

CHAIRMAN'S DISPATCH, April 2018

## Rejoice, Reflection and Remembrance

This is my second attempt at this issue's Dispatch! The first was 'lost at sea' in the internet ether while I was sailing in the West Indies lecturing on The Golden Age of the Royal Navy during the long 18<sup>th</sup> century. It wasn't very good anyway! Now because of the short deadline to get my Dispatch to you, this one will be relatively short and less philosophical than usual.



We are approaching the Annual General Meeting on 12 May at The East India Club, St James's Square, London and you will have seen my Report to Council. I should like to highlight the significant difference the Libor Grant is having on the way the Club is arranging its professional activities, governance and administration, the thrill that this boost has given to all of our activities, and the positive shadow it is casting over the Club's reputation. It is probably too soon to draw conclusions but coincidentally our membership has begun to rise and we have passed 500 again – not seen since 2005! I suspect that this has also been helped by *The Trafalgar Chronicle* New Series 2 edited by Peter Hore, another *tour de force* from Peter that last year caught the attention of the US Marine Corps who ordered 500 copies!

One could sense this wonderful Libor boost at the dinner we arranged at the House of Lords on 26 January in honour of our Vice Chairman, Bill White, brilliantly organized by Stephen Howarth. Thank you, Stephen. It was an outstanding evening, and thanks are also given to Admiral of the Fleet The Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL for being our host and Principal Guest, our President, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCB for his presence and to mezzo soprano Friederike Krum for her impromptu rendition of God Save the Queen.

Approximately one month earlier on 11 December 2017 the Club, with Benedict Ryan at the helm, The1805 Club arranged an inaugural and innovative Conservation Symposium hosted by the National Museum of The Royal Navy at Portsmouth. As a charity and a pioneering member of the naval heritage family we are directly concerned and involved in conservation, restoration and preservation, notably of graves, yet are aware that the many and different organisations approach the field of conservation in varying ways, often influenced by the medium involved – stone, wood, paper, metal, textiles, paintings, interiors & etc., and also by other factors, not least fashion. Conservators rarely get the opportunity to gather to discuss the different interpretations and this symposium was welcomed by conservation practitioners as a ground-breaking opportunity for us all to 'compare notes' and cross boundaries. It attracted over 50 practitioners and was judged by them to be a stunning success. We are now organizing a second symposium with The Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich in November of this year.

Continuing with this upbeat report, we are delighted to welcome Kathy Brown to the newly-created post of Director of The Trafalgar Way. Her experience and creativity working with people, trails and public engagement projects, including for The Mayor of London, will stand her in good stead for this challenging but exciting role. She looks forward to meeting members, especially those close to the Way and you may be able to help with connections with communities along the route of the Way, including little things such as, does anyone have a sister-in-law who's a scout leader in say Bridport or a nephew who works in the tourism office in Launceston? They might like to be involved! Also, you may have connections to authors and youth-oriented celebrities who could act as judges for a story-writing competition. Think on it because no matter how obscure, it is these little things that added up will help her to enhance legacy of The Trafalgar Way and create memories for a new generation! She will be at the AGM on 12 May.

With so much to be joyful about it is an unhappy astral configuration that the Council and the Club has lost one of its most spirited, enthusiastic and charismatic members: Winston Leese. He was one of 'Nelson's' "fine sett of fellows" who created a range of attractive, exclusive and imaginative souvenirs and merchandise for the Club, but more significantly and probably his finest Club legacy, has established a regular celebration for Emma, Lady Hamilton's birthday on 26 April in the Parish of Neston, kick-started in 2016, with the marvelous weekend he organized marking the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birthday. This included the unveiling of Emma's permanent Anvil Memorial at Ness. In November this year a tree is being planted for Emma and we plan to dedicate it to Winston as well – linking them in a unique and very special way into the future.

Although he was not a Club member – he rarely joined anything! - January saw the equally untimely death of Dr. Alex Naylor, better known to those who can hark back to the Trafalgar Bicentenary as Admiral Lord Nelson! He was the perfect interpreter (never say actor!) and with the skill of royal tailor Keith Levett at Henry Poole Savile Row, wore perfect replicas of Nelson's full-dress and undress uniforms, including stars, Bolton Medals and period sword. Alex was a remarkable man, former Royal Marine, orator and a respected philosopher who lectured widely.



I have three vivid memories to add to the splendid anecdotes related to the large congregation at his Memorial Service in Portsmouth on 26 March. On 29 September 2004, Nelson's birthday, the ONCC launched The Trafalgar Festival, Trafalgar 200 and Sea Britain 2005. Alex, sorry Nelson, was to travel up river by RNLI lifeboat to Savoy Pier and the royal reception at Somerset House. The RNLI insisted that that he wear a large bright orange life jacket. For obvious reasons he declined, so they refused to carry him! Reluctantly and against all his principles he relented for the sake of the occasion and the following morning appeared on the front page of The Daily Telegraph! This inspired Littlejohn in The Daily Mail to write his famous Health and Safety sketch, 'So that's why Nelson said, "Kiss me Hardy"?' that went viral and is still acted out today.

On another occasion, at St James's Palace, 'Dr, Alex Naylor' was presented to HM The Queen. He remained 'Nelson'. The Queen grasped the situation immediately and they talked enthusiastically for at least five minutes. Nelson

had stolen the show with his perfect Nelson patois and references to George III who he had met in this very throne room! Almost reluctant to move on The Queen's parting line was, "But I thought you had a Norfolk accent!" She had found the only concession Alex had made to modern times! He felt that his own accent for a wider audience would be better understood. He was right of course.

Thirdly, at a Trafalgar reception at the Savile Club in London's Mayfair the guest of honour was Lord Nelson. I was outside waiting to welcome him. It was a cold, dark and very foggy night. Through the vaporous mist he loomed with his Chelengk-crested hat and full-length boat cloak. Two hundred years suddenly fell away. This was Nelson! The Nelson who had wandered the very same Mayfair streets in 1800 wrestling with one of the greatest dilemmas of his life – how to choose between Fanny and Emma.

We have lost two very different but very special personalities but their respective contributions to promoting the Georgian sailing era will live on and inspire us. Let us trust that they are both raised to a bliss ineffable and their own immortalities.

Before closing, may I express my thanks to our Kedge Anchor editor, Ken Flemming. He creates this impressive magazine in 'splendid isolation' and does a marvelous job. Please discuss articles and ideas with him. He will be delighted to hear from you.

With all good wishes, yours aye,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter".