

## THE CHAIRMAN'S DISPATCH

### From the Baltic to Burnham Thorpe

For the first time I am writing my Dispatch while at sea! I am sailing in the Baltic to, among other cities, Tallinn and Copenhagen. We all know that Nelson was familiar with the Danish capital, but it is likely that fewer people are familiar with his visit to the beautiful Hanse city of Tallinn, which translated means 'Danish town'. In Nelson's day it was called Revel. In fact he was in these waters almost exactly 207 years ago to the day, before sailing for England aboard the brig *Kite*. Toompea Castle, or 'Cathedral Hill', which today has a Nelson Room in honour of his visit, is still the seat of government. Originally founded by the Teutonic Knights it now houses the Parliament of the Republic of Estonia.

Nelson's Baltic command - he was appointed Commander-in-Chief after the Battle of Copenhagen - had lasted for less than two months before he used ill health as a reason to return to England. He sailed for Great Yarmouth towards the end of July 1801. Nevertheless, in that time he had taken the main body of his victorious fleet to Revel to deter the Russians, who he always saw as the real enemy. Moreover, he demonstrated a confident understanding of the complicated political and diplomatic situation of this complex region. The Baltic was a critical source of naval supplies and the entrance to it had to be kept open to British merchantmen, hence the Battles of Copenhagen in 1801 and 1807, to break respectively the Armed Neutrality of the North and the Continental System.

On 18 June he wrote, "Lord Nelson cannot allow himself to leave the Fleet, without expressing to the Admirals, Captains, Officers and Men, how sensibly he has felt, and does feel, all their kindness to him, and also how nobly and honourably they have supported him in the hour of battle, and the readiness which they have shown to maintain the honour of their King and Country on many occasions which have offered; and had more opportunities presented themselves, Lord Nelson is firmly persuaded, they would have added more glory to their country."

With the success of the *Trafalgar Captains' Memorial* behind us the Club is now looking to do the same for these 'Admirals, Captains, Officers and Men' - the Copenhagen captains. We recognise that this will be a smaller number of officers than for Trafalgar and have therefore combined the project with the Nile captains. This will be more attractive to a publisher when we move to issue *The Nile and Copenhagen Captains: Their Lives and Memorials*, and potentially more attractive to those charitable trusts that are likely to fund the conservations.

As with the Trafalgar Captains we are keen to involve members of the Club in the project and we are calling for volunteers to visit the graves to carry out preliminary surveys, including photographs. I am pleased that, thanks largely to the painstaking research by Club Secretary, John Curtis, we have been able to identify virtually all of them. We shall publish their whereabouts in the Members' Area of the website and hope that we shall find another 'fine sett of fellows' to do this essential work. For the Trafalgar Captains, our then Chairman, Dr Colin White RNR, 'bargained for twenty' such volunteers. A similar number would be appropriate now. If you would like to help us please contact John, who will give you more details and the survey guidelines.

This year's busy events programme is well under way. The Members' Day approach to the AGM and Cecil Isaacson Memorial Lecture was liked by everyone and we shall certainly use this format in future. The Langar Lunch and the unique and memorable Henry Bayntun Dinner have been praised. The tomb rededication ceremony for Admiral John Richards Lapenotiere at Menheniot attracted nearly 70 people and local media coverage, and the *Anson Watershed* Conference at the London Medical Society was an outstanding success. You can read reports about these events in this issue of *The Kedge Anchor*. The Anson conference papers will published shortly in the Members' Area of the website.

Our next conference *The Collingwood Years: Naval Strategy against Napoléon 1806-1810* is being held on Saturday, 13 September and a notice and booking form is enclosed with this *Kedge Anchor*. We are extremely privileged to have use of the Maritime Warfare School at HMS Collingwood and the Commanding Officer, Commodore Steve Kirby, is also among those giving presentations. This is a considerable honour for the Club and reinforces our links with the Royal Navy. Dr Colin White RNR is the guest of honour at the dinner in the Wardroom afterwards.

The preparations for **NELSON 250** are also moving apace and the three-day event we have planned between 26-28 September has even more attractions for members, including a visit to Nelson's school, Paston College, at North Walsham, and a special exhibition about Nelson at Kings Lynn. Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope KCB OBE, Commander-in-Chief Fleet, is representing the Royal Navy and is guest of honour at the Civic Dinner in the wonderful historic Town Hall at Kings Lynn.

Admiral Stanhope is the official representative of the First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff and will also be at Burnham Thorpe for the Nelson Birthday Concert and the special Sunday Thanksgiving Service at All Saints' taken by the Dean of Norwich Cathedral. This is one of those unique occasions with the ultimate 'spirit of place' and I shall look forward to regaining my land legs to join you at Burnham Thorpe.

With all good wishes,

*Peter Warwick*

