

THE CHAIRMAN'S DISPATCH

“We must endeavour to follow his example...”

In 1943, during the evacuation of Crete, Admiral Cunningham famously remarked, “It takes three years to build a ship, 300 years to build a reputation – we’ll stay.” Reputation was the theme of my last Dispatch and it reaches out to this one. The Club exists to conserve the monuments and memorials of the Georgian sailing era and this allows us to delve into a substantial part of that 300-year period, even to its eve during the reign of Queen Anne, when within a few days of the October date of the Battle of Trafalgar, Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovell entered the history books. Returning home victorious from Gibraltar after skirmishes with the French Mediterranean forces his flagship, the *Association*, and three other ships struck rocks off the Scilly Isles on the foggy night of 22 October 1707 and sank like stones drowning over 2000 men. Only two washed ashore alive.

The tercentenary of this tragedy nearly passed by, but thanks to the enthusiasm of Justin Reay, one of our members and Cecil Isaacson Memorial lecturer for 2007, the Club teamed up with the Britannia Naval Research Association to arrange a moving wreath-laying ceremony beside Sir Cloudesley Shovell’s tomb in Westminster Abbey. Over 100 guests attended the ceremony, which was followed by a reception in the Commonwealth Rooms at the House of Commons. (See page 9)

The next day, 19 October, the Club was privileged to be invited to the Royal Navy’s wreath laying ceremony at St Paul’s led by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band. I had the honour of reciting Nelson’s titles, after Sir Isaac Heard at Nelson’s state funeral. The Club will now be an integral part of this ceremony, and next year members of the Club will be invited to it.

On Trafalgar Day following the Sea Sunday service at Portsmouth Cathedral, I joined the wreath-laying ceremony at the re-sited statue of Lord Nelson in Old Portsmouth. It was notable that there were more people watching than had ever been the case before 2005. Then, on 27 October it was to Newhouse for the Club’s annual Trafalgar Dinner and the Immortal Memory (see page 7). One of our three guests of honour, Commander Steve Pearson Royal Navy, Commander HMS *Ark Royal*, was unfortunately taken ill prior to the dinner and we were deprived of his Immortal Memory speech. One imagines that he may have begun with reference to his own ship!

Ark Royal is one of the most famous names in the Royal Navy. The first *Ark* was ordered by Sir Walter Raleigh at Deptford in 1586 and was sold to the crown the following year. She thus became *Ark Royal* rather than *Ark Raleigh*. ‘Her Majesty’s good ship the *Ark*’ was large and powerful by the standards of her day and The Lord Admiral, Howard of Effingham, chose her as his flagship from which to lead the entire Navy of England against the Spanish Armada in 1588. Today’s 20,000 ton *Ark* is the fifth ship to bear that name. Launched by Her Majesty The Queen Mother on 2 June 1981, she has since undergone many changes, including a major two-year refit from which she emerged as a commando assault carrier, and rejoined the fleet as the Royal Navy’s flagship in 2001.

In 2007 the Fleet is at a crossroads. It is a challenging time. The media would have us believe that the service has been reduced to nothing more than a coastal defence force. While there is ultimately a point where cuts may have a catastrophic impact, the Royal Navy is looking to a bright future. The first of the new Astute class attack submarines with their extended range Tomahawk land attack missiles, was launched in July. HMS *Daring*, the first of a new class of destroyers is undergoing sea trials that are to quote the First Sea Lord, ‘exceeding expectations’, and the Carrier Vessel Future programme is at last underway with the building of HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and HMS *Prince of Wales*, equipped with the Joint Strike Fighter. Again, in the words of The First Sea Lord, ‘effectively four acres of British Sovereign territory able to travel 500 miles in a day.’ Coupled with the amphibious and littoral capability provided by the assault ships HMS *Albion* and HMS *Bulwark*, the helicopter carrier HMS *Ocean* and the Bay class landing ships the Royal Navy will have the most capable mobile expeditionary strike force outside the US. The Royal Navy also continues to maintain the Nuclear Deterrent.

Naval ships, aircraft and submarines are deployed all over the world and are engaged in a wide range of operations: maritime security operations in the Mediterranean, Horn of Africa, Arabian Sea and South Atlantic, anti-narcotics work, fishery protection, humanitarian assistance, survey and patrol work, and ‘capacity building’ in the Gulf. Currently the main military focus is on ‘high power warfighting operations’ in Iraq and Afghanistan. Until recently it was the Royal Navy, including Royal Marines, which supplied over 50 per cent of the forces deployed in Southern Afghanistan. Unfortunately, few of the general public realise this.

