallen headlong into a trap laid by the anti-abolitionists two hundred years ago and in her argument is unwittingly siding with them.

After I published evidence that the letter was forged, Hirsch was ridiculed on social media. Far from showing contrition, she doubled down posting on twitter, where prejudice prospers over truth and facts, that “Certain jokers out here think the case against Nelson's pro-slavery stance is based on 3 words in an allegedly forged letter. Shows their entire ignorance of Britain, the Navy, & Nelson's complicity in the slave trade”. Now I have met Afua Hirsch, and I can tell you she is very intelligent, charming and polite, but twitter does this to people.

It would be easy to dismiss, even admire Hirsch as a journalist on the make who fell upon a high profile historical figure to further her career and raise her own profile, but her words were weaponised in light of the Black Lives Matter protests last year. She had propagated a false narrative which found Nelson to be racist and actively anti-abolitionist.

Four years on, Nelson has become a ‘person of interest’ in the cancel culture retributions sweeping our institutions, publishers, museums and broadcasters.

We can laugh at the absurdity of the Welsh Assembly citing the entire village of Nelson in Caerphilly as “problematic”, and we can sigh when the Dean of Norwich declares Nelson to be flawed after a statue of the admiral in her own cathedral close is daubed with graffiti. But it was deeply alarming when it was revealed that the National Maritime Museum, keeper of the greatest repository of Nelson artefacts in the world, was reviewing Nelson’s “heroic status” in light of the “often barbaric history of race, colonialism and representation in British maritime history.” Content warnings have been placed in the galleries warning, with no evidence, “that many visitors and staff are offended and hurt by the language used, the interpretation of objects, and the lack of Black voices”. I have known many of the curators at Greenwich, which included our own much-missed Colin White, so it is disappointing, to say the least, to see their work denigrated in this very public way.

Following an outcry, museum director Paddy Rodgers was forced onto the ‘Today’ programme to hastily retract any impression the museum was distancing

itself from its most valuable commercial asset, but the damage has been done and is lasting. It has fed directly into an ongoing campaign to remove a statue of Nelson from nearby Deptford Town Hall, which last year was daubed with red paint. After all, why should Deptford defend a figure which Greenwich itself finds indefensible?

As The Nelson Society, of course, we could not allow politically charged and unfounded accusations against Nelson to go unchecked risking, as they do, his historical legacy and reputation. We set up a task force to investigate the claims, to respond when necessary to inaccurate reports in the press and to make submissions to the various reviews of historic monuments across the country, including to the Welsh Assembly and to the London Assembly. Our submissions have been evidence-based, well sourced, thorough and offered entirely in good faith. They have also been largely ignored, barely even acknowledged in most cases.

Led by Chris Brett, who has done outstanding work on leading our response, we will continue to counter any false accusations against Nelson with evidence and fact. Chris will shortly publish an extensive new study of Nelson and the slave trade, but suffice to say Nelson never owned slaves, never owned a slave plantation, never took part in slaving activities at sea, never financed a slave ship and never spoke in support of the slave trade. His experience of other people, places and cultures was vastly superior to Wilberforce or Clarkson. For years he lived cheek by jowl at sea with black Africans, Indians and native Americans – they relied on him for their safety and he on them. There were no slaves in the Royal Navy. He sailed with Olaudah Equiano, the black activist and writer, and with the Haitian officer Joseph Chrétien, who served aboard HMS *Victory* after Nelson freed him from imprisonment on one of Napoleon’s warships. Chrétien had fought specifically to overthrow slavery in French-ruled Haiti, but Nelson had no qualms about describing him as “a very good orderly man [who] has done his duty,” and saying “it is but justice he should receive his wages” for helping the British.

He only passed seven out of his thirty five years at sea on the West Indies station and after 1787 only returned once in 1805. The best friend he made there was the merchant Hercules Ross, who named his son Horatio and gave evidence to the 1791 Select Committee of the House of Commons into the abolition of the slave trade which Ross saw as “contrary ... to the laws of God and nature”. He made enemies of many other planters who sued him for so strictly enforcing the Navigation laws. Of course, he married the daughter of a planter but showed no warmth towards her family and deserted her for Emma Hamilton. With Emma he secured the release of thirty North African slaves from Portuguese warships at Palermo, and returned to England with a black girl freed from a French transport off Egypt.

Yes, it is probably true to say that Nelson knew more about the evils of slavery first hand and more about the enslaved around the world, intervening

whenever possible to reduce their suffering, than Wilberforce or Clarkson, or even Afua Hirsch. And so when the people who had known him raised a column to Nelson's memory in Trafalgar Square they included a black sailor in heroic pose on the plinth. This man may indeed, as Hirsch suggested, have been "later left destitute, begging and homeless, on London's streets when the war was over". Like thousands of his white shipmates. Or he may have been like James Price, a black man known to Nelson and "as good a man as ever lived, he shall be taken care of, and have a corner in my house as long as he lives".

But the sad truth is, I am afraid, that Hirsch's Guardian article back in 2017 may never be expunged and, constantly recycled online, has left an indelible stain on Nelson's biography which we will struggle to ever remove. Hirsch is an extremely bad historian but a highly effective communicator who knew exactly what she was doing. But be assured that Nelson has nothing to apologise for, except for a pathological hatred of the French, and even that can be forgiven.

Recruiting people from the past as foot soldiers in culture wars of today is lazy history and bad politics. Social media is a haven for abusing the living but exacting revenge on long dead people is a futile exercise. It may bring a vicarious thrill but it does nothing to tackle social injustice, racism and prejudice because, of course, it has nothing to do with it.

The popular iconic image of Nelson, the hat, one arm, one eye, has always been a mirror to the world around it, evoked in time of wars and satirised in peace. But now he has a target on his own back and, unfortunately, all the evils of empire have come to rest on his narrow shoulders.

To impose our ethics on his, is as fruitless as expecting future generations to understand our own divided world. They will surely look back with amazement at how we allow twitter and facebook to go unchecked. But people can be judged on their actions, and in this regard Nelson cannot be faulted for the compassion, empathy and kindness he showed to the men he led. That is why tens of thousands of people who never knew Nelson, but knew of him, lined the streets of London for his funeral in a spontaneous outpouring of public emotion which would not be matched until Princess Diana, of modern saintly memory, died. Above all, people in the past should be judged on the people who knew them. I think it is fair to say that William Wilberforce probably knew Nelson better than Afua Hirsch and when he heard of Nelson's death he "was so overcome that he could not go on reading for tears".

**Martyn Downer, Drapers' Hall, 23 October 2021**

Vice Chairman Chris Brett gave the following response to Martyn Downer: 'Martyn, Many thanks for an excellent analysis of where we are now on this vexatious subject. You are quite right that Afua Hirsch's article in 2017 triggered the debate centring on Nelson, regardless that it had little foundation in fact. It was intended to be sensational and, as you correctly point out, had nothing

whatsoever to do with the fact that she had a book about to be published...! The problem is that once thrown, mud tends to stick. I actually purchased her book, 'Brit(ish)' in the hope of finding the source of her allegations about Nelson. In fact there is no reference to Nelson in the book, although there is a reference to the black sailors depicted at the base of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square.

I think we are entitled to be outraged, as the charges levelled against Nelson are serious in any age—perpetuating tyranny, serial rape and exploitation—especially if those charges are groundless. It is cowardly to assert and not provide evidence for that assertion. There is a saying '*Truth exists but falsehood has to be invented*' which is applicable here. Thank you for drawing attention to the Society's task force on this matter. If I can name names— we are ably led by Peregrine who is supported by Raglan, Ray Aldis, you and myself, under the watchful guidance of Graham and Sue. We remain vigilant and, for the moment, respond to the allegations as they arise. I am slightly less pessimistic than you, in that I feel we are like the fleet at Trafalgar. At present we are taking the broadsides from the enemy, but before long we will draw alongside and fire some broadsides back!

You quite rightly drew attention to the Simon Taylor letter, and thank you for getting the message out there that Nelson's letter to Taylor was heavily altered to make it appear that Nelson was pro-slavery. If you haven't read it, I commend Martyn's article in the 'Nelson Dispatch', Autumn 2020. If I can introduce a 'STOP PRESS': Martyn and I have discovered a second version of the forged letter, addressed to Duncan Campbell in Buxton (the Campbells were known slave owners in Jamaica) which now strongly indicates a concerted conspiracy, by anti-abolitionists in 1807, to use Nelson's posthumous reputation to influence the debate on the abolition of the slave trade. That conspiracy may also have extended to the highest levels to include Prince William Henry, who was a known pro-slavery supporter. We hope to publish.

There is no doubt that the time in which Nelson lived was a time of contradictions and is complicated to understand but, as you say, lazy history and bad politics do nothing to enhance our understanding. We must approach this subject with some caution, but I think we can take comfort from the Royal Navy, who on Trafalgar Day celebrate the victory in the battle and commemorate the death of Admiral Lord Nelson by giving thanks for his life and (I quote) "*for his devotion to duty, his steadfastness in adversity, his humanness in a cruel age, and for the example as a fighting sea commander he has set for future generations*". As you surmise, these are the qualities for which Nelson will be remembered.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me again in thanking Martyn in the usual fashion for an excellent talk and putting the matter of Nelson and slavery in perspective'.

**Chris Brett 23 October 2021**

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

By the time that you read this, our annual Trafalgar Weekend will have taken place. The response from members wanting to attend was tremendous. We had to re-organise many of our activities into two groups to be accommodated. The Trafalgar Banquet at Drapers' Hall in the City of London attracted over 100 guests, and what a feast it was! We had a 'bubbly' reception in the Court Dining Room and wandered next door to the Court Room where the Beechey portrait of Nelson hangs, looking across to the portrait of Wellington. The banquet was excellent in such sumptuous surroundings, and the talk by Martyn Downer covering both the Beechey portrait and the Society's involvement in the recent Nelson/slavery controversy was most interesting. I think that the Society and our 'Battle Team' have done a brilliant job in defending Nelson this past year.

Since the last issue we have also had our Battle of Copenhagen event in Worcester, and Pickle Night in Portsmouth, with the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth as guest speaker - most enjoyable events. It is almost like 'old times' with events and outings. It is so nice to be able to mix with members and talk to them face to face after such a long time of restricted communications.

Our next and final event for this year will be the Society's 40th Anniversary Luncheon at the Norfolk Club in Norwich, where the Society was founded 40 years ago to the day and the date. I am looking forward to it very much. With this issue you will receive a copy of Sue Morris' 'The Nelson Society: 40 years' and we hope you will enjoy reading this history of the Society from 1981-2021.

The controversy surrounding Nelson does not seem to go away. Recently, Goldsmiths, University of London, in Deptford, where the old Deptford Town Hall has images of Nelson and another sailor in this once important and historic dockyard facility in Nelson's day, filed a debate concerning the validity of the images in today's context. Vice Chairman Chris Brett has responded for the Society, and his response embraces not only the defence of Admiral Lord Nelson, but the interests in preserving this Nation's history and heritage. You cannot change past history because of modern thinking. The thinking and attitudes of that period do not necessarily correspond in this modern age. Chris Brett's response filed in October 2021 is a model for us all to use in any future controversy on the subject of slavery.

Wearing my Treasurer's hat, I am pleased to report that the 2020 Accounts were approved on board HQS *Wellington* on the Thames at our AGM on 23 October (an AGM afloat – a first for the Society!) and have now been filed. I have also successfully recovered £2000 in Gift Aid from membership subscriptions with a further £7-800 due – this additional income is most welcome, thank you very much to all those who signed their Gift Aid declarations.

This will be the last 'Nelson Dispatch' before Christmas, so let me wish you all a very Merry Christmas with family and friends

**Graham Capel, November 2021**

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of The Nelson Society was held on board HQS *Wellington*, London on 23 October 2021. Full minutes will be published before the 2022 AGM, but the Secretary has provided a summary of decisions listed below, in order to keep members informed in the meantime.

The AGM was well attended by some 80 members. The minutes of the 2020 AGM were accepted, as were the 2020 Annual Accounts and all Officers' reports for the period Jan-Dec 2020, circulated previously in the AGM Agenda leaflet.

It was agreed that there would be no increase to subscriptions for 2022.

It was agreed that a minor amendment to the Constitution could be submitted to the Charity Commission to enable the authorised committee officer to make use of online banking facilities.

The following members were elected to the Committee for 2022:

Chairman: Graham Capel Vice-Chairman: Chris Brett

Hon Treasurer: Graham Capel Hon Secretary: Sue Morris

Hon Editor: Martyn Downer Hon Membership Sec: Sue Morris

Committee members: David Curson, Marina Deestan-Jones, Jonathan Ponting and Alastair Robertson. Ronnie Kane was re-elected. Jeanette Ryder, Paul Ganjou and Alan Cross are continuing in their 3-year terms.

The following were accepted as Vice Presidents of the Society: Sir Alan Massey, Dr John Sugden.

The following were accepted as Honorary Members of the Society: Dan Snow, Dr John Sugden, Robert Bathurst, Dr Michael Duffy, Neil Oliver, Sir Alan Massey.

The date of the 2022 AGM was confirmed as 22 October 2022 to be held in Norfolk.



### **SIR ALAN MASSEY ELECTED VICE PRESIDENT OF THE NELSON SOCIETY**

We are delighted to welcome Vice Admiral Sir Alan Michael Massey, KCB, CBE as a Vice President of The Nelson Society. Alan is a former senior officer in the Royal Navy who served as the Second Sea Lord. He was educated at the University of Liverpool and at Britannia Royal Naval College.

During his Naval career, Alan trained as a seaman officer, specialising in above water warfare and as a fighter controller and navigator. His first posting was to HMS *Bulwark* in 1979. Alan's first command was HMS *Newcastle* in 1993, and he later saw service as captain of HMS *Campbelltown*, HMS *Illustrious* during operations against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 and as captain of HMS *Ark Royal* when his ship led the amphibious assault into Iraq in 2003. On 31 October 2003, Alan was appointed Commander of the Order of the

British Empire (CBE) "in recognition of gallant and distinguished services whilst on operations in Iraq during the period 19th March to 19th April 2003".

Staff tours included three appointments to the Ministry of Defence in London, serving in the NATO policy directorate, Defence Programmes, and as assistant director of Navy Plans. He also served twice in NATO staff appointments: as military assistant to the chairman of the NATO Military Committee in Brussels (1991–1992) and head of plans for the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia (1999–2001). As a commodore, he led the Operations Division of the Permanent Joint Headquarters at Northwood and then went on to be Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff in July 2005. He assumed office as Second Sea Lord in a ceremony aboard HMS *Victory* in July 2008, flying his Vice Admiral's flag in Nelson's own flagship for the next two years. He was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB) in the 2009 Queen's Birthday Honours.

After the Navy, Alan Massey was appointed chief executive of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in July 2010 until stepping down in October 2018. Alan is now non-executive Chair of the Trinity House Lighthouse Board, Chair of HeliOperations Ltd and a non-executive director of Shoreham Port Authority.

### **NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2022**

We are pleased to welcome four new faces to the Committee, elected at the AGM. Their terms of office will start on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. We print below their 'personal statements' submitted with their nominations and we all look forward to working together over the coming year.

#### **David Curson**

I was born near Paisley where my Father was serving as a CPO Aircraft Artificer. My Mother also served as a Meteorology WRNS. I left school at 16 with limited qualifications, and joined the Navy as an Aircraft Mechanic. Thankfully the RN system of 'learn or else', sorted me out and I went on to improve my education, including an OU BA degree. I was also field selected for the Artificer course at HMS *Daedalus*. In my career I mainly worked on the 'Junglie' Wessex and Seaking Helicopters on Carriers (and in the Arctic) and the Lynx on Frigates. I also did a spell on the Historic Flight working on the Swordfish, Sea Fury and Firefly aircraft, which was fascinating work. I have always enjoyed history, and my interest in Nelson probably started with the 'Ladybird' book and progressed to the more academic tomes. Nelson is as we know the hero of the RN, and my interest in history made me want to know more about the fascinating and complex character that made the man. His achievements in life and the bravery he demonstrated throughout his career despite injury and ailment are incredible. I firmly believe his contribution to our history should be upheld. From the RN I joined the family Park Home business, but my interest in Nelson and the Navy will endure, which includes making model ships. One of my sons also served in the Marines. My wife Carolene has also joined The Nelson Society, which really helps.

