



**The 1805 Club rededicates tombs at Kensal Green Cemetery of two Georgian Naval officers who served under the command of Admiral Lord Nelson at two of his most important battles**

The newly conserved tombs of two illustrious Royal Naval officers, Admirals Sir Thomas Capel and Sir Robert Otway will be rededicated by The 1805 Club at Kensal Green Cemetery in north London on Saturday July 10.

The 1805 Club, under its new President, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCB, the former First Sea Lord, is the only charitable body in existence which conserves monuments and memorials to Nelson and other Georgian Naval seafarers. The Club will hold special ceremonies to mark the completion of work on the tombs of Sir Thomas Capel and Sir Robert Otway, which will be attended by Club members and guests including the Mayor and Mayoress of Kensington. Conducting the ceremonies will be The Club's Chaplain, the Rev Peter Wadsworth.

Conservation work on the tomb of Sir Thomas Capel has been undertaken as part of The 1805 Club's Trafalgar Captains Project which was its major contribution during the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar in 2005.

For this project, all the tombs of the captains who served with Nelson at the Battle were researched, then photographed and recorded in a book *The Trafalgar Captains*, which was published that year.

Capel was the commanding officer of the frigate, HMS *Phoebe* at the Battle of Trafalgar and had previously served under Nelson on board HMS *Vanguard* at the Battle of the Nile.

Part of the project also entailed identifying those tombs which required additional conservation work and Capel's was one of seven which were most at risk.

Sir Robert Otway, who was present at the Battle of the Glorious First of June in 1794, was captain of HMS *London* at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801 in which Lord Nelson also commanded part of the British fleet.

Peter Warwick, Chairman of The 1805 Club, said of rededication: "The reason the Club was founded 20 years ago was so these brave men from our maritime history are remembered for their service to the defence of the country, a tradition of service stretching back 200 years which still inspires the 'fighting spirit' of today's Royal Navy.

"Britain's naval past is one of the most fascinating and absorbing strands of our history. It has shaped our culture and national identity and by conserving the graves of our forbears we not only honour them, but also remind ourselves of the continuing importance of the Royal Navy, and the sea generally, to our economy and freedom – a fact that seems to be too easily overlooked these days."

More than 20 Naval officers are interred in Kensal Green Cemetery, among them Sir William Beatty, Nelson's surgeon at the Battle of Trafalgar for whom The 1805 Club erected a memorial plaque several years ago.

Others include Sir George Cockburn who in 1815 transported Napoleon from Torbay to his exile in St Helena on board HMS *Northumberland* and was responsible for burning down the White House during the 1812 war with the United States.

The ceremonies taking place on Saturday July 10 at 2pm by kind permission of the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery will be followed by a members' buffet reception and tours of the cemetery.

For more information about The 1805 Club, please visit the website, [www.1805Club.org](http://www.1805Club.org).

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### **About Sir Thomas Capel:**

The youngest son of William, fourth Earl of Essex, Capel was born on August 25 1776 in Hanover Square, London. He officially joined the Royal Navy in 1792 and became one of the Navy's star frigate captains. In 1803, he was appointed to the frigate HMS *Phoebe* and served with Nelson throughout the Mediterranean campaigns, becoming one of the Admiral's favourite young captains. When Nelson left the Mediterranean in May 1805, he put Capel in command of a small squadron of five frigates and two bomb vessels with orders to cover Sardinia, Sicily and the approaches to Egypt. During the Battle of Trafalgar, HMS *Phoebe's* task was to repeat signals and stand by to help when she could, but she took no part in the fighting.

After the Battle, Capel commanded a small squadron of ships blockading US frigates during the War of 1812, then commanded one of the Royal yachts before hoisting his flag as commander in chief of the East India station from 1834 to 1837. He was made a KCB in 1832 and GCB in 1852. He died in London on March 4 1853.

*Source: The Trafalgar Captains by Colin White and The 1805 Club*

### **Sir Robert Otway:**

Otway was born at Castle Otway, Tipperary on April 26 1770. Despite his father's objections, he joined the Royal Navy in 1784 and experienced life on board many ships, including frigates, in the Mediterranean, the West Indies and along the West African coast.

During the French Revolutionary Wars, he served in the Channel Fleet on board HMS *Impregnable* commanded by Rear Admiral Benjamin Caldwell, who was later an important influence in his life. Within a year of joining this ship, he saw his first action in 1794 in the Glorious First of June, a massive fleet engagement off the French coast during the Glorious First of June which is also known as the Third Battle of Ushant. During the engagement and despite heavy French fire, he went aloft to repair one of *Impregnable's* sail allowing the ship to engage the enemy more closely. Caldwell thanked Otway publicly afterwards and made him first lieutenant on his new flagship HMS *Majestic*.

Otway was then promoted to commander of the brig HMS *Thorn* and other frigates in the West Indies where he reputedly captured or destroyed more than 200 French and Spanish vessels.

In 1800, Otway came back to Europe and was made flag captain in HMS *Royal George* then HMS *London*. He was on board *London* when he was part of the fleet led by Sir Hyde Parker which sailed to the Baltic Sea to engage the League of Armed Neutrality which threatened Britain's trade routes to the region.

This culminated in the Battle of Copenhagen where it was Otway's idea that Nelson serving in a different part of the fleet should lead an inshore squadron through the Sound. This led to the famous incident when Hyde Parker sent the signal for Nelson to withdraw. This resulted in Nelson putting a telescope to his blind eye saying "I really do not see the signal". Otway helped to mediate with Nelson on board his ship HMS *Elephant* and victory was claimed by the British fleet.

After a bout of ill-health, Otway served on various ships during the Napoleonic Wars and later in 1826, after being knighted into the Order of the Bath, he was sent as the commander-in-chief to the South American station. He supported Brazil during the Brazilian War of Independence for which he was awarded the Order of the Southern Cross.

In 1829, he returned to Britain and became a courtier in his retirement. He was also promoted to a full admiral and made Baronet of Brighton for his services. He died suddenly in 1846 and was survived by his wife and eight of his 12 children.