

## CONSERVATION MATTERS



## CONSERVING MEMORIALS TO GEORGIAN NAVAL HEROES

Thither shall youthful heroes climb,  
The Nelsons of an aftertime,  
And round that sacred altar swear  
Such glory and such graves to share.

John Wilson Croker from *Songs of Trafalgar*

Given the success of the recent Trafalgar bicentenary and the Club's excellent publications and thriving events programme, it is possible to overlook The 1805 Club's *raison d'être*: conservation.

The 1805 Club is dedicated to preserving the historic environment of the Georgian sailing navy, as represented by its monuments, graves and memorials. We value it, nurture it and seek to pass it on to generations to come.

It is worth reminding ourselves that no other organisation exists specifically to conserve these monuments and memorials. Yet they are the very stuff of a significant part of our rich maritime history - passports to the past and the means of exploring it. The memorials are about real people. They are the touching reminder of their bravery, adventures and achievements which helped to both shape the world and form our understanding of it.

It is our ambition through conservation to highlight what our Georgian sailing ancestors achieved across a multitude of oceans and latitudes in terms of seamanship, exploration and war. In particular our work highlights 'Nelson's Navy'.

The force of nature is a constant challenge as stones crack and mosses creep, as roots pry into fissures and acid rain dissolves. The conservation work of the Club seeks to slow down this poignant and ironically beautiful process of decay. Our mission is to identify and conserve these graves and monuments so that we can all enjoy, and more importantly learn from, the wonderful tales associated with those memorialised as we seek to bring them 'alive' through original research and with imaginative and exciting club events – the other often more visible charitable objectives of the Club!

*Above:* Monument to Cuthbert, Lord Collingwood (1748-1810) situated on the north headland of the mouth of the River Tyne.

*Right:* Marble Plaque to Capt Edward Rotherham (1753-1830) at St Mary Magdalene Church, Bildeston, Suffolk.

Photos: Matthew Prince



### Conservation versus restoration

There are a multitude of threats to outdoor monuments and memorials. Neglect is the most common, but pollution, bird droppings, salt contamination, leaf staining, acid rain, rusting ironwork, tree and shrub intrusion, subsidence, vandalism and accidental damage can all take their toll.

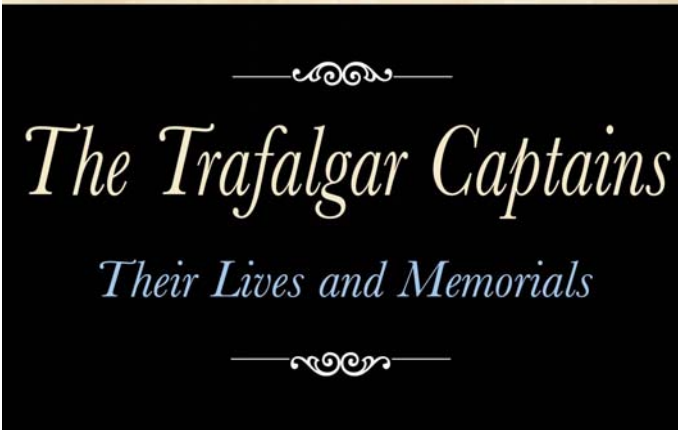
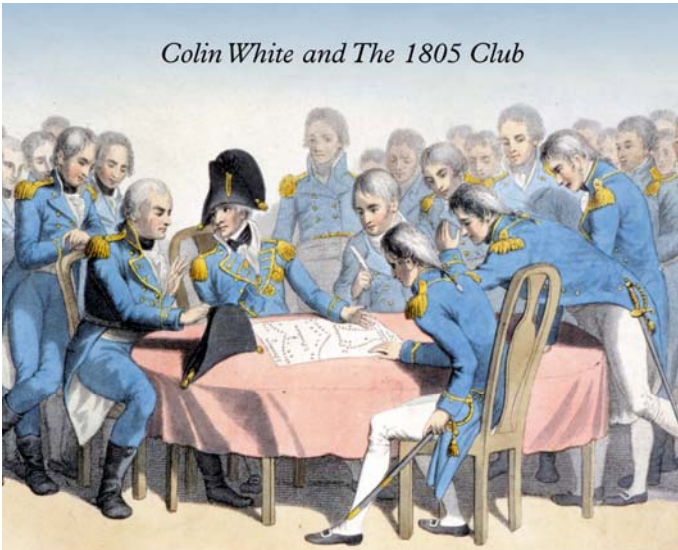
The action required depends on the nature and extent of the threat and the philosophy inspiring the nature of repairs. Conservation is a professional approach far removed from well-meaning interference, such as indiscriminate cleaning, which may do more harm than good. It aims to safeguard the long term future of the memorial at its original site with the minimum possible intervention. It does not replace parts of the structure that have gone missing, such as railings. This is The 1805 Club's philosophy, which it has described and delineated in its Conservation Guidelines (see page 4). The historical roots of the philosophy go back to William Morris, the founder the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877. He favoured sensitive repair rather than destructive restoration.