### **Alastair Robertson**

Apart from learning about Nelson in our general history, as Britons do, my particular interest in our national hero came about through my involvement in the history of the island of Tenerife. As a result of having written several articles about the fortifications of Tenerife for publication in an English language periodical, I was nominated and accepted into La Tertulia de Amigos del 25 de Julio 1797 (The Group of Friends of the 25th July 1797). This introduced me to the events of the 25th July, of which until then, like so many British, I was completely unaware, but it prompted me to become a re-enactor as the only real Englishman in Nelson's otherwise-Spanish land force. My resulting article was published first in the 'Tenerife News' and then, on a whim, an inspiration, sent to The Nelson Society - and the rest is history. I have been able to research and contribute more articles to the 'Nelson Dispatch', and since my co-option onto the Nelson Society committee I have been proud to be the amiable link between the two former protagonists. I hope to be able to continue in this role.

### **Marina Deestan-Jones**

The importance of history, pride in the Services and that name, Lord Nelson, was part of my early childhood. My mother, a teenager in Greenwich when WWII began, told me tales of the blitz, family in the Forces and what sacrifice meant. My father told of his school days when '*See the conquering Hero Comes!*' was sung every October 21<sup>st</sup> and all were given apples in honour of Lord Nelson. At my own school, an enthusiastic history teacher talked proudly of Empire and tradition, and in music we sang sea shanties and knew all the words to '*Hearts of Oak*' by heart.

As a teenager in the early seventies, after 'O' levels, a school friend and I holidayed in Torquay (making up numbers for a party her grandparents had organised.) In the panelled dining room of the hotel, overlooking the harbour, hung a magnificent portrait of Nelson. The fun of being away without parents, feeling grown up, wearing far too much scent which mixed giddily with the smell of food, made the atmosphere heady with dreamy romance. I remember distinctly feeling all around me fade away and great Nelson looking straight into one's heart to see what one was made of. (I hope he saw something he liked) I was smitten! The sea, the Navy, our history and memories – all swirled around - I was in love!

This love stayed with me through university (for a PGCE I researched Education in the Royal Navy) and throughout my subsequent life and career. Work in theatre and the performing arts, teaching, lecturing, examining, as a voice and speech specialist, then through my own communication, confidence and etiquette training business. More recently, a move into antiques and writing allows me to pursue my passion for the past and Nelson a little further.

Years later I'm still devoted to the man I know better and all he represents. A sense of belonging, Englishness, a respect for duty, bravery, faith in decency, kindness and friendship – and that feeling that something binds us beyond the brief time in which we live. When Nelson, our history and traditions are criticised, my blood boils. Liken it to Nelson's distaste for the French if you will, but not being able to vent my anger with a sword and a swagger, I'll be content to do all I can with my skills, expertise and enthusiasm to preserve his memory and serve The Nelson Society.

### **Jonathan Ponting**

I currently live in Camelford, Cornwall and work full-time as a senior research chemist. I have absolutely no Naval background or have any family members associated with the Royal or merchant navy. I am, however, fascinated by Admiral Lord Nelson.

I first became interested in Nelson at quite a late age of 33. My friends and I were thinking of ways to celebrate being British, and I suggested having a Trafalgar dinner. This was the light which ignited the blue touch paper (or should I say gun powder) and I have since become quite obsessive about this little fellow from Norfolk, who came from obscurity to become, in my view, the greatest hero this country has ever produced. I joined The Nelson Society in 2005 and my wife, Jo, and I have enjoyed many wonderful Trafalgar and Nile weekends.

I am honoured to be asked to join the committee and feel that I can make a positive contribution to the running and promotion of the society to the wider general public. It has concerned me that with the ever-increasing influence of BLM and the shift towards a ‘Woke’ society, that there is a general misunderstanding and ignorance towards historical figures including Nelson.

It is essential that The Nelson Society, at every opportunity, tries to educate and continue to tell the story of our country’s greatest Naval hero or, I fear, his name and heroic actions will slip into the ether of ‘cancelled’ history. This can only be achieved by a strong committee and Society, something I feel most passionate about and wish to be involved with.

## **MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**

With this issue you will have received a Membership Renewal Form for your 2022 membership, reminding you that subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January. Thank you in advance to all those who pay automatically by standing order, but please make sure your standing order is up to date with the current fees – see form for details. Cheques are still welcome, but a standing order is simpler and helps you not to forget to renew! It is helpful if you can complete and return the form to me, as it helps us to check that we have up to date contact details for you, confirms your payment method, and gives you another chance to sign a Gift Aid declaration if you have not already done so. We hope you will agree that membership is very good value, especially now that we have resumed our programme of special events. We’re looking forward to seeing more of you all in 2022!

A warm welcome to new members Alan & Marian Bond, Thomas Ahrens, Chris Harridge, Jimmy & Alison Chestnutt, Clive Johnstone, Martin Sylvester, Robert O’Rourke & Lise Pinchbeck. 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.

It seems all too regularly now I have to inform you of members who have passed away. Since the last issue we have sadly lost Frank Pond, Tom Vincent, Mike Kingdon, and Tony Roper. Obituaries of Elizabeth Baker, Mike Kingdon and Frank Pond appear later in this issue.

I hope you receive this before Christmas, and if so, it is not too late to give a Gift Membership for a Christmas present! Contact me for details. And I would also like to wish you a very Happy Christmas and thank you for your support in 2021.

**Sue Morris, Membership Secretary**

## **HONORARY MEMBER NEIL OLIVER**

We are pleased to announce that Neil Oliver has accepted our invitation to become an Honorary Member of The Nelson Society. Neil is a Scottish television presenter and author. Trained as an archaeologist, he is best known as the presenter of several TV documentary series on archaeology and history, including 'A History of Scotland', 'Vikings', and 'Coast'. President of the National Trust for Scotland 2017 – 2020, he is also an author of popular history books and historical fiction. Nelson is one of his all time heroes, and two stories about him feature in his recent book 'The Story of the British Isles in 100 Places'. We welcome Neil and look forward to developing our association with him.



## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2022**

For information please contact committee members/organisers as indicated, and check the website for updates.

**Battle of St Vincent Commemorative Luncheon and Lecture, London:**

**11 Feb 2022.** At the Union Jack Club, near Waterloo Station. Please note change of Speaker: Chris Brett, Vice Chairman of The Nelson Society. Further details below and Booking Form enclosed (Marina Deestan-Jones).

**Battle of Copenhagen Commemorative Event, Chichester: 3/4 April 2022.**

Further details below, and Booking Form available from Brian Gibbs.

**225<sup>th</sup> 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 – enquiries to Brian Gibbs.

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

**41<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting and Trafalgar Weekend, Norfolk: 22 Oct 2022.** Details to follow in 2022.

**Pickle Night & Remembrance weekend, Portsmouth: Nov 2022.** Details to follow in 2022 (Jeanette Ryder).

## EVENT NOTICES 2022

### **BATTLE OF CAPE ST VINCENT LUNCHEON AND LECTURE, UNION JACK CLUB, LONDON, FRIDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2022**

Booking is now open for the 2022 Battle of Cape St Vincent Lecture and Buffet Luncheon, to be held at 12.30pm for 1.00pm on Friday 11 February at The Union Jack Club, Sandell Street, London SE1 8UJ (near Waterloo station).

In a change from the previous notification, the Lecture will now be 'The Nelson Conspiracy' and will be given by Nelson Society Vice Chairman, Chris Brett. Chris will speak about the West Indian plantation owners' attempt to embroil Nelson in their efforts to subvert the abolition of the slave trade legislation, and how their actions still resonate over 200 years later. Recent research has led to some surprising new discoveries, which will be revealed!

Tickets are just £35.00 per person which includes the Lecture, an excellent Buffet Luncheon and wine/soft drinks. A Booking Form is enclosed with this issue. Guests are very welcome. To secure your places please return the form as soon as possible with your payment, to Marina Deestan-Jones, and contact Chris Brett for further information if required.

### **BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN DINNER, CHICHESTER SUNDAY 3 APRIL 2022**

The Nelson Society and The Murray Club invite you to a joint Dinner to commemorate the Battle of Copenhagen, at 7.00pm on Sunday 3 April 2022 at the Chichester Park Hotel, Chichester, West Sussex. The speakers will be Richard Plowman, Chairman of The Murray Club, and the local Sculptor Vincent Gray MRSS. This event is to be held on the first anniversary of the unveiling in Chichester of Vincent Gray's life-sized sculpture of Admirals Murray and Nelson, which stands outside the Council House in North Street, only yards from Sir George Murray's former home, now the Harbour Hotel.

The Dinner will cost £35 for three courses, including a glass of port. A Booking Form for the Dinner can be obtained from Brian Gibbs at [briangibbs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:briangibbs@hotmail.co.uk) or telephone 01246 203924.

On the morning of Monday 4 April, members can join an escorted walking tour of historic Chichester, following the Murray Trail to include a viewing of the Murray/Nelson statue. The walk will be preceded by a complimentary coffee and biscuits at the Council Chamber in North Street, hosted by the Mayor.

Members should book accommodation direct with the Chichester Park Hotel. Rooms are available on Sunday night at £70.00 for a Double or Twin Room, and £60.00 for a Single Occupancy Room. Members can stay on the Saturday night, subject to availability, at £90.00 for a double/twin and £80.00 for a single room. All rates include Breakfast. Chichester Park Hotel, Madgwick

Lane, Westhampnett, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 7QL. Tel: 01243 817400  
email: [www.chichesterparkhotel.com](http://www.chichesterparkhotel.com).

In February 1801 Murray exchanged from HMS *Achille* into the *Edgar* 74, and on 2 April, led the attack at the Battle of Copenhagen, having been chosen by



(L) Admiral Sir George Murray around 1815, by Charles Woolcott.

Nelson, and this battle was considered to be his finest hour. After the Battle of Copenhagen Nelson wrote of Murray “Murray of the *Edgar* leading the van set a notable example of intrepidity which was followed by every captain, officer and man in the squadron”.



(R) HMS *Edgar*.

## 225<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE, VISIT TO TENERIFE: 20-27 July 2022

Brian Gibbs

We announced in the Summer Edition of the ‘Nelson Dispatch’ that a trip has been organised to Tenerife, at the invitation of the ‘Tertulia de Amigos del 25 de Julio 1797’ (The Group of Friends of 25 July 1797), to join them in their celebrations on the 225th Anniversary of the Battle next year. More details of the itinerary organised by the Friends for our visit are now available:

**Friday 22nd:** The party will be welcomed by the Mayor in the Palacio Municipal, followed by a welcome greeting by the Lt. Gral. Commander of the Spanish Army in the Canary Islands with a visit to the Palacio de Capitanía General.

Transfer to the Centre of Military History and Culture of the Canary Islands. (Almeyda old fort and gun batteries) for a guided visit of the Military Museum, and the Battle of Santa Cruz gallery with many paintings and a large diorama.

**Saturday 23rd:** Visit to Santa Cruz by bus with special stops and although not confirmed, it is hoped that the Spanish, British and French Navies will be in port. It is also hoped that Naval Re-enactors will make a landing on the Teresitas beach. A spectacle of fighting will take place in the streets of Santa Cruz.

**Monday 25th:** on the Anniversary date a number of events have been organised for our group, including an Explanation of the Battle in the actual locations where it took place (Valle Seco, Paso Alto, coastline, Plaza de España, streets of the interior of the city and Teatro Guimerá), with special attention to the place where Nelson was wounded; a laurel wreath will be cast into the sea from Paso Alto or the Muelle Norte, in tribute to the British sailors and soldiers who fell in the fight; in the evening a flower wreath will be laid on the grave of General Gutierrez; Dinner at the Real Casino de Tenerife.

For more information please contact Brian Gibbs, Tel 01246 203924.

## EVENT REPORTS 2021

### THE SERVICE FOR SEAFARERS PORTSMOUTH CATHEDRAL 'THE CATHEDRAL OF THE SEA' SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2021

Jeanette Ryder

This is the most important Service for Portsmouth and is held annually to remember lives lost at sea and those serving at sea. This year the sun shone on the magnificent procession from the Cathedral which was attended by the Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire, The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth and Members of the



City Council, and I was invited by the Lord Mayor to attend the Service. I asked Nelson Society Member, Cheryl Jewitt from Portsmouth to be my guest. The Dean of Portsmouth, the Very Reverend Dr Anthony Cane, welcomed everyone and the Service proceeded with hymns, readings, prayers and it was wonderful to hear the Cathedral Choir again. At the conclusion of the Service there was a wreath laying ceremony at the Nelson Memorial at Grand Parade where I was proud to lay a wreath on behalf of The Nelson Society.

*Jeanette lays the Nelson Society wreath*

#### **Old Portsmouth: The Nelson Memorial**

Located in Grand Parade, adjacent to the slope leading up to the Saluting Platform, the statue stands on a plinth approx 1.57m square.

On the front is inscribed: 21 OCTOBER 1805

(on the steps) HERE SERVED HORATIO NELSON/ YOU WHO TREAD HIS FOOTSTEPS/ REMEMBER HIS GLORY.

On the left is inscribed Nelson's Prayer.

On the back : PRESENTED BY/ HERBERT J.ALDOUS LRCS., L.S.A./ FROM WHOSE DESIGNS/ THIS SCULPTOR WORKED/ F.BROOK HITCH F.R.B.S.

On the right: HORATIO VISCOUNT NELSON-KB/ DUKE OF BRONTE IN SICILY/ VICE-ADMIRAL OF THE WHITE/ HIS LAST HOURS IN ENGLAND/ BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE BATTLE OF/ TRAFALGAR WERE SPENT AT THE/ GEORGE HOTEL HIGH ST PORTSMOUTH/ WHICH HOTEL WAS DESTROYED WITH/ A GREAT PART OF PORTSMOUTH IN/ A GERMAN AIR RAID ON THIS CITY/ ON

JANUARY 10th-11th 1941/ HIS REMAINS WERE BROUGHT TO/ SPITHEAD  
DECEMBER 4th 1805 ON/ BOARD H.M.S.VICTORY WHICH SHIP/ WAS BADLY  
DAMAGED/ IN THE FOREFOOT/ BY A BOMB IN A RAID ON THE 10th MARCH 1941.

### **Original Inscription on Lectern:**

#### THE STATUE

LORD NELSON IS IN THE UNDRESS UNIFORM/ HE WORE WHEN LEAVING  
PORTSMOUTH/ FOR TRAFALGAR. THE COAT WHICH HE/ WAS WEARING WHEN  
MORTALLY WOUNDED/ HAS BEEN CAREFULLY COPIED. HE PASSED/ OVER THE  
SPOT WHERE THE STATUE/ STANDS 14TH SEPT 1805 IT FACES THE PLACE/ ON  
THE BEACH WHERE HE EMBARKED FOR/ H.M.S. VICTORY. HE WAS SHORT AND  
THIN/ BUT THIS CANNOT BE SHOWN IN A SINGLE/ STATUE FOR IF MADE THIN  
HE APPEARS TALL/ THE UNIFORM IS CORRECT TO THE/ SMALLEST DETAIL. THE  
SWORD IS A COPY/ OF THE ONE HE ALWAYS WORE/ PORTSMOUTH WAS THE  
LAST ENGLISH/ TOWN HE EVER SAW.



### **Further Information**

The siting of the statue of Lord Nelson has been the subject of some controversy for many years. He was originally placed in Pembroke Gardens so that he looked towards that part of Southsea Beach where it is believed that he embarked for his flagship HMS *Victory* in September 1805. Unfortunately he was placed some 200yds from the beach and over the years his 'view' of it became increasingly obstructed by the construction of a funfair. Eventually he just seemed isolated and it was proposed to move the statue to a more appropriate position. Many locations were suggested but the City Council settled for a site in Grand Parade, a few yards from the sloping path leading up to the Saluting Platform. This decision has satisfied few people as Nelson is now in such a position that he could only 'see' the sea if he stood

on tiptoes, thereby defeating the very object of moving the statue.

Whilst discussing the new location for the statue, it is said that regard was had for the route that Nelson took from the George Hotel, where he had breakfasted that September morning in 1805, to the beach from where he was ferried to the *Victory*. The route itself had been the subject of much debate over the years but it is now broadly agreed that it began when he left from the rear of the George Hotel onto Penny Street and turned right. He then turned left and walked along

what is now Pembroke Road until he reached the fortifications; at that point he turned right and followed the line of the earthworks to a tunnel under the Long Curtain. The tunnel led out onto a drawbridge across the moat, the far end of which was Spur Redoubt. A narrow passage on the Redoubt led onto the beach where his barge and several hundred well-wishers were waiting. The new location for the statue is several hundred yards from any point on Nelson's last walk. It should also be noted that when in its original position, a lectern supporting a plaque had been sited a hundred feet in front of the statue. This has also been moved to Grand Parade, though sited somewhat closer to the statue (see photo). The text on the plaque has been altered such that the sentence 'HE PASSED OVER THE SPOT WHERE THE STATUE STANDS 14TH SEPT 1805 IT FACES THE PLACE ON THE BEACH WHERE HE EMBARKED FOR H.M.S. VICTORY.' has been omitted and a further paragraph added. It reads 'THE STATUE WAS ORIGINALLY LOCATED AT PEMBROKE GARDENS IN SOUTHSEA. IT WAS MOVED TO THIS MORE PROMINENT AND HISTORIC LOCATION IN OCTOBER 2005 TO MARK THE BICENTENARY OF THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR.'

*(Information from 'Memorials and Monuments in Portsmouth' website).*

## **BATTLE OF COPENHAGEN EVENT, 19-21 SEPTEMBER 2021, WORCESTER Graham Capel**

When Vice Admiral Lord Nelson visited the City of Worcester on his tour of the West of England with Sir William and Lady Hamilton in August 1802, he was presented with the Freedom of the City in the Worcester Guildhall, and nearby Cooken Street was renamed Copenhagen after his most recent victory. The City of Worcester was the chosen location for our own commemoration of the Battle of Copenhagen, albeit delayed from the actual battle date in April until mid - September 2021. A total of 36 members and friends attended this very 'action packed' event, which was primarily organised by Robin Cade assisted by Vice Chairman Chris Brett.

The main location for the talks was the Fownes Hotel in City Walls Road, a converted Glove Factory for which this city was once famous. The event took place over three days beginning on Sunday 19 September, the main event being the Copenhagen Dinner and talk by military historian Gareth Glover on the Sunday evening. On Monday 20 September there was a walking tour of the City in the morning and tours of Worcester Cathedral and the Museum of Royal Worcester Porcelain in the afternoon. Gareth Glover gave another talk in the evening. On Tuesday we held an Auction, largely of members' donated memorabilia. This was followed by our final talk by Susan Amos, who with fellow author Louis Roeder recently wrote the book 'Nelson's State Funeral 1806 – How to bury a National Hero'.

The speaker after the Copenhagen Dinner was former Royal Navy officer and military historian, Gareth Glover. Unusually, Gareth did not talk on the Battle of Copenhagen itself, but described the political and strategic events which led

up to the battle, and involved the Treaty of Armed Neutrality between Denmark, Sweden and Russia. This was a fascinating new aspect which cast a whole new light on the battle which eventually took place, and where Vice Admiral Lord Nelson commanded with devastating effect, calling a cessation under a flag of truce and turning diplomat to negotiate a cease fire. Gareth then turned to the aftermath of the battle and the seven days of negotiation which followed, and its effect on Baltic trade for the future. The conclusion might have been that it was not such a great victory for Nelson, and possibly might have been considered a ‘negotiated settlement’. An excellent talk on new and interesting aspects of one of the four famous fleet actions in which Admiral Nelson made his name and his reputation. We also presented 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize Quiz winner Tim Scott with his award.

The tour of the City of Worcester on Monday took us to the Guildhall where Nelson was presented with the Freedom of the City. There was a display of Nelson items including the actual invitation for the Mayor of the City to attend the state funeral on which Susan Amos had based her book. Robin Cade was disappointed that there was no portrait of Nelson. Our guide also felt that one was necessary, and I will write of behalf of The Nelson Society offering a suitable framed portrait of Nelson for them to display. We will keep you advised and hopefully we may have another portrait presentation, this time to the City of Worcester.



*Nelson Society members' tour of Worcester*



*Guildhall*

Walking around Worcester, we also saw the shop where Mr Lea and Mr Perrins first concocted the world-famous Lea & Perrins Worcestershire sauce – you must not call it Worcester sauce! We also saw the later rebuilt version of The Hop Pole Inn, where Nelson and the Hamiltons had stayed. When Nelson’s party approached Worcester, the townsfolk stopped Nelson’s coach at the bridge entering the city, uncoupled the horses, and pulled the coach into the city by hand. Such was the adulation which Nelson was accorded! On the way back we stopped

at Cooken Street which had been renamed Copenhagen Street in honour of the visit. Robin Cade is investigating if an explanatory plaque from The Nelson Society could be installed.



*Nelson Society members at the Guildhall, at Copenhagen Street and at King John's tomb*



The afternoon visit to Worcester Cathedral was a highlight for me when standing beside the tomb of King John of England 1199 - 1216. In addition, King Henry VIII's elder brother, Prince Arthur was buried in the Cathedral. He had died at nearby Ludlow on honeymoon with Catherine of Aragon. He was only 16 and she was even younger. He would have been King Arthur, and the English Reformation under Henry VIII might never have happened!

Later in the afternoon we visited the Museum of Royal Worcester to view their world-famous porcelain. The display was superb including pieces made for some of the international exhibitions in the 1800s. At Nelson's visit in 1802 he ordered a breakfast service including a tea pot. The service had been made but not delivered when he was killed at Trafalgar in October 1805. Lady Hamilton later collected it, but it was later sold, and it was dispersed all over the world. The museum has been able to accumulate a few items to display- although unfortunately, their description refers to Nelson fighting Napoleon. It was Wellington who actually fought Napoleon, so we will politely ask them to correct this. Jeanette Ryder also spotted a superb plate depicting the famous 'Fighting Temeraire' painting by Turner.



*Nelson tea service display; 'Fighting Temeraire' plate*

At tea in the hotel we held a Members' Discussion (following up a previous one at Buxton in 2019). Items discussed included the long - term future for the Nile Clumps, which the Nelson Society have been supporting for many years, and members' opinion of the value of supporting Nelson's legacy to the public, particularly in these controversial times. Further details of the discussions can be obtained from Robin Cade ([rcade47@gmail.com](mailto:rcade47@gmail.com)).

That evening Gareth Glover continued his entertaining talks. This time he concentrated on the British activities in the Mediterranean after Nelson's death at Trafalgar in 1805. This well illustrated talk described many of the exploits of Nelson protégé Captain William Hoste - also the son of a Vicar from Norfolk - and in particular Hoste's famous frigate action in the Adriatic at the Battle of Lissa on 13 March 1811. In this action he hoisted the signal 'Remember Nelson'. His other exploits in hauling ships' cannons up an aqueduct into the hills behind what is today Dubrovnik, achieving the town's surrender after only a few shots into the town square, were well described. Another interesting and well-illustrated talk on a lesser-known development in the Mediterranean after Nelson.

Prior to Tuesday's Auction, the 30 lots had all been displayed in the main dining room for members to view. The sale commenced at 11am with auctioneer Robin Cade and 'Porter' Graham Capel describing the items. The bidding was lively with only three items unsold. A number of items were bid for and donated to the North Walsham Heritage Group who are planning a Nelson-themed display. The 1808 'Life of Nelson' book by Churchill, with modern binding and all original contents and engravings, was snapped up. The superb Arts and Crafts framed print of Nelson leaving home aged 12 was bought and appropriately donated to North Walsham Heritage. There were a number of last-minute additions, and finally Robin auctioned the Red, White and Blue table decorations. The auction raised £678 for The Society, and a number of items for North Walsham Heritage.

After lunch at the hotel, Susan Amos joined us and described her inspiration and extensive research into Nelson's funeral. The result of her research was a well-produced and highly detailed 348-page hardback volume of particular interest to Nelson historians, on a subject not often covered. A number of members purchased her books and are in for a very interesting read. I look forward to reading my copy.

After three most enjoyable days in Worcester it was time to leave. This was a very interesting Nelson Society event with new Nelson and related features.

*Note: Gareth Glover and Susan Amos have both contributed articles which appear later in this edition of the 'Nelson Dispatch'.*

*All photos: G Capel.*

## **TRAFALGAR DAY SERVICE AT THE NELSON MONUMENT, PORTSDOWN HILL, 21 OCTOBER 2021**

**Jane Smith**

The annual Trafalgar Day Service took place at 10.45am on a bright, sunny morning with a fresh breeze. During the Act of Remembrance wreaths were laid by the following:- Commander Terry Tyack, R.N., Executive Officer, HMS *Collingwood*, on behalf of Captain Catherine Jordan, Commanding Officer; Nigel Hosier, Site Manager of Fort Nelson; Anthony Knight, a member of the Order of St. Joachim; a representative of Veterans' Associations; and Jane Smith, on behalf of The Nelson Society. Once the wreaths were laid a Royal Marines Bugler sounded 'The Last Post' and 'Reveille'. Also present were Warrant Officer One



Martin Watson, the Base Warrant Officer for HMS *Collingwood* with an escort of five Victory Squadron ratings from HMS *Collingwood*, and Roger Glancefield, Naval Re-enactor and expert on historical Naval and Army uniforms.

Chaplain Richard Ellingham, RN, led the Service and included a reading, prayers for Seafarers, the Naval Prayer, the Lord's Prayer and Nelson's Prayer. We all sang the Naval Hymn 'Eternal Father, strong to save', and the Service concluded with a Blessing. After the Service, refreshments were provided at Fort Nelson. Lastly, we were sorry not to have Jeanette Ryder with us on this occasion.

*Roger Glancefield and Cdr. Tyack compare historical and modern day Naval uniforms. (Photo. Allan Smith)*

## TRAFALGAR WEEKEND 22-24 OCTOBER, CITY OF LONDON

**Jenny Newbold**

On 22 October, on a brisk autumn evening, friends old and new gathered at the Tower Hotel in London. After such a long pandemic-related hiatus, the numbers were impressive. Nearly sixty members attended the 2021 Annual General Meeting, and 120 the Trafalgar Dinner, on the 40<sup>th</sup> Trafalgar Weekend of The Nelson Society. Our Chairman, Graham Capel, worked tirelessly for two years on the details of this weekend, and the results were extraordinary!

The evening began in the Vicinity Bar at the Tower Hotel, overlooking the Thames, where new members and ‘first-time Trafalgar weekend’ attendees received a special welcome and a complimentary glass of wine. Once everyone was present, we strolled to dinner in St Katharine Docks. Masks on; there was a brief tour through the marina.

The Dickens Inn having not panned out, we split into two groups; half of us had dinner at Café Rouge while the other half ate at Strada, next door. Due to being separated we were not able to have the Chairman’s talk about Lloyd’s Patriotic Fund, so it was printed out to be read later at our leisure. Instead there was—at least at Strada—very lively conversation! I’m sure that quite a few of us had become unused to talking for so long. At our table there was (a brief plug here) an exciting discussion about the upcoming event in Tenerife next summer. Not one, but two, of our members have invaded Tenerife... I’ll let you speculate as to who they are!

Saturday, 23 October, was our big day, and what a day it was. We began at the HQS *Wellington*, the headquarters of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, who very kindly gave us access to most of the ship to explore before the Annual General Meeting began. HQS *Wellington* was built in the 1930s, a Grimsby-class anti-submarine sloop. She served in the Pacific, and during WWII was a convoy escort in the North Atlantic, where she participated in the destruction of an enemy U-boat. We met in the Court Room, which was once the ship’s engine room. I’m told on good authority that there is a projection screen and recording that recreates a suggestion of what it was like to be in the engine room when she was underway... something that most people will never see, as HQS *Wellington* is not open to the public. As we were actually there to conduct business, we didn’t see it either. But the former engine room of the *Wellington* makes a very gracious meeting room. Our bust of Nelson was given the Master Mariner’s seat at the dais.

Presiding over the meeting, in addition to Nelson, were our Chairman Graham Capel, and Hon Secretary Sue Morris. We began with an acknowledgement of those absent and departed, followed, after a respectful silence, by the review of the minutes from the 39th Annual General Meeting. The minutes were approved, and the meeting moved on to the Chairman’s Report.

It might be thought, in a year where all activity had been curtailed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, that the Chairman would not have a great deal to report. However, The Nelson Society fought a great battle in 2021, defending the honour and reputation of the Hero, Horatio, Admiral Lord Nelson.

Irresponsible media, under the influence of the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement, has branded Nelson a racist and a slave owner. This led to the defacement of his statue at Norwich Cathedral, and calls to remove his Column from Trafalgar Square. The Nelson Society rose to do battle.

Led by our President Peregrine Nelson Hood, our Historian Ray Aldis, Vice Chairman Chris Brett, Nelson historian Martyn Downer, and Nelson descendant Raglan Tribe, we refuted the allegations, and can claim quantifiable victories. Using careful research and scholarship (both significantly lacking from the media’s accusations), The Nelson Society was able to extract an admission from a professor at Oxford that his assertion was mistaken. In a piece of brilliant detective work, Martyn Downer and Chris Brett uncovered a letter copy proving that the one used by the media to label Nelson a white-supremacist and supporter of slavery was a forgery; it had been altered after Nelson’s death.

This revelation was published on our website; and our ‘Position Statement’, and Chris and Martyn’s ‘Deceit and Defamation’ article revealing the forgery, had 3900 and 2500 views, respectively. Ray Aldis’ ‘Defence of Nelson,’ posted on our Facebook page, had 138,000 hits.

From the Chairman’s report, Graham ‘switched hats’— quite literally. He produced a distinctive *chapeau bras*, which he wore to deliver the Treasurer’s Report, subsequently accepted and approved. From here, our Treasurer still wearing the hat, we moved on to a proposal to amend The Nelson Society’s constitution to allow for more streamlined online banking. After discussion, the amendment was approved, and Graham signed the amendment using a quill, commenting, ‘It’s quite difficult to hold.’ Surprisingly, no one suggested he try it using his *left* hand.

We progressed swiftly through the remaining reports, election of Officers and Members of the 2022 Committee, and acceptance of Vice Presidents and Honorary Members of the Society. The leadership biographies are impressive. The Nelson Society is in good hands.

New business included the difficulty maintaining the Nile Clumps, a Trafalgar Way fundraiser, and an expression of gratitude to our indefatigable Chairman/Treasurer Graham Capel, and faithful Secretary/Membership Secretary/Executive Editor Sue Morris (who has now served The Nelson Society for over 25 years).

After lunch and coffee, we departed (again in two groups) for the College of Arms. We were met by David White, the Garter King of Arms, who graciously hosted us for this extraordinary opportunity. Mr White spoke of the development of Lord Nelson’s coat of arms, from his investiture as Knight of the Bath, to his Viscounty, and explained the symbolism of various images in heraldry. Coats

of arms are specific to their holders and are developed for them alone, so the imagery in Lord Nelson's coat of arms is very personal. We were privileged to be able to see initial sketches, the final version at the end of Nelson's life with its aggregation of images and symbols (there's a *lot* going on there!), and a remarkable contemporary drawing of the Chelengk.

Mr White asked why Nelson would have preferred a KB to a baronetcy when the issue of his peerage was raised. I always thought that it was because Nelson felt he couldn't afford the lifestyle of a baronet. Mr White speculated that it was more likely that a baronet didn't get anything to wear; a Knight of the Bath got a showy red riband and silver star!

