

THE CHAIRMAN'S DISPATCH

War and Peace

October and November are good months for both war and peace, at least in the context of British anniversaries and commemorations. Apart from the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October (1805), there is the Battle of El Alamein on 23 October (1942), and Agincourt and the Charge of The Light Brigade on 25th October (1415 and 1854 respectively). November is the most profound because it is dominated by the solemnity of Armistice Day (11 November), an occasion that has assumed increased importance in recent years because of conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan, which remind us of the ongoing role played by the country's armed services. Today, at any one time, over 7,000 sailors and marines are on operations around the world, working independently or with Britain's allies, to ensure the safety of the shipping lanes and the maritime infrastructure upon which we all rely.



I have reflected on the significance of remembrance before. It is regrettable that among part of the population there are still those who misunderstand the meaning of Remembrance Day. They oppose its spirit and reflective ceremonies because they wish to make a stand against war. However, taking part and wearing a red poppy does not show support for war. It demonstrates that we care about our veterans, respect those that have fallen and reaffirm the need to be vigilant to preserve the freedoms they fought for. Remembrance is not about whether we agree with why we went to war, nor is it about the wars of tomorrow.

It occurs to me that the period between 21 October and 11 November each year is a natural one for a wider sense of Remembrance since it allows us to relate the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars with the war in Afghanistan. In turn this resonates with Nelson's call for 'humanity after victory' and the traditional version of The Immortal Memory, which is not for Nelson alone but for 'all those who fell with him'. In other words, as Remembrance Day now embraces the latest conflicts so it seems reasonable to honour those who also served and fell for their country before the First World War. They too fought for our basic freedoms. Moreover, their service, stories and leadership – not least Horatio Nelson's – continue to inspire those serving in today's front line.

The red poppy became a symbol of Remembrance in 1921 because it grew on the graves of soldiers in France and Belgium. Interestingly, the phenomenon was first noticed during the Napoleonic Wars.

There is a particular characteristic about 2015 since with Waterloo 200 it marks the final chapter in the long run of bicentenaries of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars which started in 1994 with those for the Siege of Toulon and The Glorious First of June. Coincidentally,

they have run parallel with the first 25 years of The 1805 Club and included The Nelson Decade.

In terms of upcoming bicentenaries the Long Peace now stretches out before us, which means there are no longer the obvious hooks like Cape St Vincent, The Nile, Copenhagen, Trafalgar and Waterloo. Such is the nature of war and peace. The latter state is undeniably what everyone strives for but when it prevails it lacks the impact and newsworthiness of war. In reality peace is a chimera that is sustained only by the senseless horror of war that is deployed to achieve it. War and peace are not mutually exclusive. They are interrelated, and even when it is not actual warfare but the threat of warfare, the symbiosis is maintained. This conforms to Hobbes's definition of war as consisting "not in battle only or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known". The world as a whole has not been at peace since 1914, and is not at peace now. The profound changes to the structure of armed conflict that have occurred since the dissolution of the Soviet Union with the transformation of the world system of sovereign states and the subsequent rise of international terrorism and non-state organisations has veiled the distinction between war and peace even further.

Therefore, in addition to celebrating the achievement of the Long Peace post the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, which owed so much to British maritime supremacy and the Pax Britannica, a body like The 1805 Club will inevitably turn the clock back another 60 years in order to recall the anniversaries of The Seven Years War, which began in 1756, and then the anniversaries of The American War of Independence. These wars weave the historic thread that connects us to the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in exactly the same way as it runs through to the Armageddon of the 20th century and today's endemic conflicts.

With the Seven Years War we witness the beginning of the first Golden Age of the Royal Navy (the second being World War II) and the opportunity to commemorate the 260th anniversary of the Year of Victories – *Annus Mirabilis* – in 2019. In so doing we can highlight the important careers of Admiral Sir Edward Hawke and Admiral Edward Boscawen, two unsung heroes who laid the professional keel for the later successes of Nelson and his Band of Brothers and their protégés. Hawke in particular deserves far more recognition than he gets for the way he brought aggression back into the line of duty after the lassitude of Admirals Mathews, Lestock and Byng – who 'failed to do their utmost'. Hawke's performance at Quiberon Bay was a crucial turning point, one that amazingly coincides with both the laying down of VICTORY and the birth of Horatio Nelson. This means the Club can look forward to being as relevant and as busy as it was during the age of the bicentenaries and 2019 could be as significant an anniversary as 2005 and 2015 providing we make it so.

We have come a long way over the past 25 years – from an informal organisation, to a charity that is recognised as a member of the naval heritage family. In order to meet the challenges this brings now and in the future your Council

is reviewing the Club's key operational activities ranging from its conservation policy to its financial structures. Every part of our activity is linked and adjustments will be inevitable. For instance, issues that we are addressing include the increasing costs of our excellent publications, which if left alone will gobble up the Club's main source of income – membership fees; the burden of maintenance associated with past, current and future conservation projects; and the question of cash flow now that the worthwhile Topman Scheme is drawing to a close. There is also the question of succession planning! We shall report on all of these issues in more detail in anticipation of the AGM in May, which will be in Portsmouth.

Meanwhile, it is good to report that the Club is making itself felt in a number of areas, notably the restoration of the Georgian naval hospital in Mahon, Menorca, the Wirral, where Emma Hamilton now has a permanent memorial; involvement in the New Waterloo Dispatch in June; the deposit of specially commissioned photographs and research notes used in the acclaimed Nelson's Band of Brothers, an encyclopaedia of the officers who fought in command at Nelson's three great battles, edited by Peter Hore and including many contributions from members of The 1805 Club; the national Trafalgar wreath laying ceremonies in St Paul's Cathedral and Trafalgar Square, *The Kedge Anchor* and the latest *Trafalgar Chronicle* with its Waterloo theme; and a splendidly successful Trafalgar Dinner at HMS NELSON, Portsmouth.

After 25 years, we were very sorry to leave historic Newhouse, the wonderful home of George and June Jeffreys. Our marvellous hosts were understanding of the need for the change and have written a very kind letter to me wishing the Club and its Trafalgar Dinners well in our new home. I would like to record my warmest thanks to both of them for their exceptional support and I know you will want to echo that.

This year's Trafalgar Dinner at NELSON was attended by 106 members and guests. The atmosphere was fantastic! We return to the Wardroom next year on **Saturday, 22 October**. Make a note of the date in your diary now! The dinner will be run on Royal Navy lines, and the target is 140 members and guests!

Various events are in the pipeline and will be announced very shortly, including the new date during the first quarter of the 2016 for the Windsor Castle New Waterloo Dispatch Reception at the invitation of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

There are good times ahead! May I and the Council of the Club take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!



**With kind regards and best wishes to you all,
Peter Warwick, Chairman**