Nevertheless, the Royal Navy has a constant battle to demonstrate its relevance to the general public and to their elected representatives. In a humble way the activity of the Club, which demonstrates its respect for the traditions formed over the last 300 years when it conserves the monuments to our Georgian naval heroes, helps to highlight the



enduring nature of the attributes and qualities that still infuse the Royal Navy with its remarkable ethos, and helps to explain why Nelson is, in Mahan's words, the very 'embodiment of the Sea Power of Great Britain'.

The ethos of the Royal Navy is defined as 'the enduring spirit derived from our people's loyalty to their ship, unit or team, sustained by high professional standards and strong leadership that gives us courage in adversity and the determination to fight and win.' This is a way of life where the focus is on the people rather than ships in which they serve. The ethos recognises the importance of everyone in the command chain regardless of their rank or length of service. Moreover, its roots are clearly found in the letter Francis Austen wrote to his sweetheart, Mary Gibson, on 27 October 1805:

'I never heard of his [Nelson's] equal, nor do I expect again to see such a man. To the soundest judgement he united prompt decision and speedy execution of his plans and he possessed in a superior degree the happy talent of making every class of persons pleased with their situation and eager to exert themselves in forwarding the public service.'

Collingwood said, 'We must endeavour to follow his example...' The Royal Navy faces challenges that are peculiar to this unpredictable 21st century and its asymmetric brand of conflict, but Nelson's legacy, and in the spirit of the restored toast to the Immortal Memory the spirit of all those who fell with him, demonstrates how good leadership sustains the ethos today.

Following his example includes keeping things effective. Since my last Dispatch, a considerable amount of work has been done to revitalise the Club's website. A refit was long overdue! We have employed Limeknight, a young and up and coming professional firm based at Portsmouth University, to help us redesign the architecture of the site so that it is more robust and capable of significant enlargement. This is particularly important as we begin to develop the educational side of the Club's work through 'living history'. The launch of the new site is set for 15 December and it carries a name that relates more clearly to the Club: <www.1805club.org>. Nevertheless, you will still be able to access it through our existing web address <www.admiralnelson.org>, but this will now stand alone as an information source about Nelson. One of the main features of the new site which we hope will be of real benefit to members, is the 'members only' area, which you will only be able to access through a password. Initially, this area will contain PDFs of past issues of *The Kedge Anchor* and articles from earlier editions of the *Trafalgar Chronicle*. However, we shall be adding to and updating the area on a regular basis and I am delighted that Josephine Birtwhistle is ready to take command of the new website in December. Moreover, members will be able to communicate with each other and engage in discussions with other members (see page 5)

Communications were a little more arduous in Nelson's day and as I write this Dispatch I am reminded that we are only a few days away from arguably the most prestigious event ever arranged by the Club: The celebration of the delivery of the news of the Battle of Trafalgar by post chaise to His Majesty King George III at Windsor Castle on 6 November 1805 at a reception in the Queen's Guard Chamber at Windsor Castle in the presence of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT. The evening acknowledges the important link between the Royal Navy and carriage driving. To be at Windsor is a tremendous privilege for The 1805 Club and I am delighted that many members will be there to enjoy it. As one can imagine the demand was considerable and I am equally sorry for those who were unable to get tickets. All will recognise that a unique occasion like this raises the status of the Club and reinforces its ability to fulfil its charitable objectives.

Looking forward to 2008 the Club is devising plans to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Lord Nelson's birthday. These will include a civic dinner at Kings Lynn, a Nelson Birthday Concert at Burnham Thorpe, and a Service of Thanksgiving at All Saints Church, Burnham Thorpe. The dates are 26-28 September. Two weeks earlier on Saturday, 13 September the Club is arranging an international conference entitled *The Collingwood Years: Naval Strategy against Napoleon 1806-1810* at HMS *Collingwood* followed by a dinner in the wardroom. Earlier in the year we are organising another conference entitled *Anson's Voyage round the World and its Medical Aftermath* at The Medical Society of London on Saturday, 7 June. Also with special thanks to its Director, Dr Colin White, the Club will be holding a fundraising dinner in the Nelson Gallery at the Royal Naval Museum for the conservation of Captain Henry Bayntun's grave in Bath. The Club's Trafalgar Dinner will be on Saturday, 18 October 2008. And there is much more (see p 15). It is going to be another busy year!

As ever my thanks to Randy and Dana Mafit, Paul and Penny Dalton and our 'contributing editor', Alison Henderson, for this splendid issue of the *Kedge Anchor* – no longer a newsletter; now a news magazine!

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

With best wishes,

Peter Warwick