We were also shown two letters from Nelson to Sir Isaac Heard, the Garter King of Arms 1784 – 1822. One was acknowledging the receipt of his amended coat of arms after the Battle of the Nile, and observed that it 'is NOT CORRECT...'; the other, written only four months after the loss of his right arm at Tenerife, attests that the lineage drawn up as part of the process of investiture is accurate. There is a poignancy to the careful script of this letter, and certainly to the little flourish following his signature... the effort it must have cost him is evident.

We also saw a drawing of Emma Hamilton's coat of arms, the development of which may have been devised in an effort to keep her visible after Nelson's death. It is a lozenge, not a shield, as women did not go to war; partitioned *per fess*, and consists of the Cross of Malta on a black field, above three lions, a play on Emma's birth name, Lyons.

From there we embarked on a comprehensive walking tour of the City of London, led by John and Tina Callcut, who each shepherded a group of about thirty people, as the number of members interested in the tour was so high. Tina bravely stepped to the fore, escorting 'Group B'. We saw glimpses of the history of the City: from the Roman Wall and the site of a former Roman amphitheatre at the Guildhall (where some notable people lost their heads); to multiple Wren churches, some now only remnants; to hidden gardens and the medieval Jewish quarter. Our group was privileged to hear the sound of Bow Bells... does that make us honorary cockneys?

The 'crown jewel' of the evening was the Trafalgar dinner at Drapers' Hall, the guild hall of the The Worshipful Company of Drapers, where Nelson himself was a member. Their motto, 'Unto God only be honour and glory', must certainly have appealed to him—in his more reflective moments, when it then perhaps served as a necessary reminder of humility. We had the opportunity to socialise under the majestic William Beechey portrait of Nelson. (Wellington was opposite him on the other end of the room, but may have been—understandably, this night—snubbed.)

Jaws dropped when we entered the Livery Hall for dinner. The magnificence of the room cannot be described in words, and even photographs perhaps do not do it justice. It has been used in films as a stand-in for Buckingham

Palace, and the Queen herself has dined there. It is adorned with towering portraits of monarchs, from Charles II through Edward VII, a gilded gallery, marble columns, and a painted ceiling depicting scenes from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The Grace was given by the Rev Terry Colling, The Nelson Society's Honorary Chaplain. The meal was superb, with a menu of Dorset crab and smoked salmon with samphire, delectable Beef Wellington, and iced banana soufflé. The camaraderie was unforgettable. Toasts were drunk to the Queen, The Nelson Society, and of course, The Immortal Memory.

Recognitions followed, with the presentation of a traditional Chain of Office to our President, Peregrine Nelson Hood, designed by Barbara Capel, the Chairman's wife and a skilful jeweller. There were awards of 1805 hallmarked silverware for distinguished service to Sue Morris, and in gratitude to Martyn Downer and John and Tina Callcut. In my own case, I have no idea what I did to deserve my souvenir teaspoons, other than being the odd American who travelled here to celebrate Nelson, and writing a few modest articles for the 'Nelson Dispatch'... Every member present received an exclusive tea mug and a commemorative pen.

There was a magnificent raffle, organised by Jeanette Ryder, which raised over £500. The top prize was a hand-made quilted table runner commemorating this Trafalgar Weekend, created by Maureen King. Her husband Robert was our 'Lockdown quiz' prize winner. Unfortunately they were unable to be present, but were warmly recognised.

After dinner, Martyn Downer addressed the assembly on the subject of the cancel-cultural defamation of Nelson. Our team of staunch defenders can claim some victories in this recent skirmish, but the threat is not diminished. As long as major institutions like Oxford University, the BBC, and the National Maritime Museum lend any credence to these unsubstantiated allegations, Nelson is vulnerable. Martyn vowed that we will continue to meet these attacks with scholarship and integrity. I do not hesitate to think that any member of The Nelson Society would go to the wall for Lord Nelson, as he so unfailingly did for us.

On Sunday morning at St Paul's we attended a Sung Eucharist, where we had reserved seats, and afterwards were privileged to be escorted by Canon James Milne to the crypt, where we were allowed to offer prayers at Nelson's tomb. Rev Terry Colling read aloud Nelson's Prayer, and our weekend concluded with the words of Sir Isaac Heard, Garter King of Arms, who proclaimed the style at Nelson's State Funeral, as read by our Chairman, Graham Capel:

'Thus it has pleased Almighty God, to take, out of this transitory life, unto his divine mercy, the most Noble Lord Horatio Nelson, Viscount and Baron Nelson of the Nile, and of Burnham Thorpe, in the County of Norfolk; Baron Nelson of the Nile, and of Hilborough in the same county; Knight of the most Honourable Order of the Bath; Vice Admiral of the White Squadron of the Fleet, and Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels in the Mediterranean;

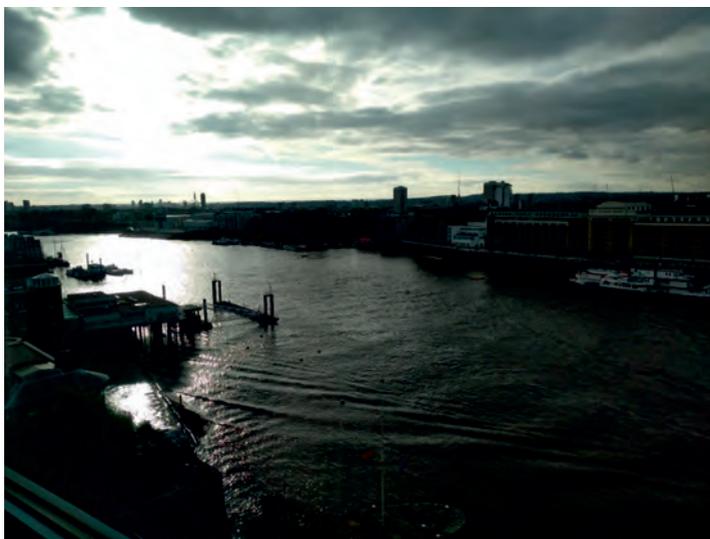
also Duke of Bronte in Sicily; Knight Grand Cross of the Sicilian Order of St Ferdinand and of Merit; Member of the Ottoman Order of the Crescent; Knight Grand Commander of the Order of St Joachim; and the Hero, who in the moment of victory, fell, covered with immortal glory. Let us humbly trust that he is now raised to bliss ineffable, and to a glorious immortality!’

*Amen, amen, amen.*



*Graham Chapel, Revd Terry Colling and Canon James Milne with members at Nelson's Tomb (SM)*

*The Nelson Society Trafalgar Weekend 2021*



*View of the Thames from our riverside lodgings at the Tower Hotel (SM)*



*Convivial Friday night meal at St Katharine Docks. (L-R) Paul Ganjou, Chrissie Ganjou, Tony Butler, Sue Tribe, Sir Alan Massey, Barbara Capel, Graham Capel, Raglan Tribe, Ranji Goddard, Jeanette Ryder, Terry Ryder, Wendy Butler (PG)*



*HQS Wellington, our AGM venue (RL)*



*Nelson presides at the AGM, flanked by Secretary Sue Morris and Chairman Graham Capel (quill pen in hand), in the Court Room of the Guild of Master Mariners (CB)*



*The College of Arms:*

*The impressive façade and entrance  
(PS)*

*David White, former Somerset Herald and now Garter King of Arms, gives an informative talk in the Earl Marshall's Court. Groups were shown the Nelson and Hamilton Coats of Arms and an original letter from Nelson complaining of delays and omissions (SM)*





*Drapers' Hall: Chris Brett, Graham Capel, Paul Ganjou and the Beechey portrait (CB)*



*The magnificent Livery Hall (SM)*



*Maureen King's quilted table runner (MK)*



*Presentation to Jenny Newbold (CB)*



*Trafalgar Dinner: The Chairman presents a Chain of Office to the President (PB)*



*Trafalgar Dinner guests on 'Murray' table enjoy a glass of Port (L-R) Dr Peter Brinsden, Christine Edgington, Bryan Gagg, Marina Deestan-Jones, John Davies, Christine Davies, Daniel Wilkinson, Rainer Lemp (SM)*

*Photo credits: CB- Chris Brett; MK- Maureen King; PB- Peter Brinsden; PG- Paul Ganjou; PS- Pam Saunders; RL- Rainer Lemp; SM- Sue Morris*

**PICKLE NIGHT & REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND,  
PORTSMOUTH 12-14 NOVEMBER 2021**

**12 November - A Red-Carpet Return to Ye Spotted Dogge  
Jenny Newbold**

Nelson Society members gathered in Portsmouth on 12 November, 2021 to celebrate Pickle Night the following evening. On Friday night, however, we assembled at Ye Spotted Dogge on Old Portsmouth High Street, for a dinner which itself had a celebratory feeling. Perhaps it was simply the pleasure of being together again that made it feel like a celebration.



*The Dining Room*



*Jeanette and Terry Ryder*

This is not The Nelson Society's first visit to Ye Spotted Dogge (although it was my first), but owners Alex and Ian warmly welcomed us like old friends and esteemed guests. I'm sure that this is in no small part due to the special relationship that they enjoy with Jeanette Ryder, who so perfectly managed the entire Portsmouth weekend.

Ye Spotted Dogge has existed on the High Street since 1523, when it was a public house called 'Le Greyhounde.' On my first visit to Portsmouth I stayed down the road at The Duke of Buckingham pub, and walked past Ye Spotted Dogge on my way to and from the Historic Dockyard. I remember thinking what a magnificent past this building must have, never dreaming that a few years later I would be invited to dine there!

To refresh your memory, this is the place where George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, was murdered in 1628 by John Felton, a lieutenant in the English Navy. Ian showed us the dagger reputedly used to assassinate the Duke, a stubby, brutish looking thing. It must have been something of a sensation for some time afterwards, as apparently Samuel Pepys mentioned visiting 'the room where Buckingham was killed' in an entry in his famous diary thirty-three years later. I was informed by a reputable source that it is bad luck to stand on the spot where the Duke was killed. Unfortunately, no one told me precisely where that was...

According to their website, Buckingham House, the site of Ye Spotted Dogge, was owned at the time of the Duke's death by a man named Captain John Mason, who later established the state of New Hampshire in what were then the North American Colonies. (I have been to New Hampshire far more often than I have been to the original. I shall have to work on that.)

We began in the bar, where the gin and tonic flowed and kept the young staff on their toes... afterwards in the dining room we were treated to the 'potted history', shown the instrument of assassination, and heard something of the treasures that were found when the current owners restored the rooms (some of which can be seen in the gallery on their website). We then dined in style on three courses, with plenteous food and wine, all delicious, and with convivial company! Truly a memorable evening, as was the rest of the weekend, and I, personally, look forward to the next one.

### **13 November – Pickle Night Dinner at the Royal Maritime Club Jon Ponting**

Members of the Society joined the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Frank Jonas, and other invited guests to the 216<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the journey of HMS *Pickle* bearing the news of the British victory at Trafalgar and the death of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson. The evening's festivities were held at the surprisingly large and grand Royal Maritime Club hotel 'Below Decks' dining room. Members were treated to an excellent three course meal served with wine and Port.



*Terry and Jeanette Ryder, Frank Jonas, Marina and Patrick Deestan-Jones 'Below Decks'*

Our special guest Frank Jonas then gave a short address entitled 'Observations on the Old Pubs of Portsmouth', about the history of public houses that are, or used to be named, after Lord Nelson. It was surprising to learn that nowadays very few pubs in Portsmouth remain which bear Nelson's name. Graham Capel gave an interesting account of the historical significance of Pickle Night.

The Loyal Toast was proposed by Marina Deestan-Jones and The Immortal Memory toast was proposed by John Wallis who described the annual Pickle

Night formerly held upon HMS *Victory* as being a rather more boisterous affair accompanied by the consumption of a rather large amount of Pusser's rum and sea shanty singing. Our evening was a little more sedate and was followed up with a raffle comprising of numerous Nelson-themed prizes. The raffle raised in excess of £330 for the Society funds which was well received.

As always, this excellent evening was organised by the irrepressible Jeanette Ryder whose constant energy and organisational skills are second to none. It was particularly appreciated as her husband, Terry, has been unwell over the last 18 months and it was good to see him looking so well this weekend.

The formal part of the evening drew to a close at approximately 23.30hrs even though some members continued with the celebrations into the early hours! A special thank you must go to the staff of the Royal Maritime Club Hotel for looking after us all so well and providing such an excellent meal.

### **14 November - Remembrance Day Service and Parade Jeanette Ryder**



*Nelson Society Members with the Lord Mayor's party on the steps of the Guildhall as Veterans march to 'It's a long way to Tipperary'*

The Pickle Night Dinner on Saturday, 13 November was a great success and seemed to be enjoyed by all. Next morning I took a group of Nelson Society members to Portsmouth Guildhall where we were met by Cllr Lee Mason, previous Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, who guided us inside the Guildhall for coffee and a chance to mingle with personnel involved in the Service for Remembrance Sunday. We then went outside onto the steps to watch the colourful and moving Service of Remembrance, held in the presence of the Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Councillor Frank Jonas, who had been our special guest the evening before at Pickle Night Dinner.

The Service was preceded by a parade of organisations led by the superb Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines Collingwood, and once the service parade

were in position the Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth and Leader of Portsmouth City Council, Senior Armed Forces representatives and MPs for Portsmouth processed onto the steps, very near us.

Readers from the Muslim, Sikh and Jewish communities took part in this multi-faith service and the veterans, led by the Portsmouth Salvation Army Band paraded onto Guildhall Square. The prayers, the Act of Remembrance, the two minutes' silence, the hymns, the Standard Bearers, the bands and the National Anthem were all particularly moving this year. It was a wonderful experience, very patriotic and a fitting end to the weekend. If you joined me for this Service I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did, and if you watched it from your own Remembrance Services or on television I'm sure you also were pleased to see this wonderful annual event taking place again after the restrictions due to the pandemic last year.

## NEWSROUND

### GOLDSMITHS CONSULTATION

In July 2021 Goldsmiths College (part of the University of London), as owners of the former Deptford Town Hall, undertook a consultation on the removal of four statues decorating the building. The statues are of Sir Francis Drake, Admiral Blake, a 'representative' figure and Admiral Lord Nelson. The consultation was launched in response to "anger at the statues' connections to Britain's slave trade and colonial past and their impact on people today".

The Nelson Society was particularly concerned at the inaccurate and misleading characterisation of Lord Nelson, which read:

*Lord Horatio Nelson (1758 - 1805) was a naval flag officer whose leadership is credited with a number of decisive British victories, particularly during the Napoleonic Wars (1803 - 1815). Nelson spent a large part of his career in the Caribbean and developed an affinity with the slave owners there, with evidence suggesting he used his influence to argue against the abolitionist movement in Britain.*

As is now well known to members of the Society, this statement is wrong and misleading on a number of counts and the Society submitted a comprehensive statement seeking to correct matters but especially that there is no evidence to show that Nelson was pro-slavery and supported the slave trade. The Society's statement can be found on the website.

The outcome of the consultation is awaited.

### NEW STATUE OF NELSON FOR BURNHAM THORPE

Sue Morris and Jenny Newbold were visiting Burnham Thorpe on 29 November to see long time member and Thorpe resident Mary Heather, and were surprised to see a new statue in the village which had not been there the week before!



Situated on the village playing field in sight of the ‘Lord Nelson’ pub, Parish Hall and All Saints Church, the life-size sculpture has been created by local sculptor Henry Hepworth-Smith from an existing Norwegian Maple tree which had suffered summer branch drop, and was due to be removed, before the villagers decided to commission and fund the sculpture. It is a wonderful addition to Nelson’s home village and thanks are due to the people of Burnham Thorpe for raising the funds. Mrs Holly Smith, the manager of the Parish Hall, was kind enough to show us round this fine building (which was the venue for a

number of AGMs in the early days of the Society) which is available for hire.

It is pleasing to see a new statue of Nelson going up, when elsewhere in the world his statues risk being removed – Barbados has now removed the historic Nelson Statue from Heroes Square in Bridgetown to the museum, where we hope that it will at least be kept safe and displayed respectfully. The newly independent Republic of Barbados this week honoured its new ‘heroes’ who include the singer Rihanna, named the 11<sup>th</sup> National Hero.

