

THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

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Chairman, The 1805 Club

Greetings fellow 1805 Club members,

The view from my desk here in Florida is a different one from the Northern Virginia view that I prefaced in the spring edition of the *Kedge Anchor*. I can see the two lime trees struggling to produce limes for our gin and tonics and not house finches building their nest. Also, across from my desk in our sitting room is a recent acquisition; a beautiful model of HMS *Surprise* (38). Glad to have her on my side.

The day is 17 September, and the 80th anniversary of the famous World War II airborne operation MARKET GARDEN. This was an airborne operation involving three airborne divisions dropped along a north/south corridor in the Netherlands; it turned out to be a '*Bridge too Far*'. You are probably wondering what does this have to do with The 1805 Club and the age of sail during the Georgian era?

The 'low countries' (Belgium and the Netherlands) have been very strategic to Britain throughout history and during the Georgian era this part of Europe was no less important in Britain's century-long struggle against France. I remember being told in one of my British history classes that whoever held the 'low countries' held a dagger straight at Britain's heart. Or as Napoleon bragged '...that his fleet based in the dockyards at Flushing and Antwerp was a pistol at the head of England'¹.

I thought of the two major naval battles that took place off the low countries during the Georgian era; The Battle of Dogger Bank in 1781 followed by the Battle of Camperdown 16 years later in 1797. Both Royal Navy victories stymied the threat of the dagger or pistol. The former was during the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, whilst the second was fought against the Dutch who were allies to the French Republic at that time.

Then, there were the two failed land campaigns that brought the British Army across; the Flanders Campaign of 1793-94 (The Duke of York had 10,000 men fame) and the medical disaster that was the Walcheren Island Expedition of 1809. The latter was the largest expeditionary force the British had sent up to that time across the North Sea. 'The military objectives were soon overshadowed by an epidemic of disease that largely destroyed the army'².

The importance of the 'low countries' persisted through the world wars of the twentieth-century, culminating with another Walcheren Island operation in November 1944 — Operation INFATUATE.³ The capture of the island was a costly success for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines; they answered the



signal to 'Engage the Enemy More Closely'.

Speaking of another island, we visited Nevis in August to attend the annual International Association of Caribbean Archaeology and to meet with the staff of the Nevis Historical and Cultural Society and members of the vestry of St. George and St. John's Anglican Church. I updated them on the status of the Parish Register's conservation, and I said it will be completed by the end of year. That includes the digitisation of the register with the production of two hardbound facsimiles by March. All agreed that a formal presentation of the register and the unveiling of the replica of Nelson's uniform and tricorne hat would occur during the weekend of 8/9 March 2025. The date coincides with Nelson's wedding day 11 March.

With regard to the uniform display case, I am pleased to report it arrived, and all 800 lbs of it is safely stored within its massive shipping case. Many thanks to those members who

made a donation to the purchase of the case.

Since the last *Kedge Anchor*, you will see that the Club added several names to its muster book. One is Robin Rowland of British Columbia, Canada. Robin is working on two writing projects that I am sure our members would be very interested in knowing more about. One involves two black Royal Navy sailors who were captured in 1819 by Brazilian slavers and sold into slavery at Bahia, Brazil. They were rescued by Robin's fourth great, grandfather and his nephew, who were British diplomats to Brazil.

Robin's second writing project is about a contemporary of HMS *Pickle* — HMS *Beagle*, and a 14 year old First Class Volunteer named Finlaison. As Robin wrote to me: 'In 1805, *Beagle* (not Darwin's *Beagle*) was one of Sir John Orde's scout ships and witnessed Villeneuve's fleet passing through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Atlantic. *Beagle* arrived at Cadiz after Orde had retreated and then shadowed the Spanish ships for a day before breaking off to warn Ferrol and then was one of the ships to arrive at Plymouth with the warning. From all my reading it looks like the role of *HMS Beagle* has been neglected in many of the histories. Robin may produce a book that will complement Captain Peter Hore's book, *HMS Pickle*.

Two other members who placed their X on our muster book are examples of the international nature of our membership. Paul Bowness, who is originally from Liverpool, lives in North Creake, Norfolk, England and his home is only two miles from Nelson's Burnham Thorpe. Paul has always had an interest in

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the Club's period of history and he is presently collecting the Club's *Trafalgar Chronicles*. By the time you have read my report, we have met up with Paul and other 1805ers at his tea room at Burnham Market — The Burnham Tea Room.