Restoration aims to return a memorial to a previous state in its history. This is a much more invasive approach and one that can sometimes have destructive rather than constructive results. Preservation is another form of action. It is an even more interventionist approach and can involve maintaining the surrounding environment in an unchanged state in order to preserve the memorial.

There is an ongoing discussion about the margin between conservation and restoration and in this respect each project is assessed according to its particular circumstances. If in doubt the Club will leave well alone.

## The Trafalgar Captains' Memorial

In 2003 the Club launched the Trafalgar Captains' Memorial. The project has located, recorded and where necessary conserved the graves of those who commanded or flew their flags in British ships at Trafalgar on 21 October 1805.



This conservation project was a new departure for The 1805 Club in that never before had so many graves and monuments been tackled at once. In November 2002 the Club established a Project Group which aimed to research and record the graves and monuments of all the Admirals and commanding officers in Nelson's fleet at Trafalgar, publish the results, and



where necessary, conserve the memorials. It was recognised that no other conservation work could be undertaken while this project was proceeding.

Members of the Club were enlisted to help find and record the graves. Photographs of each location were then taken by Matthew Prince and Chatham Publishing agreed to publish *The Trafalgar Captains: Their Lives and Memorials* (ISBN 86176 247X) in August 2005. The book, which contains brief biographies of each captain was written exclusively by members of the Club and was edited by Dr Colin White. Professional surveys of the monuments revealed that only seven of the 37 graves required conservation work, and these are listed as follows:

Capt Henry William Bayntun - Weston (Bath)  
 Capt Edward Berry - Walcot (Bath)  
 Capt Charles Bullen - South Stoneham (Hampshire)  
 Capt Thomas Bladen Capel - Kensal Green Cemetery  
 Capt Thomas Dundas - Hurst, near Reading (Berkshire)  
 Capt Richard Grindall - Wickham (Hampshire)  
 Lt John Richards Lapenotiere - Menheniot (Cornwall)

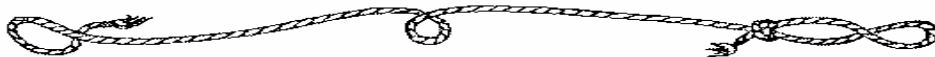
### Roll of thanks

The Chairman and Council of The 1805 Club would like to express warm thanks and appreciation to all those involved in the project. The Project Group was fortunate in that many people quickly agreed to help, especially following an appeal to Club members in June 2003. Their names are recorded in *The Trafalgar Captains: their Lives and Memorials*, but in addition the following people merit special mention: Dr Colin White, who conceived the idea and edited the book; John Curtis who acted as archivist and secretary to the group throughout; Graham Simpson, who acted as the Club's surveyor; John Kerr, the architect instructed by the Club to specify and supervise the conservation work; Matthew Prince, for a remarkable set of photographs of each location; Matthew Beesley and staff of Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey, who were employed as contractor, and the funding bodies who kindly gave grants and made the conservations possible: The Manifold Trust, The Francis Coales Charitable Foundation, The Leche Trust, and The Idlewild Trust.

*Above: The Trafalgar Captains—Their Lives and Memorials* published in 2005.

*Below: Conservation of the Grindall family grave containing the remains of Admiral Sir Richard Grindall (1750-1820) was carried out at St Nicholas Church, Wickham, Hampshire, in September 2006. After cleaning and extensive work above and below ground, the headstones and plinth were treated to inhibit spalling and the surrounding vegetation removed.*

Photos: left: Paul Dalton; right: Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey Ltd



## The conservation process

### What we do

Every project has five main stages: identifying and researching the sites of the memorials, surveying and costing, fundraising, supervising the conservation, and recording the whole exercise. In some cases there is a service of rededication.

Research is the essential pre-condition of every project. It can be a lengthy and time-consuming process, especially when correspondence has to be conducted at long distance, and it is not possible to visit local archives in person. The examples of Captain John Stockham and Captain Robert Young illustrate the intricacies and anomalies. The Club knew quite early on the dates of death and that they had both died in Exeter, but the location of their graves was uncertain. Finding them was made more difficult because extensive bombing during WW2 had destroyed many churches as well as Exeter city centre. However, for John Stockham, the burial register was located in the Devon Record Office. At this point an internet search revealed the existence of the Devon Family History Society who for a small fee found that Stockham had been buried at St Sidwell's Church, and the Record Office supplied a copy of the entry in the burial register. The church was one of those bombed, and is now a drop-in centre, so it seemed unlikely that the grave would be visible.

