

THE CHAIRMAN'S DISPATCH

The Immortal Memory

Frederick Hoffman was a new midshipman in October 1793 when he wrote the following lines after joining his first ship: ‘The wind was blowing strong, and we were more than an hour before we reached the frigate, which was lying at Spithead. My eyes during that time were fixed on twelve sail of the line ready for sea. As I had never seen a line of battleship, I was much struck with their noble and imposing appearance, and I imagined everybody who served on board them must feel pride in belonging to them.’

Twelve years later on 21 October 1805 he was a lieutenant standing on the quarterdeck of the *Tonnant* fourth ship in line astern of Collingwood in the *Royal Sovereign*. He certainly felt the ‘pride in belonging’ that morning, and after the battle wrote that the British cheers alone ‘must have shaken the nerve of the enemy’, adding that, ‘We were saved the trouble of taking in our studding sails, as our opponents had the civility to effect it by shot before we got into their line.’

Hoffman reminds us that Trafalgar was not just about Nelson, although as the durable icon for the Royal Navy’s success at sea it is gratifying to see that one year on from the bicentenary of the battle the plaudits for Nelson are as enthusiastic as ever. Yet it is also encouraging to see that the Immortal Memory is now being given more often than not in its earlier form: ‘The immortal memory of Nelson and those who fell with him’. This extended toast was given by Captain John Pasco (he had supervised the hoisting of Nelson’s ‘England expects...’) aboard HMS *Victory* on Trafalgar Day 1846. It recognises the sacrifice made by so many others at the battle and reflects the spirit of The Trafalgar Festival 2005 which was imbued by the ‘brotherhood of the sea’.

Today’s leaders are generally regarded as mediocre by comparison with their forbears and there are those who believe that our current heroes – if indeed we still have any? – are no longer of ‘a noble and imposing appearance’. This may or may not be the case. The world is a very different place from 1805, and yet the nation’s sinews still stiffen with pride when they quicken to the valour and deeds of its armed services. In this respect the inspiration of Nelson remains a potent and living force, which is why we honour him today. He was not only a superb tactician and dauntless fighter, but also a man who loved his fellow creatures, and strove for their betterment. If today there is a longing for heroes, it is brought into focus by his towering example - heroes who can lead us with the same humanity and vision. This yearning reveals the significance of the Immortal Memory since superior leadership is as applicable to the challenges we face from fundamentalism and climate change as it is to the battlefield.

On a different scale, the Club faces its own challenges. We need to find new and imaginative ways to raise substantial funds to carry out our conservation work, the raison d’être of the Club. (The next issue of *The Kedge Anchor* will carry a 4-page supplement on our recent project activity). We look this year to complete the first stage of our website redevelopment, including the first part of a new Memorials Log for the whole of the Georgian era. We seek to find a new President, following the death of Lily Lambert McCarthy, who served us so well. We wish to generate ‘living history’ from our conservation activities that will be particularly attractive to a younger audience. We wish to ensure that our members retain their sense of worth and affection for the Club and continue to enjoy the events that we arrange. We wish to promote the Immortal Memory.

All of these challenges are being met with enthusiasm and without diffidence. I am delighted to highlight our progress at raising funds to complete the Trafalgar Captains Memorial, notably the graves of Capel and Bayntun. With the close support of Chris Gray, SLt Kevin Williams RNR, one of our members local to Bath where Bayntun is buried, is pioneering an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Awards for All scheme; and the raffle at this year’s superb Trafalgar Night Dinner also raised more than £600 for Berry’s conservation.

Some of you will remember that in 1996 I approached the Royal Naval Museum and offered to organise a conference about the Battle of Cape St Vincent if they would give me their support. They did so, and were soon joined by the Society for Nautical Research, The Nelson Society and The 1805 Club. This led to the establishment of the Nelson Decade Conference Series which concluded in 2005 with a record of six ground-breaking naval historical conferences. The series accumulated sufficient money to pump-prime future events and I am delighted to tell you that by mutual agreement The 1805 Club with its partners has now established The Nelson Legacy Conference Series. These naval history conferences are inspired by Nelson, but they will not be about him. They nevertheless promote his Immortal Memory.

The Copenhagen conference raised sufficient additional funds to make a plaque dedicated to all the heroes of the first Battle of Copenhagen in 1801 and arrangements by The 1805 Club are now underway for an unveiling ceremony at Great Yarmouth on 31 March 2007. The plaque will be the first memorial in the United Kingdom to commemorate and honour those who took part.

These are examples of how The 1805 Club continues to honour Nelson’s immortal memory *and all those who fell with him*.

With good wishes to you all,

Peter Warwick