#### **TRAFALGAR COMMUNITY INFANT SCHOOL, HORSHAM**

We were recently made aware of this school which celebrates Trafalgar Day every year with themed dressing up by pupils and staff and fundraising for school resources. All the year-groups engage in a range of fun, educational, hands-on activities in their classrooms throughout Trafalgar Day and all the children (and staff) are invited to dress up and come to school as Horatio Nelson, sailors, cabin boys, Lady Hamilton or other historical characters of the time. Apparently the children really enjoy it and they are learning something of our naval history in the process. The Nelson Society is sending a donation towards their funds, together with books, and some ‘Young Nelson’ bears for the young Nelsons!

#### **FOUNDLING MUSEUM EXHIBITION ‘FIGHTING TALK: ONE BOY’S JOURNEY FROM ABANDONMENT TO TRAFALGAR’**

Do try to visit this exhibition at the fascinating Foundling Museum (Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ) which runs to 27 February 2022. The Foundling Hospital was the first UK children’s charity, and this exhibition tells the story of an 18<sup>th</sup> century foundling George King, who was press-ganged into the Navy in 1804 with his journeys taking him across the Mediterranean to the Caribbean, Brazil and Argentina. His memoir provides us with both a humorous and harrowing account of life below deck, on shore, and in the thick of battle, including his account of the Battle of Trafalgar where he fought aboard HMS *Polyphemus*, which took 200 French prisoners and towed HMS *Victory*, bearing Nelson’s body back to Gibraltar. There are a number of artefacts on display



including the original manuscript of his autobiography, a rare fragment of the flag from Nelson’s coffin, letters between the Hospital’s matron and Emma Hamilton – annotated by Nelson himself – and two rare Naval General Service Medals.

### **NELSON GARDEN, MONMOUTH**

Louis Hodgkin has sent this picture of the Nelson Garden during a recent event held by Monmouth-based ‘Bees Abroad’, taken by a friend who was commissioning a skep from the man in the foreground. He notes the addition of vases atop of the seat, the final touch to the recent restoration, and says that it is heartening to see the garden being used.

### **FORMER POLITICIAN ED BALLS’ ANCESTRAL LINKS WITH HMS VICTORY**

Ray Aldis writes: TV personality and former politician Ed Balls featured on a recent edition of the BBC’s popular family history programme ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’. As a Norfolk man Ed was excited to learn from his father that there were family rumours of an ancestor who may have served as a surgeon at



Trafalgar on Nelson’s HMS *Victory*. A visit to the ship at Portsmouth’s Historic Dockyard revealed that his ancestor, William Dunbar, had indeed served on *Victory* as an assistant surgeon but not, disappointingly for Ed, at Trafalgar. He served on the flagship much later, in 1826. However, having joined the Royal Navy in

1811, William Dunbar did serve during the Napoleonic Wars and saw some action, so Ed was happy to have found a hero in the family, even if he was not by Nelson’s side at Trafalgar. Sadly, on leaving the Navy in 1834 Dunbar’s career entered somewhat murky waters, but for that story, members will need to watch the programme themselves on BBC iPlayer.

### **ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIRTH**

Congratulations to the Tribe family on the birth of Frederick Nigel Horatio Tribe on 29 October, in Thailand, a son for Will and Amy and grandson for our Vice President Raglan Tribe and his wife Sue.

## ARTICLES

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

**Part One of this article appeared in the ‘Nelson Dispatch’ Vol 14 Part 3.  
The third and final part will be published in the next issue, Vol 14 Part 5.**

#### PART TWO

##### Our Hero - Giancante Casabianca (1786 - 1798)

Giancante is an enigmatic hero whose fame is entirely due to Mrs Hemans' poem about him. There is little known for certain about his short life so he is the subject of a great deal of imaginative speculation. Although he was certainly born in 1786 and died during the Battle of the Nile in 1798, he is often said to be anywhere between 9 and 13 at his death. Napoleon himself wrote that he was 8! We also know for certain that he died at the very moment *l'Orient* exploded but despite many eyewitness accounts, where he was on board during the battle and the exact manner of his dying, are conflicting and unverifiable. On the other hand, a great deal is known about his father, Luc, one of France's most illustrious naval officers. It has to be said my own biographical enquiries and research led to few results and that there was little interest on the French side to uncover more about Giancante. However, we may deduce something of Giancante's background from the exhaustive literature on his famous father who was born in 1762 in Vescovato, a small town in northern Corsica. His tight-knit family was prominent both in politics and the military, and Luc's military career was interspersed with periods of public and political service. His name is irrevocably linked to his role in the American Revolution where he was on active service with the French Navy at the Battle of Chesapeake Bay. The relevant point here is that he had a close link to Napoleon, some seven years his junior, who himself came from Ajaccio in the south of the island and their paths frequently crossed. The Casabianca clan, after much initial wavering, came to support Napoleon's revolutionary ideas wholeheartedly. Luc married Felice Raffalin 1784 and their daughter, Faustina, was born in 1785, followed by Giancante in 1786.



*Luc Casabianca: marble bust - Augustin Courtet 1873*

They divorced in 1794 and eventually Giancante went to live with his father in Paris. But not before he had received an excellent schooling at the local parish school run by his uncle.

His father was often away fighting at sea and must have returned with exciting tales of valour and glory. We can thus justifiably surmise that his upbringing placed great emphasis on the values of obedience, bravery and honour and that the idea of glory and dying for one's country was a backdrop to his education. This sense of personal honour and obedience would explain Giancante's behaviour when faced with imminent death. In this context the words often imputed to Luc addressing his son before the battle are also entirely in character:

*"Mon fils, je compte sur toi pour être courageux face à l'ennemi et je t'interdis d'abandonner le navire sans mon ordre".* (My son, I count on you to be brave in battle and I forbid you to abandon ship without my order).

At the age of twelve, Giancante would have been considered old enough to begin his naval training at sea but there was hesitation about his maiden voyage taking place in the midst of war. This was a matter that Napoleon himself would decide when he came on board his flagship *l'Orient* in Toulon in May 1798. He met with his officers, made Luc Casabianca Commander who presented his son, requesting permission to have Giancante accompany him. Napoleon gave his permission albeit reluctantly. A reluctance which would prove justifiable.

There is no record of Giancante's role and duties aboard *l'Orient*, only that he had access to the officers' quarters. But we may assume that he would have shared the experience of other young boys on board. Of course, his father would have kept a close eye on him to ensure not only that he behaved correctly but also that he was treated with the respect due to his rank. No-one would have put Giancante's life in danger or subjected him to the rough and ready treatment from the crew, which was often the lot of the young boys on board.

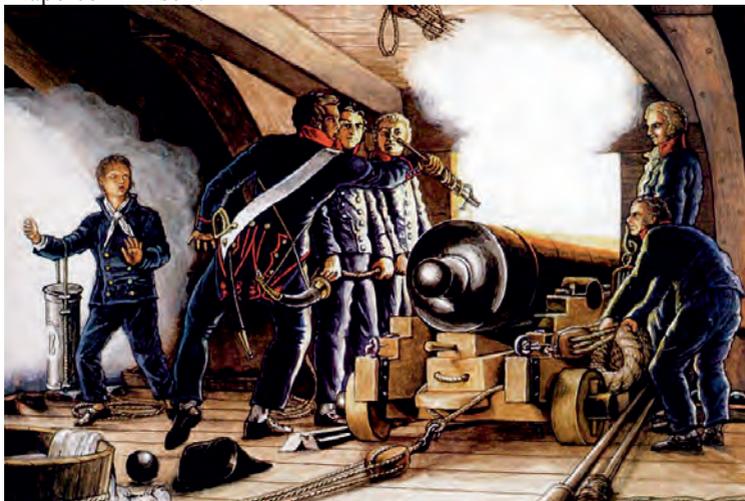
News of Luc and Giancante's death took several weeks to reach France and we can only imagine the grief of Giancante's mother and sister when they learnt that father, son and brother had perished in the battle. After Luc's death Felice and Faustina found themselves destitute. Records show that Faustina, then aged 16, petitioned Napoleon for help and that he granted them a generous pension, maybe in part to assuage a bad conscience. The poet Alfred de Vigny quotes Napoleon as saying on learning of the death of both Giancante and Luc:

*"Je n'aime pas qu'on emmène ses enfants et je ne l'ai permis qu'à Casabianca et j'ai eu tort".* (I don't like it when children are brought along. I only gave my permission because it was to Casabianca, and I made a mistake).

### **Young boys on board**

Giancante is often described as a 'cabin boy' on board the French flagship *l'Orient* and Mrs Hemans' poem does nothing to correct the impression that he was an ordinary boy who just happened to be present on the ship's deck when it

burst into flames. In fact Giancante, son of the ship's captain, was on his maiden voyage aboard Napoleon's flagship as the first step in his training to be a naval officer. It was customary in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for future officers, even those coming from naval families, to start on the bottom rung in a very hierarchical system and only after some experience at sea, enter naval college. This was definitely the path set out for Giancante, who had received permission to be on board directly from Napoleon himself.



*French 'powder monkey' at the loading of cannon (Louis-Philippe Crépin, circa 1800)*

The French term used for young boys on board ship is 'mousse' derived from the Spanish which simply means 'a young boy'. It carries no connotation either of low social status or menial work but describes a young (sometimes very young) apprentice seaman who could be given the same tasks as any other crew member, his size, skill and strength permitting. Age was not a factor since, for all trades and professions at the time, the younger you began work, the better, and we know that 8- and 9-year-olds were present at sea at the Battle of Trafalgar. Teenage boys who had some years of education could rise quickly to the rank of midshipmen. Lord Nelson who came from a family with no naval background began life at sea at 12 and rose through the ranks.

While in both French and British navies many young boys were from the upper or middle classes, a higher proportion in Britain came from the poor and destitute. They were, as Magistrate J Fielding wrote at the time, 'Miserable, ragged, deserted and iniquitous, pilfering boys who shamefully infest the streets of London'. For them, signing onto a ship's roster meant being given steady rations, somewhere to live, a wage and a kitbag of clothing, so life at sea would have seemed no worse and hopefully better, than on land.

Placed in the care of the ship's captain who was responsible for both education and training, these boys were used for mundane tasks requiring less skill, strength or seamanship: cleaning officers' quarters or the kitchens, sweeping and scrubbing, and since ships often carried live animals on board - chickens, pigs and even cows to provide fresh food - the boys would be put to clean and feed them. However their agility meant they were also used for much more dangerous work such as climbing to mend the rigging and sails or be on watch from the crow's nest. In war, given the name 'powder-monkeys', they supplied the powder and ammunition to the gunners, running from the stores to the firing decks, ducking and weaving between the cannons.

Although promotion was swift for those boys with some education behind them, initially all boys shared the same harsh conditions and extreme discipline of other crew members. Flogging was the standard punishment in both the French and British navies but was far more frequent among the British where it continued long after it had been abolished in France. Much has been written about this harsh level of punishment but that is to overlook just how severe punishment was also on land. A flogging for theft on board was the most frequent punishment but the same crime on land could lead to deportation.

Poor nutrition, inadequate or contaminated water supplies, and fevers of every kind meant that for all seamen the death rate was high, but given their tasks, it was even higher for young boys, particularly out at sea. Falling from the mast was invariably fatal whether you died from injuries when you hit the deck or were drowned if you fell into the water. However, although handling explosives was extremely dangerous, English figures show us that among those engaged in battle there were fewer deaths in close-fought naval encounters than in land battles. At Trafalgar the death rate was 9%, but it was 22% on the battlefield of Waterloo. So maybe it was safer to be a powder monkey than a young drummer boy.

Undeniably life at sea was too harsh for many young recruits and records show that the attrition rate was very high among those officially recruited at a young age. Some 38% of young boys on the rosters did not continue at sea after the initial contract was served.

### **The Battle of the Nile, August 1<sup>st</sup> 1798**

The Battle of the Nile was not a naval battle on the open seas but a surprise attack by Nelson on a huge fleet of French ships, which was at anchor off the coast of Aboukir, 20 kilometres up the coast from Alexandria, waiting to take Napoleon's troops home from his military campaign in Egypt.

Countless books have been written about this terrible battle and it is not my intention to describe yet again a well-documented series of events, but simply to highlight those which have a direct bearing on the fate of Giancante Casabianca.

Throughout the years 1788-1814 France and England were in perpetual conflict and the period of intense fighting known as the Napoleonic Wars lasted

from 1793-1814. The Battle of the Nile occurred in 1798 when France was governed by the Directoire, a short-lived period following the French Revolution when Napoleon Bonaparte was head of the army. George III was on the throne in Britain, William Pitt his prime minister.

Napoleon had convinced the government of the Directoire that they should support his plan for an expedition to Egypt which would further the commercial interests of France and hamper the lucrative British trade with India which funded the war. This ‘expedition’ would also spread the ideas of revolution and freedom to the southern shore of the Mediterranean, freeing Egypt from the grip of the Ottoman Empire. It would not only be a military operation but also a cultural and scientific campaign including, alongside the troops, the best scientists, craftsmen, doctors and historians that Revolutionary France could muster.

By June 1798 a huge flotilla of some 13 ships of the line, 14 frigates and 400 supply ships had been assembled off Toulon carrying 40,000 soldiers and 13,000 other crew and passengers. Admiral Brueys was given command along with four rear admirals, and Giancante’s father, Luc Casabianca was made captain of Napoleon’s flagship *l’Orient*.

Napoleon set sail for Egypt on *l’Orient* on 19 May alongside his captain, Casabianca and in all probability his son, Giancante. The flotilla arrived off Alexandria on 1 July having seized Malta in June and plundered bullion worth 5 million francs in gold, 1 million in silver and a further 1 million in gems and any other treasure they could find, which was then stored in the hold of *l’Orient*.

Napoleon disembarked his troops in a hurry fearing attack from Nelson’s ships which were following him closely, and proceeded with his military expedition, leaving the supply ships to return to France and the fighting ships to find shelter in the small bay of Aboukir. The wisdom of keeping the fleet anchored together was the subject of dispute between Napoleon’s admirals who disagreed on the safest strategy. But before a decision could be taken, Nelson’s ships appeared on the horizon.

Nelson attacked at 6 pm, placing his ships between the lines of the French and submitting the French ships to cannon fire from both sides. One after the other the French ships were overcome and either destroyed or had to surrender.



*Napoleon Bonaparte, by Jacques-Louis David 1812*



Horatio Nelson (Lemuel Francis Abbott  
1797)

There are numerous first-hand accounts of this battle from those on both sides, from above and below decks, from simple gunners to senior officers and there is little disagreement about the sequence of events. The fighting was fierce, particularly around *l'Orient* which carried the fleet's arms and ammunition.

Shortly after 7.30 in the evening, Luc Casabianca had his legs blown off by cannon fire and died on the deck of *l'Orient*. His death was to seal the fate of his young son Giancante. Two hours later a terrible firestorm swept across the vessel and at 10 pm the order was given to abandon ship. When the fire reached the ammunition stores there was an explosion so great it was described as an earthquake, the sound was heard in Rosetta 32 miles away and the glow visible in Alexandria.

*"The sky lightened as if some enormous blast furnace had suddenly opened and then as suddenly, closed again. In the darkness which followed, timbers, masts and spars, lumps of burning debris and the pulverised bodies of men, rained down on the ships around"* one eyewitness reported.

It was so terrible, there was a pause in the fighting as seamen on both sides of the conflict were paralysed in horror, watching *l'Orient* and her remaining men literally dissolve before their eyes.



Aboukir – The Orient on Fire – George Arnald 1763-1841

It is at this point that Giancante enters into the realm of legend through several, albeit conflicting, first-hand accounts given by those who fought and survived that night. According to these witnesses Giancante's father, determined that his son should carry himself like a man in his first experience of war, had earlier addressed his son with these words which I have quoted before, "My son, I rely on you to be brave in combat and I order you never to leave this ship without my express order". Therefore when the crew begged the boy to leave the ship, now engulfed in flames, and to jump into the lifeboat, he refused, citing the order his father had given him. The last sight of Giancante according to some reports was of a slight figure clutching the mast of the *l'Orient* at his father's side, a young boy seeming to float above the flames. That is how he is often portrayed.

