



## **Parish Register containing Marriage Record of Lord Nelson travels to the UK for urgent conservation work**

The parish register containing the entry recording the marriage of Admiral Lord Nelson has been brought to the UK from its home in the Caribbean for urgent conservation work.

The 190-page register is held in the parish church of St John Figtree on the island of Nevis, where the then Captain Horatio Nelson married Mrs Fanny Nisbet, the widow of an island physician, who later became Viscountess Nelson. The marriage took place in the parish on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1787 at Montpelier House, the residence of the President of the island.

At that time, Captain Nelson was commanding the British warship, HMS *Boreas*, protecting British interests in the north east Caribbean and especially enforcing the Navigation Act recently passed by the Parliament in the UK.

Early in 2016, The 1805 Club, a UK-based charity, which conserves and maintains monuments, graves and artefacts of the sailing Royal Navy of the Georgian era, was made aware that due to long exposure to the humidity and high temperatures in the Caribbean, the condition of the register had deteriorated badly and was in urgent need of conservation.

The church in Nevis is within the Diocese of the North East Caribbean and Aruba, and permission having been granted by the diocesan Bishop and his Chancellor, the Club announced it would bring the register to the United Kingdom for conservation.

The work is being carried out by the world-renowned Borthwick Institute, part of the University of York and the repository for the archives of the Archbishopric of York. This Institute has long experience in conserving church documents, including church records up to 800 years old.

Bill White, Vice-Chairman of The 1805 Club, said: "We are very grateful to the Bishop of the North East Caribbean and Aruba for giving us permission for this vital work to be carried out. The parish register is very much part of the Royal Navy story and gives a unique insight into the social history of one of its most illustrious figures."

Chris Webb, Keeper of Archives at the Borthwick Institute, said: "It's a great privilege to be part of this exciting and important work, which will conserve for everyone, now and in the future, not only a part of the Royal Navy's history, but also a key record in the history of the island of Nevis."

It is expected that it will take the Institute at least 18 months to complete the conservation work on the parish register.

This is one of six major commemorative and educational projects relating to the Georgian sailing Royal Navy and Admiral Lord Nelson on which the Club is currently working. Progress on these projects has been made possible through a grant totalling £455,000 made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 2017 out of the fund derived from the LIBOR fines of over £100 million. This fund was set up by the Chancellor to support Armed Forces charities, and other related good causes.

The other projects are:

- 1) The provision of a series of naval lectures for Royal Navy personnel delivered by university academics.
- 2) The acquisition and hosting of two Royal Naval historical databases that contain the biographical histories of officers who served in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars and the other giving similar details of officers and men who served in the British ships at the Battle of Trafalgar. A third database to be hosted by the Club comprises data on memorials, tombs and artefacts relating to the Georgian sailing navy.
- 3) Development of the Trafalgar Way, the route which was established in 2005 by way of an earlier 1805 Club project, The New Trafalgar Despatch. This marked the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar by commemorating the voyage by HMS *Pickle* from Cape Trafalgar to Falmouth, and then by post chaise from Falmouth to the Admiralty in London to bring the first dispatches from the Battle including the news of Nelson's death.
- 4) Restoration of the Anglican chapel at the world's oldest Royal Naval Hospital located at the Isla de Rey, an island in the centre of Mahon harbour, Menorca.
- 5) Provision of one day Wooden World school workshops, for Key Stage 2 and 3 students, which are about the sailing navy of the Georgian era.

**For further information about the Parish Register conservation project, please contact:**

Bill White, Vice-Chairman, The 1805 Club, email: [chiswhite@aol.com](mailto:chiswhite@aol.com)

Captain John Wills RN, Project Manager, email: [willsjohn53@gmail.com](mailto:willsjohn53@gmail.com)

Peter Warwick, Chairman, The 1805 Club, email: [peterwarwick@compuserve.com](mailto:peterwarwick@compuserve.com)

Chris Webb, Keeper of Archives, the Borthwick Institute for Archives, email: [chris.webb@york.ac.uk](mailto:chris.webb@york.ac.uk)

Alison Fairburn, Senior Conservator, the Borthwick Institute for Archives, email: [alison.fairburn@york.ac.uk](mailto:alison.fairburn@york.ac.uk)

Issued on behalf of the 1805 Club by Alison Reijman, Hon. Press Officer and Council Member, The 1805 Club, email: [alionscolumn@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:alionscolumn@yahoo.co.uk).

**Notes for Editors:** The conservation of the parish register containing the marriage record of Vice Admiral Lord Nelson held in the island of Nevis is a project of The 1805 Club funded by way of a grant from LIBOR funds made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom.

### **About The 1805 Club**

The 1805 Club is a charity founded in 1990 to care for the memorials of the Georgian sailing navy, which are a vital yet often neglected part of Britain's naval heritage. The Club is the only organisation dedicated to their preservation.

The Club's three objectives are:

- 1) The conservation of monuments, memorials and artefacts relating to seafaring people of the Georgian era, particularly Admiral Lord Nelson.
- 2) Promote and publish research into the Royal Navy of the Georgian period
- 3) Organise cultural and historical events for the Club's membership and the public

For more information about the Club, visit its website: <http://www.1805club.org>

### **About the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York**

The Borthwick Institute was founded in 1953 to conserve, and make publicly available, the archive of the archbishops of York dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.

We conserve and make available more than a 1000 parish registers from more than 200 parishes, the records dating from their inception in 1538 to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For more information about the Borthwick, visit the website:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/>

### **About LIBOR**

The LIBOR fund is administered by HM Treasury using proceeds from LIBOR funds (banking fines) to support Armed Forces and emergency services charities and other related good causes.

### **Facts about the marriage of Nelson to Mrs Fanny Nisbet and Royal connections to the Parish Register**

- In 1784, Captain Horatio Nelson was appointed to the command of HMS *Boreas*, a 28-gun frigate with orders to go to the Caribbean to join a naval force under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Richard Hughes. His orders were to enforce the Navigation Act recently passed into law by Parliament. This prohibited trade with

British Colonies with any merchant ships sailing under flags other than that of the United Kingdom. In practice, this was directed primarily at American merchant shipping.

- In vigorously pursuing the policy of the Navigation Act, Nelson became deeply unpopular with the colonists, his social connections ashore being substantially curtailed as a result.
- During this period, Nelson developed a strong professional friendship with Prince William, later the Duke of Clarence who later succeeded George IV to the throne as William IV. Prince William was serving on board Sir Richard Hughes' flagship.
- Despite the colonists' resistance, Presidents of the islands of the northern Leeward Island group, including Nevis, St Kitts, Montserrat, St Christopher and the Virgin Islands, generally supported Nelson's naval activities.
- Nelson was invited to social events at Montpelier House in Nevis, the residence of Mr Herbert, the island's President.
- Under Mr Herbert's protection was his niece Mrs Frances (Fanny) Nisbet and her three-year-old son, Josiah. Both her parents had died, as had her husband, Dr Josiah Nisbet, a physician.
- The relationship between Nelson and Fanny developed and they were married at Montpelier House in the parish of St John Figtree in Nevis on 11 March 1787. Fanny was given away by Prince William. The marriage was recorded in the parish register.
- The Parish Register contains a note, highlighting the Nelson entry, signed by the Duke of Edinburgh, understood to be HRH Prince Alfred, the second son of Queen Victoria. This is likely to have been made when he was in command of HMS *Galatea* in 1867.