For Robert Young, the search was more difficult. For a long time, it was suspected that he lay in St Sidwell's as well, but then John Draisey of the Devon Records Office found his entry in the burial register of St James Church. This church was destroyed in 1942, and the site is now part of Exeter City football ground. The trail again went cold until John Draisey once more discovered the answer. Just before Young died, a burial ground for St James Church was established in an area adjoining that of St Sidwell's, so it must have been there, quite close to Stockham, that Young was buried. Unfortunately, this churchyard was later cleared to make way for a car park and other buildings.

As a postscript, when Matthew Prince went to Exeter to photograph the general area of St Sidwell's, he discovered by chance a badly decayed gravestone which he believed to be that of John Stockham. This was confirmed later.

In some cases there is quite a story. For Sir Edward Codrington, monuments were located at St Paul's Cathedral, his family seat at Dodington (now owned by John Dyson of Dyson Vacuum Cleaners) and in Pylos, Greece, as well as originally at St Peter's Church, Eaton Square, London where he had been buried. However in 1953 the church crypt was cleared to enable its use as a parish hall, and all the remains found there, including Codrington's, were removed to Brookwood Cemetery by night, and re-interred there. Unfortunately no record of this is now visible. There was a memorial tablet in St Peter's Church until it was destroyed by a disastrous fire in 1987, and no proper record of the inscription exists.

Once local ground surveys have shown that conservation is required, the Club ascertains who has responsibility for the given memorial, which is typically in a churchyard or on church property, but which may be in a public thoroughfare or on private property. In the case of a churchyard faculties are usually required before any work can be undertaken. The Club also sources a programme and cost estimate for the works from a qualified expert, who is briefed with the Club's Conservation Guidelines.

Once the quotation has been agreed, fundraising can begin. The Club's Fundraising Officer, Chris Gray, is experienced at knowing which potential grant making bodies to approach, although he is always open to suggestions from members if they know of other sources of funds! Needless to say no work can be authorised until the funds are available.

In the case of the Trafalgar Captains' Memorial, John Kerr, an architect, was instructed by the Club to obtain the estimates and to supervise the works. He recommended using a single conservation firm to do the work on all seven graves and Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey were finally selected. It was then his responsibility to check the schedule of works, monitor progress to completion and ensure a full record documenting the whole process, including a description of the technical aspects, such as the treatment of stone and metals.



The tomb of Vice Admiral Sir Thomas Dundas (1758-1841) at St Nicholas Church, Hurst, Berks, undergoing extensive conservation work.

Photo: Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey Ltd

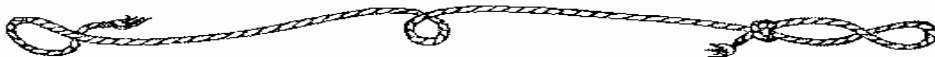
Increasingly, the Club is interested in the maintenance of the memorials after conservation and encourages members in their locality to take a watching interest and where feasible to 'adopt a grave' in association with a local school. The catalyst for this is often a re-dedication service which seeks to involve the local community at the outset, particularly younger people who are encouraged to learn more about the life and times of their 'local hero'.

### Projects for the future

The Club has new conservation projects in the pipeline, including The Nile and Copenhagen Captains' Memorial, and The Mediterranean Memorial 1806-1815, comprising a representative selection of graves and memorials of those who served in the naval war during those years, a period of history that is far less well known than the years of Nelson.

Napoléon's abandonment of plans to invade England and the focus he placed on continental Europe after his victory over the Austrians at Austerlitz meant that the Mediterranean theatre assumed an even higher strategic significance than before. The Club has already dubbed the period between 1805 and 1810 as *The Collingwood Years*. Historian and Club Vice-President Tom Pocock has generously agreed to the Club using his phrase 'Stopping Napoléon' as its cornerstone description for the conservation and intellectual and educational themes relevant to the naval story 1805-1815 that the Club is developing, in addition to its Nelson-oriented activities.

This imaginative outlook gives the Club a coherent and consistent theme for the next 10 years. During this time it will seek to enhance the approachability and relevance of the Club through 'living history', especially with younger people and local communities, by bringing 'back to life' the people whom the monuments and memorials commemorate as much as conserving the stone. It will also be developing a web-based 'National Memorials Log' which will eventually seek to record all the known graves, monuments and memorials of those who served in the Georgian sailing navy.