The battle picked up and continued until 3.30a.m. when the last ship, *Le Tonnant*, lowered its flag in surrender.

As well as Luc and Giancante Casabianca, Admiral Brueys was among the 5,000 dead or wounded (approx. 900 for the British). A huge effort was made to rescue as many survivors as possible and despite their defeat there was nothing but praise for the bravery and courage of the French combatants. The Reverend Mathews wrote, "*No other ship, not even the glorious Victory herself surpassed in heroic deed the Orient in her tempest of fire*". Admiral Hallowell noted later, "*The conflagration raged with dreadful fury but the French sustained the honour of the flag with heroic firmness*".

News of this battle took several weeks to reach London and Paris and its significance was no doubt exaggerated in Britain and minimised in France. It gave the British a boost to their morale, showing them that David could beat Goliath, that the 'spread of global tyranny hiding behind the mask of liberty' could be defeated. But although described in Britain as a glorious victory, the wars continued and the decisive battle of Waterloo was many years into the future.

On the French side, attacking their fleet at anchor was viewed as an atrocious, treacherous act with blatant disregard for the naval code of conduct in war. Strangely enough, when news of the disaster reached Napoleon, although he was sad for the loss of life, he was also relieved that he and his army were safe, and despite the inestimable loss of the Maltese treasure, he did not see the destruction of his ships as a significant setback. He himself only returned to France to be made First Consul in the autumn of 1799.

Whilst in British history this battle takes pride of place alongside Trafalgar and Waterloo, in French history it is simply an aside to the 'glorious success' of Napoleon's conquest of Malta and Egypt.

What both nations did agree on at the time was the human horror and cost of this battle and it is not difficult to see why. It appalled and impressed those who witnessed it and even today is considered one of the most terrible sea battles in recorded history.

## Fire on board

The officers and crew of fighting ships in both the French and British navies were for the most part battle-hardened and accustomed to the horrors of catastrophe at sea. A very high death rate as a result of drowning, war-wounds or disease was more acceptable than it would be today, being only marginally worse at sea than on land. Yet by every account even these men were horrified and distressed by the nightmare scenario which they witnessed when *l'Orient* exploded in a fireball mightier than they had ever seen, stoking their worst fear: fire on board.

Indeed, a wooden ship, caulked and tarred with highly inflammable pine tar or pitch, varnished and painted with oil-based products, was a potential floating torch at the best of times. Great care was taken to control flickering candles and preference given to lanterns, ovens to open cooking fires. Yet fermenting foodstuffs in the hold and the large supply of alcohol on board were stored in combustible, wooden and often leaky casks. On a ship armed for war carrying a maximum of explosives, the threat of fire was daunting. As the ship



*Ship alight at the Battle of the Nile (Thomas Luny 1834)*

storing the arms and explosives for the rest of the fleet, *l'Orient* was in an extremely vulnerable situation with a huge supply of gunshot, cannon balls and loose gunpowder. These were tightly controlled and monitored but open powder horns, scattered gunpowder on the decks and the overcharging of cannons, further increased the chance in battle of fire on board, either as a result of enemy action or of carelessness. The threat was greater still when the enemy used the tactic of deliberately setting fire to enemy ships with the use of floating fireships aimed at the wooden hulls or by lobbing ignited projectiles to set fire to sails and decks.

Safety procedures were draconian and known to everyone on board. Highly trained crews were drilled to contain and extinguish fires, damp down the embers and carry out safety inspections. However, while making the best use of the fire-fighting means at their disposal, these were few and rudimentary. Until the invention of an efficient hydraulic pumping system in the 19th century, the only

way to douse a fire was with mattresses and clothing for small fires and buckets of water passed hand to hand for more serious blazes. Rapidly removing anything combustible in the path of the fire, including hauling in the sails, cutting down rigging or even chopping down burning masts, was all that could be done.

If you were lucky and fire broke out in port, there was some hope of assistance but at sea your chances of surviving a major fire were slim. Outside the well-travelled shipping lanes, rescue by another ship was very unlikely at a time when ships and men were at the mercy of winds and tides. Immediate death through drowning was preferable to that through extensive burns and ship's surgeons were very aware and concerned by the high fatality rate. A wide array of balms and ointments were applied, wet cooling lotions for superficial burns, oily dressings (often a mixture of egg yolk and almond oil) to more serious injuries. Picric acid ointment was found to have anaesthetic and antiseptic properties and was used extensively until in the 19th century it was discovered to be more toxic and destructive than the burn itself.

Until medical science in the 19th century showed that death from burns was due to wound infection rather than to the burn itself, followed by the discovery of antibiotics in the 20th, the death rate from burns was extremely high and fire on board feared quite as much, if not more, than enemy attack.

#### **‘Wind of Ball’ or ‘Wind Contusions’**



*French frigate Poursuivante in battle with HMS Hercule in the action of 28 June 1803*

Military surgeons and doctors in the 18th century were used to dealing with horrendous injuries, the inevitable result of war, as well as with the high incidence of disease and accidents which led to more fatalities than those incurred directly in battle, whether on land or at sea. But an intriguing new phenomenon came to their attention towards the end of the 1790's which seems to have coincided with

the increasing calibre and velocity of both cannon and musket shot. It was an observation which had been noted previously but was now reported frequently. Called ‘Wind of Ball’ or ‘Wind Contusion’ (*Vent du Boulet*) it refers to an injury or fatality resulting from cannon or gun fire passing near, but not touching, the victim, who was nevertheless killed or suffered internal injury with no outward sign of having been hit.

The usual explanation was that the rush of air (wind) surrounding a high velocity cannon ball particularly at the height of its trajectory, was of itself enough to cause injury and death. Indeed, the greater proximity of battling ships and the increased size and speed of cannon balls of the time, seemed to support this notion. Although there were more reported casualties of this nature in naval than land battles, ‘Wind of Ball’ casualty reports from the Army also increased with the use of heavy artillery on the battlefield.

From the Napoleonic wars until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century ‘Wind of Ball’ was the subject of much speculation among the most eminent of medical and military experts. Napoleon’s own chief military surgeon, Baron Larrey, believed the injuries were the result of the pressure of heavy projectiles which did not pierce the elastic skin but which could nevertheless break bones and lacerate organs beneath it. Victims had in fact come into contact with a cannon ball but it had ‘rolled over’ the skin.

The Russian general Admiral Greig in 1854 reported having been knocked off his horse at the battle of Inkerman and asserted the ‘wind of large shot’ was the cause. In his 1862 report the British Army Surgeon General, Sir Thomas Longmore, discussed the surprising number of ‘subcutaneous contusions without any mark having been left on the skin’.

As late as 1915 newspapers reported the surprising number of soldiers dead or disabled with no visible injury. John Nicol, a mariner present at Aboukir, reported seeing a boy sitting on a cartridge chest ‘bolt upright with his eyes open’ who did not respond when addressed. When a gunner pushed him, he fell to the deck, ‘dead from blast with not a mark upon him’.

Yet, despite the many verified incidents, the idea that wind could cause injury was usually dismissed as the result of mistaken observations, easily made in the chaos and confusion of war, the victims in fact having died of heart attack or been concussed by flying debris. However, this did not convince those who had observed the phenomenon first-hand.

Decades after the Napoleonic Wars the debate still raged and an eminent Russian surgeon and artillery expert, Pelikan, set up an experiment in the late 1850’s, which he believed conclusively disproved the theory of ‘Wind’. He concluded: “*The wind of a ball even with a full charge of powder has so trifling a force as to be incapable of determining any lesion*”.

But this oft-quoted experiment was set up neither with cannon balls nor in the context of close combat in battle, nor did it take into account either velocity

or calibre. Indeed, there has never been a reliable simulation either virtual or in real time, using period cannon balls in battle conditions.

The phenomenon is now attributed to devastating concussive and vibratory forces which have been well-researched and which are caused today not by cannon balls but by high velocity gunfire and heavy shelling. The weapons and terminology may have changed but sadly not the effect.

### **Francophobia**

English attitudes towards France and the French have always been ambiguous and a certain degree of Francophobia in Britain has persisted for almost a thousand years. This reached its apogee during the Napoleonic Wars.

France is the ideal focus for English fears, being the only foreign country visible from English shores and culturally so very different, portrayed in Britain as a source of dangerous ideas and contemptible values. France and Britain were locked in endless conflict over religion, trade and imperial expansion and the mutual antagonism between the two nations was only partly overcome by their alliance to defeat Germany in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the French, 'Perfidious Albion' as Britain is often referred to, is just one of the six potentially hostile countries on its borders and the real menace has always been from the land rather than sea. The French therefore have always been far more preoccupied by what was happening on their continental frontiers than the threat from across the Channel. During the Napoleonic Wars, anti-French feeling in Britain was fuelled by heavy government propaganda and a growing and influential press which emphasised the notion that the French were effeminate, extravagant and untrustworthy.

*Caricature: James Gillray 1803*



Ironically, during this period there was significant admiration in Britain for the philosophy and democratic, republican ideals which underpinned French policies at home and abroad. These were sweeping across not only Europe but also America. In Britain such ideas were treasonable talk which undermined the government's war effort and the press redoubled its efforts to lampoon and ridicule the enemy. Francophobia reached an unprecedented level of hysteria which is well illustrated by the incident which occurred in the northern town of Hartlepool.

## The Hartlepool Monkey

This extraordinary incident in the early 1800's at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, illustrates the deep and far-reaching fear of the French at the time.

As the story goes, a shipwrecked monkey was hanged by the people of Hartlepool who thought it was a French spy. Indeed, a French ship had been seen sinking off the Hartlepool coast and, convinced they were in danger of imminent invasion, the townsfolk rushed onto the beach. Here the only surviving living thing they found was a monkey dressed in military uniform. The monkey was tried on the spot, found guilty and forthwith hanged. While it is not impossible that the people of Hartlepool had never seen a Frenchman and were deceived by



the uniform and almost human form of the monkey into thinking this was a real French spy, it is a striking example of just how fearful, and insular, people were at the time, and how the smallest incident could trigger a frenzy of speculation and revenge.

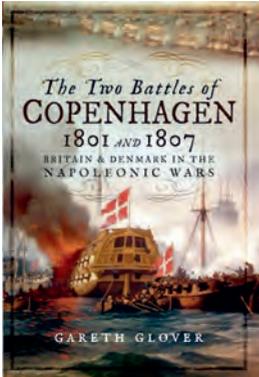
*The Hanging of the Hartlepool Monkey-contemporary cartoon*

It should be pointed out that today the monkey embodies the identity of Hartlepool, with three statues raised in its honour and the local rugby team, the Hartlepool Rovers, called 'the Monkey Hangers'. The monkey has been the subject of plays, books and songs, but although there is much speculation as to the truth of the tale, the context in which it came about and the rampant Francophobia which it reflects, are rarely mentioned.

*Note from The Nelson Society's Historian, Ray Aldis: The idea that the treasure seized by Napoleon from the Order of St John on Malta was lost in the destruction of the L'Orient is now largely discredited. A number of detailed surveys over the years of the seabed at Aboukir Bay have not led to the discovery of a single piece of the treasure. A number of gold coins have been found but these were almost certainly from the substantial cash reserves that would have been held on any flagship in order to fund the day to day running of the fleet. It must also be remembered that the French fleet had been at anchor in Aboukir Bay for a month and it is therefore highly unlikely that Napoleon would have left his 'Army' treasure for this amount of time in the hands of the Navy! See 'So What Happened to Treasures seized from Malta by the French in 1798?' by Dr Joseph F Grima, published in The Times of Malta, 25 May 2021.*

## AN UNCOMFORTABLE VICTORY – COPENHAGEN 1801, A STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Gareth Glover



*Military historian Gareth Glover gave a talk to The Nelson Society at the Copenhagen dinner held in Worcester in September 2021. He has kindly provided this precis of his lecture for the 'Nelson Dispatch'. Gareth's book 'Two Battles of Copenhagen' was published in 2018. His latest book 'Nelson's Navy in 100 Objects' is reviewed later in this issue.*

Denmark's position as the gateway to the Baltic, meant that it was strategically important, but rarely appeared on Britain's radar during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, being fully invested in regular wars with the French and the Spanish and occasionally the Americans. Indeed, the last time a British fleet had actually sailed into the Baltic was in 1700, when a joint British/Dutch/Swedish fleet bombarded Copenhagen from the sea, forcing Denmark to withdraw from the 'Great Northern War', although she did re-join the war later, in time to enjoy the fruits of victory, with Denmark receiving the sole rights to the shipping dues levied on ships sailing through the Sound between Denmark and Sweden in 1720. From this point on, despite the numerous wars raging across Europe, Denmark remained 'neutral', or more accurately, promised everything to both sides - and did nothing. This shady diplomatic act was seen as a great trait of which all Danes were proud and it allowed the country to flourish, especially as its merchant navy found a very profitable role in acting as a 'neutral carrier' for warring states, avoiding the threat of British capture.

Denmark at this time, it must be understood, was actually a much greater concern than today. Denmark and Norway were one sovereign country as equal partners, which also covered the sparsely populated Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. Denmark itself also extended into Holstein in Northern Germany and had a number of overseas possessions in the West Indies (now the US Virgin Islands), and with trading stations on the Gold Coast of Africa and in India, indeed there was even a Danish East India Company. These possessions were not conquered however, simply purchased from other countries and used purely as trading posts, as the Danes had no ambitions of Empire building.

The Danish merchant fleet expanded to about 3,500 ships (the British merchant fleet peaking at about 16,500 ships). To protect their lands the Danes maintained an army relatively similar in size to the British army during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, but Danish pride was embodied in their fleet of warships. Because of its wealth, Denmark, a second rate power, maintained the fifth largest Navy in the world, behind Britain, France, Spain and Russia. The fleet however was not

meant for use, it was a threat and a tool of state to ensure other European countries respected her neutrality. This fleet therefore spent long periods in harbour, but this was no ordinary dock. The naval facilities at Copenhagen were second to none, anywhere. Each warship was provided with its own warehouse on the wharf with all the equipment stored and maintained in perfect order, simply waiting to be loaded onboard on the occasional times that a small squadron set sail during the summer months (the Baltic then regularly freezing solid during the winter).



No less than five thousand sailors were maintained ashore in housing in Nyboder district (illus. left), where they lived with their families, receiving full pay, ready to man the ships whenever necessary. This clearly was an inordinately expensive way of maintaining a fleet, but it made the Danes feel very secure.

Britain had interest in the Baltic region for only one thing, naval stores: Russia, Poland and Sweden supplying mast timbers and the hemp invaluable for caulking ships and of course in rope making. As long as these supplies flowed freely and British merchant shipping sailed freely in the Baltic, then the Royal Navy had absolutely no interest in this sea, and the fact that no British warship sailed in the Baltic between 1700 and 1800 speaks volumes. However, by the 1790's Britain was becoming a little concerned over the actions of the Danes, with Admiral Hyde Parker being tasked with preparing for a fleet sailing there, when he found that the charts available predated 1700!

As the wars with France went on through the final decade of the century, relations started to become more strained. British warships were regularly boarding all merchant vessels to check both their nationalities and cargoes and an increasing number of Danish vessels were seized for carrying contraband goods. This infuriated the Danes who had been carrying on this surreptitious trade under their 'neutrality' for years. The Crown Prince Frederick of Denmark ordered Danish ships to refuse to be boarded and the Danes and Swedes (who were equally unhappy) began to deploy joint naval squadrons in the North Sea, which Britain saw as a major provocation. Britain was also very unhappy that 'neutral' Denmark was turning a blind eye to a large number of French privateers working out of Norwegian ports, capturing 250 British merchant vessels in 1799 alone. Frederick went so far as to order Danish merchant ships to sail in convoy protected by Danish warships, which caused a number of dangerous standoffs with British warships determined to check their cargoes. This blew up in June 1800, when a small squadron led by HMS *Nemesis* stopped a convoy protected by the Danish warship *Freya*. After the British insisted on boarding, *Freya* fired a single shot, which led to the *Nemesis* firing a full broadside. After a short action

the *Freya* and her entire convoy were escorted into British ports and claimed as prizes. Britain reacted by sending Lord Whitworth, Britain's senior diplomat, to Denmark to seek redress and the Danes panicked and immediately wrote to the Russian Tsar.



