



# CNOA

## Chatham Naval Officers' Association



## The CNOA Newsletter for November 2022

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### Chairman's Flag Hoist



Dear All, I hope you well. Thank you to all members who attended the Trafalgar dinner, it was lovely to see so many. I had the honour of representing CNOA at HMS Presidents dinner last week thank you to Cdr Greg Young for the invitation. I have enclosed Mr Paul Auston talk on Trafalgar below for anyone that missed it. Mr Auston also has given a generous donation to CNOA



Midshipdog Barney at the dinner studying the menu, more photos will appear on the [CNOA.org.uk](http://CNOA.org.uk) website that's the Andrew Storey who has been helping the committee with his skills building a new website. I have sent pictures that Barry kindly took directly to those in the pictures and kept a few to use at Halloween. Andrew was presented with a ships badge from the President at the dinner in gratitude for his hardwork

### Trafalgar Dinner October 13<sup>th</sup>. By Mr Paul Auston DL Talk

*Mr President,*

*I suspect that many of your distinguished guests assembled here to dine this evening are deeply immersed in the story of The Battle of Trafalgar and far more knowledgeable than me.*

*Thus I find myself at a disadvantage, although the same could be said for our hero, Vice Admiral Lord Nelson, when sighting against the dawn sky 33 enemy sail of the line to his 27. On that eventful day, the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1805 at 10mins to 6 in the morning, for the 17,000 men of the British fleet all that tedious effort patrolling the coast, bottling up the enemy for the past 2 years, paled to insignificance as thoughts turned to the sea battle to come and for that they had to wait some 6 hours, as the two great battle fleets closed each other at little more than walking pace. For some a gut-wrenching agony, for others, who knows, perhaps a coming to terms with secret fears.*

*And yet, although the battle to come in only a few hours' time would be one of the most momentous in British Naval history, the roots of the victory at Trafalgar were in fact the result of the previous 2 years of boredom in blockading Napoleon's combined fleet.*

*To launch his invasion of England required him to mass his fleet so as to force his way up the channel just for a day or two in protection of the enormous flotilla of landing craft already assembled in Boulogne.*

*Some 40-50 thousand British sailors had been involved in the blockade and it was an unpleasant business. An evocative glimpse is recorded by a boy, Bernard Coleridge, who was 11 years of age at the time when he wrote "Indeed, we live on beef which has been ten or eleven years in corn and on biscuit that makes your throat cold in eating owing to the maggots which are very cold when you eat them, like calf's foot jelly or blancmange, being very fat indeed. We drink water of the colour of the bark of a pear tree with plenty of little maggots and weevils in it".....*

*This in marked contrast to the wonderful meal we have enjoyed this evening---thanks to the chefs and all the staff for their superb efforts.*

*How a point of time, in this case 21<sup>st</sup> October 1805, has been created by the politics of the period is for me intriguing. Some historians say the fault lies with The Treaty of Amiens, broken in May 1803. We, the British, had agreed that the island of Malta would be evacuated in return for undertakings that Bonaparte would abandon his plans for expansion in Europe and the Mediterranean.*

*Bonaparte knew that we were rearming. Forced into a corner and needing more time to ready his forces to invade, Bonaparte offered what he thought was a compromise, to allow Russia to take trusteeship of Malta and the British troops to leave. When this was rejected by London as a breach of the treaty, war was declared on May 18<sup>th</sup> 1803.*

*Perhaps there is a strange parallel in that the island of Malta should figure so prominently in the background of the build-up to Trafalgar, and indeed Waterloo, and 137 years later play a pivotal role during WW2 when Pedestal demonstrated the Royal and Merchant navies courage and selfless determination to succeed, whatever the cost.*

*And Bonaparte (otherwise known as the Little Corporal--- the second word being shared with another dictator, some 130 years later) had built himself an amazing fleet of landing craft under the direction of a M. Forfait. He, being a Bonaparte favorite, had his ideas listened to intently. However, he was a landsman with no nautical knowledge, but nevertheless was tasked with the design of the invasion craft, later described by Rear Admiral Denis Decres, the French Minister of Marine, as a "heap of monstrous baubles!" By August of 1803 Bonaparte had 1000 vessels of various types available to invade.*

*In France Bonaparte was finding that his diplomatic attempts were viewed with deep suspicion by the governments of Russia and Austria and, as history now shows, they had good reason to be distrustful. The tension for Bonaparte was heightened when news reached him of the appointment of a new Prime Minister, William Pitt, in early May of 1804.*

*And what of the Spanish? They had been in fear of an invasion by France so were in a manner of speaking subjugated. Bonaparte needed cash or more ships, the choice was Spain's. Spain decided that cash would allow them to stay neutral, but the cash had to come to Spain on the treasure ships from South America. London was aware and had decided that the threat to British interests was so existential that a pre-emptive strike be made to capture the treasure ships. In the event 4 frigates from Nelson's fleet intercepted the 4 treasure ships; 3 surrendered, but the other blew up and in doing so killed the Captain General of Peru and his family along with nearly 100 others.*

*Spanish pride was outraged and on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1804 Spain declared war on Britain, much to Bonaparte's delight.*

*The Spanish had 30 sail of the line to call upon and so the scales tipped away from the British quite significantly and now ports all around the coast into the Mediterranean, previously open, became hostile.*

*And what of our hero, Vice Admiral Lord Nelson. He had spent most of 1805 trying to bring to battle elements of the combined fleet as far south as the Windwards and back up to Brest with little to show for it. He knew that his foe would have to weigh from Cadiz and when he did that would be the opportunity Nelson sought.*