Without giving you all mental whiplash (going from British Columbia to Norfolk, England) is another member that placed his X on our muster. Brenton Schiffer is a former US Navy officer, living in Dallas, Texas. Brenton was a nuclear submariner. He served aboard the USS *Hampton*, SSN-767, making several west Pacific and under-ice patrols. He wrote: 'As for joining the club, I have always been a military history buff and I suppose my fascination with the Age of Sail started after I got out of the Navy. I was in London and met an officer in the Royal Navy while having drinks at the Naval In and Out Club in St. James. He learned that I was heading to Portsmouth the next day to see the HMS *Victory* and called ahead to make sure the Duty Officer knew that I was coming. The tour was impressive and covered some of the parts of the ship that the public does not normally get to see. I was hooked and have since joined the Army & Navy Club (The Rag) in St. James and the Nelson Society. I saw the 1805 Club mentioned in the latest "Nelson

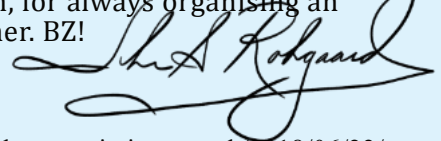
Dispatch", the quarterly Nelson Society publication, and here I am. I look forward to learning more!'

Forgive the whiplash again, but we welcome Izak Hough of Mossel Bay, South Africa. Izak owns The Model Shipyard. He joined The Club as a corporate member. If you look up the company, you will definitely see Izak's interest in our period of history.

Welcome aboard Robin, Paul, Brenton, and Izak. You all definitely place 'international' into the appeal The 1805 Club has for those interested in the age of sail during the Georgian era.

Well, by the time you probably receive this, The 1805 Club's annual Trafalgar Night Dinner may have come and gone. It is my great pleasure to see many of you there. Many thanks go to the Club's Secretary, Stephen Howarth, for always organising an outstanding dinner. BZ!

Yours aye,



¹ <https://www.waterlooassociation.org.uk/2018/06/22/walcheren-expedition/>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1127097/>

³ <https://www.combinedops.com/Walcheren.htm>

REQUIEM — By Robert Louis Stevenson

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

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SECRETARY'S REPORT (CONTINUATION)

and is close to its exciting completion ceremony in March 2025. After the successful conservation of the George Forbes ledger stone in Aberdeenshire, this project will be completed in 2025 with an information board and a plaque recording the now illegible inscription on the memorial of the Sailing Master of HMS *Swiftsure* at Trafalgar.

We are considering the installation of a new memorial to a young Royal Marine in the graveyard of the church of St Tudy, Cornwall. Richard Masters (21) died at Trafalgar in HMS *Thunderer* and has no grave but the sea. If progressed, this will be in partnership with the local historical society.

In 2025-26 we plan to inaugurate a new rolling programme of plaques transcribing monumental inscriptions, aiming at two per annum, to provide lasting legible versions of worn and illegible words.

Education

In association with the Admiral Lord Nelson School, Portsmouth, UK, we provide an annual trophy for personal endeavour in overcoming adversity. In association with the US Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland, we sponsor two panels of speakers at the biennial McMullen Symposium.

Events

Our two major regular events – our AGM and our UK Trafalgar Night Dinner – were well attended, with marvellous speakers: Paddy Bridges, CEO of Royal Museums Greenwich, at the AGM; and Penny

Mordaunt MP at the TND. Other British and US events alike have been numerous and fun in the past 12 months, and included a museum visit in Lewes, Delaware, and another Newport News, Virginia; two US TNDs; the annual wreath-laying at Nelson's tomb, St Paul's Cathedral; four performances by shanty band The Salts; a public talk about the Trafalgar Way; commemorations of the battle of Cape St Vincent, the Glorious First of June, the battle of the Nile, and Midshipman Dale; and a private visit to Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire. The Club's social aspects are an important part of being a member, and we encourage members to create their own. British legal restraints mean we cannot publish all members' contact details, but we have a universal database and we ask any member who would like to set up a regional social network to contact our chairman.

Publications

Our twice-yearly hard-copy and electronic colour magazine *The Kedge Anchor* (for members only) and our electronic bi-monthly newsletter *The 1805 Dispatches* (open for all visitors to our website) flourish under their editor Peter Turner. Our annual scholarly journal *The Trafalgar Chronicle* (free to members and on sale worldwide via Seaforth Publishing), edited by Captain John Rodgaard USN (Ret) and Dr Judith Pearson, is a significant benefit to the international naval historical community. Our websites www.thetrafalgarway.org and www.1805club.org continue to attract and inform many new visitors.