*Copenhagen 1800*

Admiral Dickson was dispatched with a fleet of 18 ships and 4 bomb vessels, with the clear threat of bombarding Copenhagen, as they had in 1700. The Danes had planned new sea defences to counter this threat, but had never got round to building them. Their fleet was not ready for sea, but the city did have a garrison of 10,000 troops and was secure from a land attack, Dickson having only 500 marines at his disposal on his fleet. The Danes had not yet heard from the Tsar in reply and had been caught completely unprepared by Britain's rapid military response, so they backed down. They agreed to stop their armed convoys, but little else was agreed pending further talks to be arranged in London. The Danes however did not set a date for such a meeting, as they had no intention of turning up, they were simply buying time until they got an answer from the Tsar.

Tsar Paul of Russia had been an ardent enemy of Revolutionary France, but as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century dawned his feelings towards Bonapartist France were thawing, as he recognised a more 'stable' France. He was also seriously unhappy with Britain for their refusal to hand over Malta to him, as he had recently been elected Grand Master of the Knights of St John (whose remaining assets just happened to be in Russian Poland), who had controlled the island for centuries until Napoleon had evicted them in 1798. He had even gone so far as to recall the victorious Marshal Suvorov's army back from Switzerland in 1800. Paul was

inclined to break his alliance with Britain in exchange for a treaty with France, but was concerned for Britain's reaction. Therefore, the letter from Denmark requesting a League of Armed Neutrality with both Russia, Prussia and Sweden was seen as a godsend. Such a league would provide a perfect buffer between Britain and Russia and he eagerly took the golden opportunity. The League was officially ratified on 16 December 1800, with a joint fleet being formed to protect the Baltic, consisting of 30 ships of the line and 10 frigates, commanded by a Russian Admiral. Russia supplied 15 ships of the line and 5 frigates, Denmark 8 ships of the line and 2 frigates and Sweden 7 ships of the line and 3 frigates. Prussia had no navy.

Britain's response was swift. There were orders for Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, seconded by Admiral Horatio Nelson to sail with a large fleet of ships, with which to clear the Danish Navy out of the way, so that they could attack the Russian fleet and force the Tsar to reconsider his decision and regain free access to the vital naval stores. Hyde Parker, who was 62, had made his fortune in the West Indies and had only recently married the 25-year-old daughter of Admiral Onslow and was still enjoying his honeymoon, proved slow to go to sea; Admiral Nelson was not overly keen to sail either, having just seen Emma Hamilton give birth to their daughter Horatia, but having decided to leave, he was keen to get the business done so that he could return as soon as possible. When Nelson arrived at Yarmouth with his ships he was outraged to find Parker still ashore with little sign of sailing, however a few letters informing ministers of the situation, soon saw orders arrive for the fleet to sail immediately which Hyde Parker could not ignore. A fleet of 19 ships of the line and 34 other armed vessels sailed on 11 March 1801. Timing was essential, the Baltic only starting to thaw towards the end of March, meaning that Denmark was isolated with little hope of help from the Swedish fleet at Karlskrona and absolutely no hope from the Russians who would remain icebound for another month.

The Danes knew a fleet was coming but were not sure if the British would pass on towards Russia. However, following the embarrassment of the previous year, work had finally begun on the city's seaward defences. The formidable Trekroner Battery was far from complete, the earthen ramparts being less than a foot high, providing minimal protection for cannon and crews; ammunition stores were incomplete, requiring an ammunition ship to lie in the enclosed harbour to provide re-supply. There were no living quarters for the garrison.



*Trekroner Fort, Copenhagen harbour*

Other batteries had been planned but not started. The landward defences of Copenhagen were formidable, but the seaward defences remained wholly inadequate. The decision was therefore made to keep the Danish Navy safely ensconced in the harbour, where inaccurate shelling was highly unlikely to cause serious damage and a fleet of old hulks and open gun platforms were hastily prepared to form a line in the King's Deep, the channel in front of Copenhagen as an ad-hoc defence. These ships were manned by sailors, soldiers and volunteers and hastily trained in gunnery, not by the crews of the Danish Navy which would be required to sail the fleet.

After an inordinate delay while Hyde Parker dithered over which way he would sail his fleet to Copenhagen, they eventually sailed past Elsinore Castle receiving little damage as the roundshot fell short. Nelson was deputed to fight the action in the King's Deep, the channel being narrow and only deep enough for 74's which precluded Hyde Parker's larger ships being involved. Requesting ten ships, Parker gave Nelson twelve and it is fortunate he did. Having sailed to a position to the south of the Danish line Nelson prepared his method of attack while soundings were taken and buoys placed to mark the channel, the Danes having removed them. One question that has not been answered fully, is why Nelson chose to ignore the advice of Captain Hardy, who had sounded around the Danish ships in the dead of night and confirmed that there was deep water on both sides of the Danish ships, allowing a re-run of the Battle of the Nile. It may well be that he was not confident that there was deep water throughout the length of the Danish line, and as they were moored both fore and aft, there was no sure way of knowing, so caution presumably won over.

The intention of this article is not to describe the fighting of 2 April 1801 in great detail, however a few salient points may be made. The grounding of the *Agamemnon*, *Bellona* and *Russell* clearly degraded his force by one quarter and caused him to shorten his line and reallocate the positions to be taken up by each successive warship including his own flagship the *Elephant*, which was fortunate for Nelson as will be seen. All British eyewitnesses admit that the Danish fire was much hotter than anticipated and they readily admit that it was a tougher fight than ever they had witnessed against the French or Spaniards. The Danish pride (to this day) in the plucky fight by the open decked barges, commanded so bravely by such as Willemoes, is clearly misplaced regarding their effectiveness. Indeed an analysis of the fighting shows that these open decked gun platforms quickly became mere charnel houses, when seriously engaged by a British warship, and many of them were driven out of the defence line with horrendous losses in a short time. The larger hulks put up a very valiant defence, however, and British losses also climbed steadily.

During the action Admiral Hyde Parker flew Signal 39 for the fleet to disengage from the enemy, but it was famously ignored by Nelson who turned his 'blind' eye. Various reasons have been given as to why Hyde Parker decided

to fly it, but the claim that he did so simply to give Nelson a way out if he needed it, cannot stand. Hyde Parker would know that such a defeat would go down badly in London, and he was never going to fall on his sword simply to save Nelson. Nelson's refusal to repeat the order could certainly have gone badly wrong if his individual captains had followed the order as they should have done, and Riou's frigate squadron did. However, Nelson would have known that his failure to obey this order meant that he had to gain a victory, and fast, to save his ships from serious damage - and potentially his career.

Within 45 minutes of this incident, Nelson was penning his first appeal to the Crown Prince for a ceasefire, which did not arrive ashore until nearly 3pm, when the first phase of the battle had effectively ended with the surrender of the last ships in the Danish line. It was later claimed by Nelson that his appeal was made on humanitarian grounds, but do we really believe that this was his sole purpose? I say the first phase, as the next part of Nelson's plan of attack required Captain Fremantle leading the boats of the fleet on an attack on Trekroner Battery, which may have cost high casualties, but success would allow the British bomb vessels to shell the city and fleet. The ceasefire was agreed and negotiations began ashore, but what had Nelson's ships achieved? They had undoubtedly defeated the Danish Reserve Fleet, but the British ships had suffered severe damage, and two were so badly damaged they had to return to Britain for repairs. The entire Danish fleet of 17 line of battle ships remained unharmed in harbour, fully able to proceed to sea at any time, and the Swedish fleet were also close at hand as the ice at Karlskrona had melted. Losses of men were however remarkably even.

The Russian fleet still had to be tackled, and when the British fleet proceeded into Russian waters, the threat of a combined Dano/Swedish fleet blocking their exit from the Baltic would remain a serious threat. Nelson's negotiations with the Danish Crown Prince were not proceeding well, with the Danes unhappy with a protracted period of a ceasefire. Nelson's position looked difficult and it is not hard to see that both he and Hyde Parker were concerned at how little progress the negotiations were making, until the news of the Tsar's death (his murder) allowed the Danes to sign an armistice without fear of retaliation from Russia.

All eventually turned out well, although Hyde Parker returned to see his career effectively ended and Nelson returned home soon after, when it was found that the new Tsar Alexander had abandoned the League of Armed Neutrality and was far more amenable to British interests, but made it clear that he would not negotiate with a fleet at his door. So the fleet quietly returned to Danish waters. Admiral Pole commanding the fleet as it quietly returned to Britain.

Six years later, Napoleon's forces, now allied with Russia, threatened to sweep up the ships of the three neutral fleets in Europe (Sweden, Denmark and Portugal) and use them to break the Royal Navy's stranglehold of the seas. Britain was forced to react urgently, the Portuguese fleet was persuaded to move out of harm's way to South America, and Sweden's fleet remained relatively safe while

Napoleon did not have control of the Baltic. However, the threat of a French army reaching Copenhagen forced Britain to send a fleet, this time with a large army onboard to bombard Copenhagen from the land side (the sea defences having been completed) and forcing the Danes to hand over their fleet, which was sailed to Britain.

The defeat of the Danish Reserve fleet is not questioned, but did Nelson's victory over it really win the strategic victory that was necessary?

## A TICKET TO IMMORTALITY

**Susan Amos**

*Susan Amos is the co-author (with Louis Roeder) of 'Nelson's State Funeral 1806. How to Bury a National Hero' published in 2020. She spoke to Nelson Society members at the Nelson Society Copenhagen commemorative event in September 2021 and has kindly provided the following article for the 'Nelson Dispatch'.*

Back in September this year The Nelson Society made a visit to Worcester. One of the items on display which members of the Society were able to see was a ticket to Nelson's state funeral, which is on display at the Worcester Guildhall. Having spent much time in recent years researching all aspects of the Nelson funeral, including the tickets, I was eager to meet the group. The simple little card ticket with its black border and gothic heading FUNERAL OF LORD NELSON belies the magic which happens when the card is studied, and especially when handled. If you were to take such a little insignificant piece of printed ephemera and turn it over in your hand, peer up close to its letterpress surface, deeply inhale the centuries through your senses, you would find, as I have done, a virtual time machine.

Eyre and Strachan, Printers by Appointment to the King, supplied the tickets to the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's for distribution to those who were eligible to attend the funeral at St Paul's cathedral. The 9,000 or so tickets which were required vary very slightly. Some are smaller than others and the black printed borders also show some variation. Eyre and Strachan may have subcontracted some of the printing to other workshops in the area, as they had many other print jobs for the funeral to contend with. They were responsible for supplying 1,500 black bordered copies of the *Funeral Ceremonial*. 500 copies of the *Funeral Ceremonial* were sewn, bound and covered in best Prussian blue paper. 24 copies were bound and covered in black Genoa velvet with ribbons, tassels and silk fringes. These 24 alone cost £31 in 1806. The printer produced 1,500 copies of the *Funeral Service and Anthems*, on best blue paper with black edges, with additional sets of 80 for the Choristers, 45 for the Lord Chamberlain's Office and 25 for the Board of Works. Eyre and Strachan also had to supply 800 copies of the two-page *Supplementary Regulations*.

All entering the cathedral on the morning of 9 January 1806 had a ticket bearing the seal of the Dean of St Paul's. The distinctive black wax seal in the bottom right hand corner was that of George Pretymen -Tomline, the Bishop of Lincoln. Tickets for the funeral service were issued by the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's. These tickets are not to be confused with Procession tickets which were issued by Sir Isaac Heard, Garter Principal, King at Arms at the College of Arms.

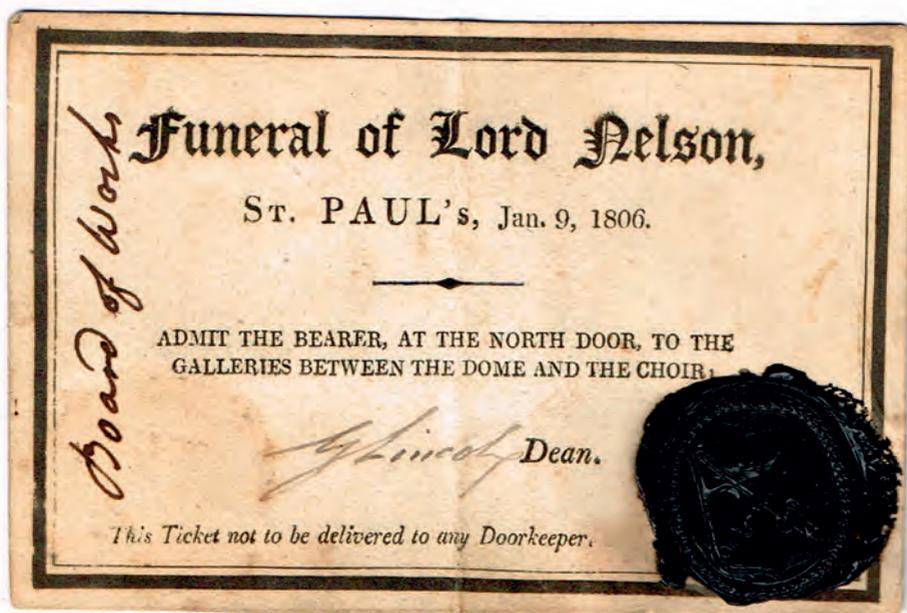
The family, friends and executors of the deceased had little influence over the arrangements for the state funeral. By Christmas Eve 1805, when Nelson's body came ashore, his brother William, already styling himself 'NELSON' wrote on black edged paper to Dean Pretymen asking for an appointment in order to get involved with the arrangements for his brother's funeral. In this he was unsuccessful. He told the family "...it does not appear at present I am to have anything to do with it as a mourner or in any capacity whatever."

One week later, on New Year's Eve 1805, William Haslewood, one of the executors was still under the mistaken impression that they could order tickets for whoever they wished to invite. Haslewood asked the Dean for "...a small number of tickets for the admission of ladies and gentlemen who the Prince of Wales wishes to invite." A swift reply came from John Hale at the Lord Chamberlain's Office. In no uncertain terms it spelled out the facts; the only people who could issue tickets were The Lord Chamberlain himself, the Dean of St Paul's and the Surveyor General of His Majesty's Board of Works, who at that time was the architect James Wyatt.

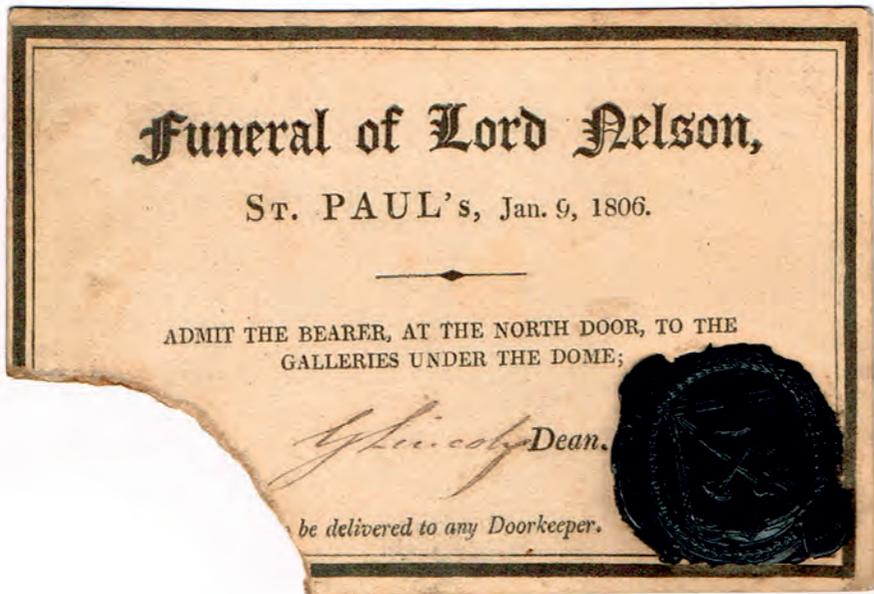
Tickets were sought, but not guaranteed. The Prince of Wales wrote, offering to pay for 10 – 12 tickets. The reply? "...I will do my best endeavours." If you were lucky enough to be one of the 9,000 -10,000 ticket holders, you would have been very likely to have taken your seat on the temporary staging (which filled all but the VIP places under the dome) from a very early hour. Attendees made for the cathedral at first light, or 8am at the latest. Road closures coming into force from 9am would have made entry impossible any later. Each ticket stated by which door the bearer was to enter. The ticket also stated that it was not to be handed in to any doorkeeper. Even so, some tickets appear to have a deliberate tear from the left corner, as if a doorkeeper had, in fact processed the attendees. The organisers were keen for there to be no disturbance once people were in their places. On the plans it is clear that necessary closets had been integrated here and there. Presumably attendees consumed a hearty breakfast before setting off (as did the Nelsons, Boltons and Matchams) or took a breakfast pie with them wrapped in a cloth! No one could enter without a ticket and all tickets were distributed in advance. Members of the Volunteer Militia were stationed around the church to ensure no one tried to take a reserved place. The College of Arms had in fact posted messages in the press stating that: "All such persons as do not form part of the procession, to be in the church by eight o'clock [at] the latest."