*On the evening of September 13<sup>th</sup> 1805 Nelson left his home in Merton. He wrote in his diary, "Friday night at half past 10 - drive from dear dear Merton where I left all that is dear in this world, to go to serve my King and my country. May the great God, whom I adore, enable me to fulfil the expectations of my country".*

*Lord Nelson, like so many great men, was a dichotomy of parts; technically superb, some say vain, but an inspirational leader, a man of his time, the brutality of life in the sea service and the closed environment that it represented, sometimes years at sea and not a foot on land in case a jack should run, yet our hero goes to infinite pains to keep his crews healthy. He provided lemon juice, onions, fruit and fish. As a result, after 20 months blockading Toulon, there was only 1 man sick in Victory. He won the hearts of those under his command by force of personality and little demonstrations of kindness and consideration. In Victory, off Cadiz, Lieutenant Pasco appeared to Nelson as a little agitated. Nelson insisted on knowing why. A small packet bound for home with mail had not taken Pasco's letter to his wife. His Lordship ordered a signal to be sent to recall the packet even though she was some distance off under full sail. It returned and Pasco's letter reached home.*

*Nelson expected to have 40 ships in his fleet ready to meet the combined might of France and Spain. His plan of attack was based on this premise, but the brilliance of his plan allowed it to flex. It was a plan he shared with all his Captains. They bought into it and made it their own. He had the utmost confidence in them and they in him.*

*The result is now legend. No fewer than 20 of the enemy ships were destroyed or had struck their colours. Not one British ship was lost, but what a bittersweet victory; they had lost their hero, their Commander in Chief.*

*And so we return to where I opened, to that clear dawn of an autumnal day under a hazy sky on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1805. The Victory, built by the master shipwrights here in Chatham, sailing into the proud history of the Royal Navy and a date with destiny.*

*A sailor wrote home after the battle and said "men adored him and in fighting under him every man thought himself sure of success"*

*Toast - The Immortal memory of Lord Nelson and those who fell with him.*

In November we have a service to mark Remembrance Day at Maidstone, please attend with family at friends at 1800 in either 1B or smart civilian clothing at the united reform church, we have room for plenty of room and would welcome members and their guests. I also wanted to make members aware that Lt Cdr Stephen Small the Vice Chair attends The Lines on our behalf and lays a wreath. He also purchases the wreath each year out of his own pocket and on behalf of us all wanted to thank him.

On 5<sup>th</sup> December we have a tour of HQS Wellington, lunch followed by a tour of London on foot by gas light, just 2 places left !

Clifford attended the Trafalgar service at St Pauls and has shared the order of service which are in the attachments, the picture shows Clifford and Barney in the Crypt at Nelsons memorial,

The black marble sarcophagus, made by Benedetto da Rovezzano (1474-1552) for Cardinal Wolsey, in which Nelson was buried in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral, 9 January 1806. Wolsey, already disgraced but pardoned by Henry VIII and allowed to retire to Yorkshire, was arrested and sent to London in 1530 after a false accusation of treason. He died on the way at Leicester Abbey and was buried there in an unknown grave. The inscription on this drawing reads: 'This sarcophagus was originally intended for Cardinal Wolsey, but presented by his present Majesty George 3rd to entomb the body of Horatio Viscount Nelson, situated in the vault under the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, London'. The drawing shows the sarcophagus and plinth down to floor level.

Benedetto - a well-known Florentine sculptor - worked in England from 1519 to 1543, Wolsey originally being his principal patron. Henry VIII subsequently appropriated his uncompleted tomb project, commissioning Benedetto to repurpose it for himself, but it was not finished in his lifetime and while his three children (Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I) intended to complete it posthumously for him, none did so. In 1565 Elizabeth moved the existing pieces from Westminster to Windsor but many were later dispersed to raise funds in the Commonwealth period: four gilt-bronze candleholders made for Henry were obtained by St Bavo cathedral in Ghent, for example, with the sarcophagus eventually being presented by George III to hold Nelson's remains, as shown here.



## **Action please**

On Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2023 we will hold our New Year's lunch. We are having to change venue as Bearsted Golf club was £300 for the room hire on top of the meal cost, so we are now going to the Masonic Hall in Maidstone, details are in the attachment. The venue require numbers and payment by 27<sup>th</sup> December, so I will put a cut off of the 23<sup>rd</sup> December on us. Please support this function and bring family and friends as its our main charity fund raiser of the year as well as a great social occasion

## **2022 Programme**

11 November	Remembrance service organised by CNOA Chaplains, in Maidstone
14 November	Committee Meeting
5 <sup>th</sup> December	Lunch, tour of HQS Wellington, London by Gaslight
9 December	Christmas social with our President in the mess

## **2023 Programme**

13 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Dr Martin Watts	Online lecture	The Somme, the innocence lost
28 <sup>th</sup> Jan		New Years lunch,	Maidstone
17 <sup>th</sup> Feb		AGM - CHANGE	
10 <sup>th</sup> March	Peter Hubbard OBE	EOD	
14 <sup>th</sup> April	Barry Duffield DL	Kent in Pictures	
12 <sup>th</sup> May	Glen Joes	Singapore Mutiny 1915	
9 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Amanda Baker	Anna Chaplain	
14 <sup>th</sup> July	John Fullagar	East to West Panama Transit	
Aug		No Meeting	
8 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Guy Bartlett	Aviation in Kent	
13 <sup>th</sup> Oct		TBC	
10 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Derek Goodwin BSc	LNG Bunkers, Cold ironing and scrubbers	
8 <sup>th</sup> Dec		Xmas social	