## Past projects

Since its foundation, the Club has been responsible for over forty-five projects. These range from major works, such as the erection of a new monument to Emma Hamilton in Calais and the installation of new plaques in the Painted Hall

Photo: Tony Wozencroft



(above) at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, to mark the spot where Nelson and Collingwood's coffins lay in state, to more straightforward conservations of the tombs of Nelson's wife Frances and his daughter Horatia. The achievement to date includes:

- Lady Nelson's tomb, Littleham, Devon
- Grave of Horatia Nelson Ward, Nelson's daughter, Pinner, Middlesex
- The Nelson Monument, Springfield Park, Liverpool
- The Trafalgar Pillar, Baslow, Derbyshire
- William Beatty's Memorial Plaque, Kensal Green Cemetery, London
- First memorial to Emma Lady Hamilton, Calais, France
- Vault of Alexander Davison, Nelson's agent, Northumbria (Grade II listed)
- Tomb of Thomas Atkinson, HMS *Victory's* sailing master, Farlington, Hants
- The Bolton Memorials, All Saints' Church, Burnham Thorpe, Norfolk
- Vault and monument of Admiral Sir Home Popham, Sunninghill, Berks
- Tomb of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith, Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris, France
- Memorial to Capt Edward Thornborough Parker, Deal, Kent
- Tomb of Capt John Quilliam, Ballabeg, Isle of Man
- The Nelson and Collingwood plaques, The Painted Hall, Greenwich
- Grave of Niel Smith, HMS *Victory's* Asst Surgeon, Cawdor, Scotland
- Grave of Capt James Robert Mosse, Wickham, Hants
- The Nelson Pillar, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk
- The Nelson Monument, Glasgow
- Tomb of Admiral James Lord de Saumarez, Catel, Guernsey
- Monument to Sir William and Lady Hamilton, Slebech, Pembrokeshire
- The Trafalgar Captains' Memorial Project (7 conservations)
- The Battle of Copenhagen Memorial Plaque, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk



Conservation work on the tomb of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith (1764-1840) found the marble profile of the Admiral, after a portrait by Jacques-Louis David and thought to have been stolen, had dropped behind the front panel. Photos: Bill White

The 1805 Club records its thanks to the charitable trusts that have supported its work: The Francis Coales Charitable Foundation, The Idlewild Trust, The Leche Trust, The Manifold Trust and The Pilgrim Trust.

## The 1805 Club's Conservation Guidelines

The 1805 Club has drawn up its own conservation doctrine, which it rigorously adheres to, although some of its earlier projects were undertaken before the guidelines were in place.

We will:

- Make safe and stabilise the monument. This may include providing new or strengthened foundations where required.
- Do everything practical to prevent or at least considerably slow down further decline of the monument, which may include where beyond repair, replacement of kerbs and/or posts associated with the support of any existing railings.
- Clean the existing material and sympathetically repair only the parts necessary to restore the stability of the monument and prevent long-term deterioration.
- Provide good quality interpretation of the monument, based on scholarly research, together with transcriptions of any worn inscriptions.
- Create a research pack of every project to include:
  - A brief history of the person commemorated by the grave.
  - A brief history of the monument itself (e.g. designer, builder, etc.).
  - Any photographs or drawings of the monument in its original form.
  - Photographic record in its pre-restored state.
  - Photographic record of work in progress and in the restored form.
  - Copies of specifications; correspondence relating to the work.

We will not:

- Replace missing features with replicas (except where such replacements are required to make the structure safe).
- Re-carve worn inscriptions, or replace an inscribed panel with a new one.
- Fasten any new feature (such as a plaque or interpretation panel) to the original fabric.



Serenading Nelson 2006, following the £420,000 refurbishment of the most famous of Nelson monuments, by David Ball Restoration, to whom the Club gave historical advice. Photo: Peter Warwick

### The 1805 Club

The 1805 Club, registered charity no. 1071871, was formed in 1990 with three objectives:

- To promote and engage in the conservation of monuments and memorials of the Royal Navy and merchant service in the Georgian era;
- To promote and engage in original research into these services, and to publish such research; and
- To promote and engage in the organization and promotion of related cultural events.

The Club's primary objective is unique: there is no other voluntary body that undertakes such conservation. However, it works alongside and in close co-operation with many other bodies, such as The Society for Nautical Research, and has given historical advice on major works like the 2006 restoration of Nelson's Column, the most famous memorial in the country.

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