During the early stages of the day those taking their seats would have been kept occupied watching the ongoing preparations. By mid-afternoon the mood had changed. Every time the great doors were slightly opened, and a puff of fresh air rippled the black hangings and colours people were aroused temporarily before they sank back into a chilly, jaded and bored state.

The first part of the funeral procession began to arrive at the doors of St Paul's at 1.30pm, with the final part at around 3pm. All was not in place in the Choir (where the Body was to be placed during the Evening Service) until 4pm. By 6pm the funeral service had come to an end. The Standard, Banners, Banneroles and Trophies were deposited on a table behind Admiral Sir Peter Parker, the Chief Mourner. The clergy retired and the procession withdrew. The cathedral slowly emptied to the sound of Attwood playing the Dead March for the final time. No doubt, as the people, stiff with cold, hunger and emotion left their hard, small seats many dropped their precious funeral ticket between the rows, tickets fell from pockets, tickets were mislaid by cold fingers to be swept up with the general detritus of such large gatherings. Some survived and achieved a kind of wondrous immortality of their own. One which did was seen by the Nelson Society at Worcester in September 2021. Two others can be seen here.



*Funeral ticket, Galleries between the Dome and the Choir (photo L Roeder)*



*Funeral ticket, Galleries under the Dome (photo L Roeder)*

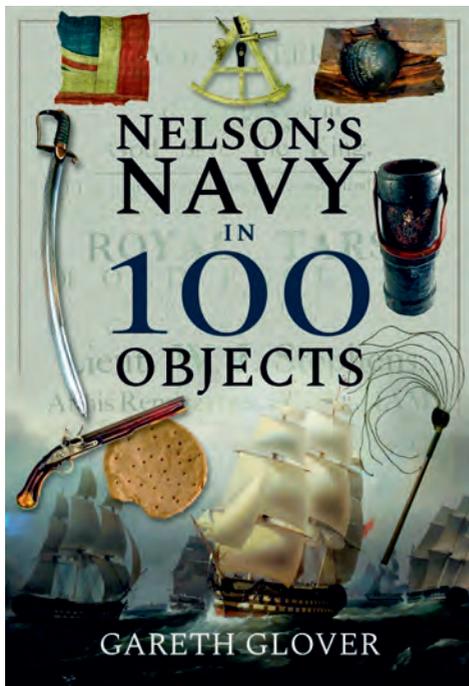
## CORRECTION

### NELSON AT MALTA

Thank you to Clint Collier for pointing out a discrepancy in the article 'Nelson at Malta', Part 2 in the Spring 2021 edition of the 'Nelson Dispatch'. He writes: 'Something seems wrong with the time line in this article beginning on page 79...'. As we were unable to verify with Brian Tarpey, who sadly is no longer with us, our Historian Ray Aldis looked into this, and says that 'Brian Tarpey must have made an error with his first date: Nelson and Keith arrived Palermo from Leghorn on 3 Feb 1800 not 13 Feb. To complete the picture, they both then departed Palermo on 12 Feb arriving off Valletta on 15 Feb. Nelson captured *Le Genereux* on 18 Feb. On 24 Feb Keith departed Valletta for Genoa and Nelson departs Valletta 10 Mar for Palermo. There are several references which confirm the above eg 'The Life of Nelson' A T Mahan; 'Nelson and the Hamiltons' Jack Russell'.

## REVIEWS

**NELSON'S NAVY IN 100 OBJECTS.** Gareth Glover. 301pp, over 300 col. illus throughout. Frontline Books (Pen & Sword Ltd), Barnsley, 2021. Hardback, £25.



The “100 Objects ...” presentation has become very popular in recent years in books and the media, so it was only a matter of time before Nelson “got the treatment”. Gareth Glover, a noted military historian focusing principally on Waterloo has also given Napoleon the “100 Objects...” treatment in 2020, and is well placed to take up the Nelson challenge. To make the restricted choice from within the huge Nelson canon was a daunting task. Despite the 100 in the title, only just over 60 individual objects *per se* are identified. Many of the remainder numbers consist of documents, views of associated places, maps, paintings of ships, etc. In thus widening his choice the author has been able to open many other aspects of Nelson’s navy within the numbered

headings that include associated objects and even contemporary caricatures by James Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson. Within these wider aspects and tucked in behind the numbered objects there is a mass of interesting and indeed intriguing information, e.g. it took 2000 oaks to build a 74-gun frigate but 3000 for *Victory* (p. 39), or that she used about eight tons of gunpowder in her opening broadside, half her guns, and fired “a simply staggering weight of 3,240lbs [of shot], three times Wellington’s total capacity at Waterloo” (p. 56).

The book is a wonderful pot-pourri of Nelsonian information, and, rather like the proverbial curate’s egg, good in parts but also with a rather scatter-gun choice and lack of specific information on some of the actual numbered objects. Some choices are truly intriguing, e.g. no. 90 (pp. 256-9), “The Death Mask of Richard Parker”. The text details the background of the mutinies at Spithead and The Nore, beginning with the mass mutiny in April 1797 when the *Queen*

*Charlotte* and 15 other ships refused to sail. However, the only reference to the death mask (apart from its caption) is on p. 259, “the ring leaders, including Richard Parker, were hanged”. An engraving of him is also illustrated, but there are no further details of the mask. The account of the mutinies is excellent, but where are the answers to the obvious questions about 30-year old Parker – reader, see Wikipedia, but still no mention of the death mask, curious in itself being taken from a mutineer’s corpse, and no entry guiding to mutinies in the index. Similarly, no. 80, p. 217, “Gravestones in the Naval Cemetery at Gibraltar”, illustrates the magnificent gravestone of Captain Thomas Norman, RM, of the *Mars* but has no mention of it in the text. Page 221 states, “The naval cemetery at Gibraltar has been renamed the Trafalgar Cemetery as those who died of their wounds have been buried there”, but the only other named and identified grave there from Trafalgar is Lt William Forster, HMS *Colossus* – so only two burials to name the cemetery although it holds many other naval burials.

For many of the actual object entries a fuller note about them, some only have their one line caption, or even noting their whereabouts would have been useful for the keen Nelson aficionado. Some emotive objects such as Nelson’s Trafalgar uniform jacket, the bullet that mortally wounded him, the torn Union flag ripped by sailors at his funeral, don’t get a numbered object entry, only an illustration in the Foreword. The famous signal at least gets its own number (71) and illustration, showing it flown at the mastheads on *Victory* and also laid out.

A curious anomaly occurs on p. 286 under no. 98, ‘Naval Officer’s Gold Medal 1794-1815’. Amongst the additional illustrations is a Naval General Service medal (NGS) with clasp VICTORIOUS WITH RIVOLI, an action fought in the Adriatic in February 1812, with only 67 clasps issued in 1848. Surely a better and more relevant NGS with clasps for either of Nelson’s greatest victories, the Nile or Trafalgar (336 and 1611 clasps issued respectively) would have been more relevant and emotive in making the direct Nelson battle connections.

So much is concealed here that it really is a ‘Little Jack Horner’ book, plums there are aplenty but only serendipity will find many as the index is essentially a proper name index and includes few analytical or subject entries, e.g. amongst major omissions noted are, Marines (pp. 153-6), mutiny (pp. 256-9), piracy (pp. 268-71), prize money (pp.225-9). Lack of space is usually cried by publishers to explain a squeezed index but not so here, there are four blank pages after the index that could have been better used to provide a more detailed analytical index and key to make the book even more useful.

The last observations aside, this book is, however, a remarkable compilation of 100 Nelsonian objects (and subjects) that goes far beyond its numbered structure to present a vast amount of information and many splendid and useful additional illustrations. It is not a book to be read seriatim (although the reviewer did) but rather to be dipped into for enjoyment and enlightenment on so many things Nelsonian. It really is a must for the bookshelf of every Nelson Society member.

**Peter A. Clayton**

## THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR ON THE BBC

A recent edition of Melvyn Bragg's always excellent series 'In Our Time' on BBC Radio 4 discussed the Battle of Trafalgar. On the programme with Melvyn Bragg were James Davey, Lecturer in Naval and Maritime History at the University of Exeter, Marianne Czisnik, author of a number of distinguished works on Nelson and Kenneth Johnson, Research Professor of National Security at Air University, Alabama.

Following a setting of the political background by Professor Davey there was a comprehensive, albeit brief, description of the battle itself by all three experts. The discussion then moved on to discuss the impact of the battle in the context of the war as a whole and also the resultant fame that fell upon Nelson. Davey was of the view that the whole Nelson hype was generated as deliberate propaganda by the Government of the day in order to boost morale during a war that was otherwise not going very well. Dr Czisnik disagreed (as do I) and said that Nelson's fame arose much more from popular impetus due to their Hero's life of duty and sacrifice.

Apart from the odd minor slip (there were 13 French battle ships at the Nile, not 11) the detail of the programme is generally accurate; although the firm statement that Villeneuve committed suicide on his return to France after being paroled in 1806 ought to have been challenged (see Sugden's 'Nelson, The Sword of Albion', P837). For any Member with 45 minutes to spare I can recommend listening to a recording of this broadcast, available on the digital channel 'BBC Sounds'.

**Ray Aldis**

## THE GENTLEMEN DANES

Society Member John Nixon has written and published a book on a little known and unusual story of some 600 Danes and Norwegians detained in Reading in the period 1807-1814. However, rather than being imprisoned, a number were considered to be gentlemen and men of rank and were given the status of 'parole prisoners' who resided in local communities having undertaken not to escape.

Their story is told through the experiences and insights of a young naval lieutenant (later Admiral) Hans Birch Dahlerup and adds to our knowledge of the period.

The book, entitled *The Gentlemen Danes*, is well researched and illustrated, lavishly presented and will be reviewed in full in the next issue of *The Nelson Dispatch*. Anybody wishing to purchase a copy should contact John on [johnix1@gmail.com](mailto:johnix1@gmail.com)

## OBITUARIES

### ELIZABETH BAKER 1932 - 2021

We are sorry to report the death of member Elizabeth Baker. She had a life-long passion for naval history and had been a member of The Nelson Society since



1998. She was well-known in the Society and became very popular for her friendliness, quiet sense of good humour and down to earth, wise attitude to Nelson, and life in general. Elizabeth Ellen Hill was born in Exeter in 1932. After their house was destroyed during an air raid in WW2, the family moved to West Moors near



Bournemouth, and Dorset remained her home. When Elizabeth was 18, in 1950, she left home to join the WRENS. She first went to Portsmouth and then to HMS *Gannet* in Northern Ireland, where she trained as a Range Assessor. During her time in the WRENS, Elizabeth met her future husband, Victor James Baker. After her marriage, and with three children, Elizabeth trained as a teacher. She remained intellectually curious throughout her life. Her greatest passions were classical music and history. As well as teaching herself medieval French, she independently pursued learning Ancient Greek and Latin and was particularly proud to have read Harry Potter in Latin. She was extremely passionate about music, and sang in choirs for most of her life. She travelled widely throughout her life. She also greatly enjoyed her Christian faith.

Our sympathies go to James, Vicki and Anni and their families. **Sue Morris**



### MIKE KINGDON 1949-2021

We regret to record the passing of member Michael (Mike) Kingdon on 24 August 2021. Born in South London in 1949, he joined the Royal Navy aged 14 and served on HMS *Decoy*, *Ajax*, *Wakeful*, *Leopard* with tours in Europe, Far East and a world tour. Mike is sadly missed by his partner, Sally, his three children, Luke, Holly and Oliver, and his four grandchildren. A Service was held on 16 September at St Nicholas Church, Sandford Orcas where Mike and Sally enjoyed village life with many friends and neighbours. A

member of The Nelson Society for many years, he attended Society events with Sally and he will be missed for his good humour and wit.

**Jeanette Ryder**



### FRANK POND 1924-2021

Frank passed away peacefully on 17 October at St John's Care Home in Norwich. His wife Jean predeceased him earlier this year. Frank shared her enthusiasm for Nelson but his great passion was for the contemporary creative arts, and he was a keen painter,



composer and cellist. He will be sadly missed by his family and many friends in The Nelson Society.

## NELSON SOCIETY MERCHANDISE AND MEMORABILIA

### Gifts and merchandise

We have a great selection of special Nelson Society merchandise for sale including ties, scarves, umbrellas, lapel-pins, bow-ties and cuff-links. We also have limited numbers of The Nelson Society's own specialist publications including many out of print titles unavailable elsewhere. All these make wonderful gifts for the Nelson enthusiast. If you would like to buy, do take a look at our website Online Shop. Please contact Graham Capel (Treasurer) for all information and further details of prices and availability. And don't forget we have back numbers of *The Nelson Dispatch* going back up to 40 years and Binders if you wish to complete your collection.

### Memorabilia and books

From time to time the Society is fortunate to be given members' Nelson memorabilia, to be sold for the benefit of the Society. The sort of things we receive for example are pictures, prints, ceramics and other memorabilia, all Nelson or Navy related. Members have the opportunity to acquire some of these items, to benefit them and also the Society. These are usually offered on the Sales Table at Nelson Society events. If you would like to be sent a list periodically to see if there might be anything of interest, please let Sue Morris know. We also have a number of excellent donated Nelson and Navy related books, modestly priced or available for a donation. Let Sue Morris know if you would like to be on this mail listing.

**Thank you for supporting The Nelson Society! Your purchases and donations help us to achieve more of our aims and objectives.**

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE NELSON SOCIETY

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.

# CONTRIBUTIONS & ADVERTISING

## Contributors

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.

## Deadlines

Edition	Researched articles and full page adverts	Letters, notes, event notices and reports, small ads
Winter (publication 28 Feb)	30 December	15 January
Spring (publication 31 May)	31 March	15 April
Summer (publication 31 Aug)	30 June	15 July
Autumn (publication 30 Nov)	30 September	15 October

## Advertisers

### Black & White Advertising:

Price	For 1 insertion	For 4 identical consecutive insertions (each)
Full page A5	£145	£100
Half page A5	£85	£63
Quarter page A5	£48	£36
Eighth page A5	£28	£23

### Colour Advertising:

Price	For 1 insertion	For 4 identical consecutive insertions (each)
Full page A5	£175	£130
Double facing pages A5	£300	£900
Half page A5	£100	£75
Quarter page A5	£60	£45
Eighth page A5	£35	£30

Please contact the Executive Editor (Sue Morris) for further information.

Any additional pre-printing work by our printer will be notified to you before the advertisement can be placed together with a quotation for the price.

Advertising copy is best provided in electronic form either as a PDF or Word document depending on the content and reproduction quality required by the advertiser.

The Editor's decision regarding suitability of any material is final
--



**THE NELSON SOCIETY**