

THE CHAIRMAN'S DISPATCH



Peter Warwick

“We gave them their Valentines in style”

Yesterday was Valentine's Day! On 14 February 217 years ago Horatio Nelson was present at the action which became the watershed of his career: the Battle of Cape St Vincent. A victory a gunner aboard Goliath remarked, “We gave them their Valentine's in style”.

When Spain entered the French Revolutionary War Britain was forced to abandon the Mediterranean. Nelson masterminded the evacuation from Elba and sailed to join Admiral Sir John Jervis's fleet at Lisbon. Britain was in need of a victory and the actions of Jervis and Nelson brought it about. The climactic story is well-known: With 15 ships Jervis formed a single line of battle and sailed for a gap between the ill-formed Spanish formations of 27 ships. He split the enemy into two unequal groups and attacked the main formation from the rear. However, the smaller Spanish formation disrupted the manoeuvre allowing the larger formation to attack the British rear.

Jervis signaled his rear division to block this move, and on seeing that the signal had been missed, Nelson acted without hesitation and dramatically – it was not sanctioned by the Fighting Instructions – wore his ship *Captain* (74) out of the line and sailed directly to support the British van, which by now had begun to catch up with the rearmost Spanish of the larger formation. Then, in an act of conspicuous heroism, involving cold-blooded hand-to-hand fighting, he led a boarding party, seized the *San Nicholas* (84) and from her decks captured the *San Josef* (112) as well. The fleet dubbed the feat, “Nelson's patent bridge for boarding First Rates.” His daring instantly captured the public imagination, became the watershed of his career and made him a national hero.

In the Peers Dining Room at the House of Lords on 14 February 2014, The 1805 Club celebrated a hero and

watershed of its own with the symbolic handover of the Club's North American Station from Randy Burdett Mafit to the dynamic and trusty Captain John Rodgaard USN Rtd. I say symbolic because while John took the helm from Randy last May, the dinner made it real. The packed dining room saluted the extraordinary service Randy, with his wife Dana, has given to the Club over the past 23 years and presented him with the Club's thanks ‘in style’.

The choice of 14 February for this celebration was auspicious for two other naval historical reasons: On this date in 1778 the first official salute by a foreign nation to the Stars and Stripes took place when the Continental Navy ship *Ranger*, Captain John Paul Jones, fired 13 guns and received nine in return from the French fleet anchored in Quiberon Bay, France.

On 14 February 1799 Captain James Cook was clubbed and stabbed to death by natives at Kealakekua Bay in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) during his third voyage of exploration to the Pacific. His remarkable voyages highlighted his superior seamanship and navigation and I am struck by how the names of the four ships that took part in these voyages describe Randy's contribution to The 1805 Club: *Endeavour*, *Resolution*, *Discovery* and *Adventure*. Endeavour because he has strived and done his utmost. Resolution because of his constancy of purpose, Discovery because through *The Kedge Anchor* his editorship has revealed so much about the Georgian sailing navy, and adventure because that is what it has been for all of us during the past 23 years.

Therefore, on this rare occasion and to honour Randy I should like to share my Dispatch with some of the messages sent by friends and Club colleagues who could not be at the House of Lords dinner.

From our co-founder and first Chairman, Michael Nash:

Sorry I am unable to be with you this evening Randy, I expect to be somewhere at sea when you ‘take your seat in the House of Lords’! Randy has been a mainstay of The 1805 Club from the very outset of this venture, way back in 1990. During my years as Chairman I always knew that I could rely on his full support and unwavering loyalty. The current health of our North American wing is almost entirely due to his efforts, and the beautifully produced series of ‘Keepsakes’ established a very high standard during those formative years. Today they are eagerly sought after by collectors. Randy went on to take the Newsletter to equally new heights and to create a worthy companion to the ‘Trafalgar Chronicle’.

I will be raising a glass to both Randy and Dana far from these shores and I wish them both a wonderful evening and a well-deserved retirement. I would like to add to the many sincere tributes I know he will be receiving tonight by giving him my personal thanks for his outstanding and unique contribution to the 1805 Club. God bless you both.

From our co-founder and Vice President, Tom Vincent:

I am very proud to have served in the Royal Naval Medical Branch, and it was in 1946, 68 years ago that I first went on board HMS Victory and have always retained my interest in all things to do with The Life and Times of Nelson. That interest led me to give talks on Admiral Lord Nelson to many young people including the Sea Cadet Corp. I joined The Nelson Society soon after its formation in 1982 and served on its Committee, and met my friends Keith, Ken and Mike. We immediately recognised that not only this country but other countries including North America were in danger of losing part of their history and heritage in the

many naval monuments and graves that were fast disappearing because of their neglect.

Four ordinary people came together to help save that heritage and are now recognised as founder members of this Club. However there was a fifth member, already known to us through his active interest in the Georgian Navy; his name is Randy Burdett Mafit. When invited to join The 1805 Club as its North American Secretary he immediately accepted and can perhaps be described as the founding North American member as well as founding editor of The Kedge Anchor. Dear Randy, I am very sorry I cannot be with you today, but I THANK YOU so much for all your hard work on behalf of us all. Finally may I say from one shipmate to another, this is truly an occasion to “Splice the mainbrace”.

From John McCarthy Jnr., son of Lily McCarthy, our first President:

If I may presume to speak for my late mother and the McCarthy Clan, thanks for your long service to The 1805 Club both as North American Secretary and Founder-Editor of The Kedge Anchor. I hope to have an opportunity to thank you in person one day at an 1805 Club event. You have been a pillar of the Club and The Kedge Anchor has always been a good read from start to finish. Please enjoy your break from the editorial pressures and my best wishes for the future.

From North American Vice President, Rear Admiral Joe Callo USN Rtd:

Randy Mafit has made a unique contribution to advance awareness of the relevance of Vice Admiral Viscount Nelson to our own lives and times, and in the process he has also advanced “The Special Relationship” between the United States and Great Britain. Randy was the first to assemble a roster of the North American branch of The 1805 Club and he established and edited The Kedge Anchor for many years. In addition Randy facilitated the administrative connection between the North American and United Kingdom members. Randy’s unselfish attitude and hard work has been a unique inspiration to his fellow members and he has our profound respect and deepest appreciation for what he has accomplished.

From our Spanish Vice President, Dr Agustín Guimerá Ravina:

Dear Randy, I have been a member of The 1805 Club since 1998 and in those years I have admired the development of The Kedge Anchor, your creation. It has always been full of interesting information and is a great means of communication for the Club. In particular it shows the Club’s internationalist values. As a Spanish vice president that is important to me. From 1996 Spaniards and British worked together in the commemoration of our common Naval History, during the Nelson Decade. This international “Band of Brothers” is still going on, with good results. You were one important pillar of this project I congratulate you and your wife Dana on your achievements.

Finally, from our President, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCB DL:

I am very sorry not to be present tonight in this very British setting to lead the tributes and give thanks to these great friends of the 1805 Club. Randy and Dana, you have been stars. Randy, your stewardship of our US dimension over all these years is of course notable but we also wish to commend you for your creation and development of The Kedge Anchor – one of the hallmarks of the Club. So on behalf of the Club may I say what a pleasure it is for us to appoint you Joint Life Presidents and award you Joint Life Membership.

Impressive indeed! Fortunately, for The 1805 Club, the North American Station is now in the impressively capable hands of John Rodgaard.

With kind regards and best wishes to you all,

Peter Warwick
Chairman