

THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

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With Spring now upon us, I am sure all of you have been seeing brighter weather and calmer seas ahead. For many of us, COVID's grip has definitely relaxed. In anticipation of the relaxation of restrictions, I am happy to report that your Club Council has been very active since you found the last *Kedge Anchor* in your letterbox.

Your Club Council has created an Events Committee. The committee has not only started planning to hold in-person events, but as of this writing, a few have already taken place. You will see the schedule of events in this issue.

In-person events began in February, when The Club's US Secretary, Harold 'Pete' Stark, organised a luncheon to commemorate the Battle of Cape St Vincent on Saturday 12 February. The luncheon brought together 17 members living within the greater Washington, DC area. Two additional attendees came as guests and left as two of The Club's newest members. One, Ms. Clare Sassin, is the President and CEO of the Tall Ship *Providence* Foundation, Alexandria, Virginia.

This was followed later in February when The Club's Secretary, Stephen Howarth, met with local members at the historic Crown Inn at Bishops Waltham, which is just north of Portsmouth (UK). It was an informal dinner. I am sure many in attendance wondered where the French Admiral Villeneuve sat for his meals during his 'imprisonment' at the inn after Trafalgar.

Representing the Club, Council member Genevieve St George and Club Secretary, Stephen Howarth, attended the dedication at the newly restored Nelson Room on 17 March. The reason for the invitation was that the Club provided a modest donation toward the restoration of the room. It was on Christmas Eve 1805, that this small inconspicuous room, located off the side of Greenwich's famous Painted Hall, held the body of Lord Nelson. His remains had arrived earlier that day to stay overnight in preparation for his grand lying-in-state, which was held in the Painted Hall. Plans are



underway to follow up with a special event to be held later this year for Club members, to tour the room in addition to visiting other attractions at Greenwich. [See *Events Diary*]

As mentioned previously in *The 1805 Dispatches*, the Club will hold an in-person AGM on Saturday 28 May. It will be held at The Army Navy Club (The RAG), London. I look forward to seeing many of you there, in person or via zoom.

At the AGM, it is my hope that the membership will walk away with a better understanding of the direction the Club is taking beyond its original mission. That of preserving and maintaining those memorials and monuments relating to Royal Navy personages and events over 200 years ago. It is not that the Club's *raison d'être* has been dropped, but that it is now a part of a greater programme that promotes the history of the Royal Navy, as well as the world's sailing navies during the Georgian era and their greater legacy into the modern seafaring age.

I think one unfortunate aspect of that legacy can be connected to the current age; it can be seen in the war that we are witnessing in Ukraine. As of this writing, the descendant of the Imperial Russian Navy's Black Sea Fleet is actively blockading Ukraine's coast and threatening the city of Odessa with amphibious assault. The port of Kherson that Catherine the Great established for

the purpose of building her Black Sea Fleet is in Russian hands. Catherine established Odessa as a result of conquering the immediate lands from the Ottoman Empire in 1792. The two great wars of the eighteenth century against the Ottomans resulted in pushing Russian rule down to the Danube River Delta. The Russian Navy played a major role in Russia's success.

The current posturing of the Russian Mediterranean Squadron during this war has its roots in the Imperial Russian Navy's operations under Catherine, succeeded by Tsar Nicholas. Those squadrons of the Imperial Russian Navy sortied from the Baltic Sea to operate in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea against the Ottomans. They experienced considerable success during these wars, which concluded in the international navies, including British and French ships, defeating the Ottomans in the Battle of Navarino in 1827. This battle contributed to ensuring Greek independence.

As someone who sailed the Mediterranean in a US Navy destroyer escort between 1971 and 1973, I can tell you that the presence of the Soviet Navy was a constant challenge. At the time, my ship's operations represented, in a small way, a legacy of the US Navy's presence in the Mediterranean, that began in the early nineteenth century, which continues to this very day.

In conclusion, as a naval historical organisation, The 1805 Club has an opportunity to show the general public the relevance of the Georgian era of sail to today's sea-going world through developing educational programmes, promoting commemorative events, conserving and restoring artefacts, and championing historical research.

I am so pleased that you have joined us in this voyage.

