



Victorian Chapter

President's Musings – September 2020

Our last meeting was in February when we were to view a video on The Hospital Ship Centaur but ended up watching an excellent video on USS Missouri, the 'Big Mo'. We obtained a new copy of the Centaur Video but have not had an opportunity to screen it. During our conversations with Lensie Matthews, the wife of the author/producer Tony Matthews, Marty and I expressed interest in Tony's books and have received a copy of Tony's book, 'Shipwrecks and Seafarers Scandals' which I found to be good reading. His latest book is about the Evian conference held in France in 1938, seeking increased migration of Jews to participating countries. Maybe the Holocaust could have been averted if the conference had succeeded in its objectives? Interested? Please come back to me and I'll put you in contact with Lensie. Our Des Shinkfield is an accomplished author and the society has been gifted his three published books. *My Three 'R's* – covers his war service in the Navy, and a fascinating account of his life after the war; *HMAS Australia* – a comprehensive look at the life of this iconic ship, and, *A collection of Navy Stories*, which indeed is also interesting. I will enjoy reading them all, and thank Des very much for his generosity.

"I wonder, oh I wander out under the sky" when restrictions are repealed and we all can get together? Having vented, I feel better now! It doesn't seem likely that we will have an AGM in October. Upon reading the constitution we don't have to have it until December 31, and given that our next meeting after that is February 22, 2021!! Surely, by then!!

THE NHS A SPEAKERS PROGRAM

Bob Trotter's Zoom presentation on HMS Australia I was well received and if you missed it, you will soon be able to view it on our NHA website as a copy was made. Please note that the October 20 presentation, 'Virtual tour of Garden Island Tunnels' is also at 1000 as is the Sydney/Kormoran one on November 24.

One of my heroes is Horatio Nelson and with Trafalgar Day coming up soon, I felt that I would like to share my passion with you in my September and October Musings. To celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar the London Times published a book, Sea Battles and Major Naval Events. A History from 1798. Also embossed in gold lettering is 'Researched for and prepared for Rex Frederick Williams'. It was a very generous gift to me by our very close friends, Barbara and Brian Evans from Mickleover in Derbyshire, and I treasure it! Barbara and Brian were our neighbours in Templestowe and we established a very strong bond. ENJOY!



Wax model of Nelson in HM Naval Base Museum Portsmouth UK

THE TIMES

SEA BATTLES: Admiral Nelson's victory over the French Fleet 3 Oct 1798

London, Oct 3

Admiral Nelson's victory: The official news of the GLORIOUS VICTORY obtained by Admiral Nelson over the French Fleet, near Rosetta, arrived at the Admiralty yesterday morning at a quarter past eleven o'clock. It was brought by the Hon. Captain Capel, one of Lord Essex's sons, and lately made master and commander into the Mutine cutter, from the admiral's flag-ship. He was detained at Naples one day, owing to some necessary ceremonies of Quarantine. The Park and Tower guns, and the merry peals of the bells from the steeples of several churches, soon announced this happy news to the public. Lord Spencer wrote official information of it to the Lord Mayor; and Mr Winchester, the Messenger, was sent off express to the King at Weymouth, in order that his Majesty might learn the glad tidings before he went to rest. Yesterday evening the following London Gazette Extraordinary was published:

The Hon. Captain Capel, of His Majesty's sloop Mutine, arrived this morning with despatches from Rear-Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson, KB, to Evan Nepean, Esq., Secretary of the Admiralty, of which the following are copies:

ADMIRALTY OFFICE, October 2.

Vanguard, Mouth of the Nile, August 7

Sir,

Here with I have the honour to transmit you a copy of my letter to the Earl of St. Vincent, together with a line-of-battle of the English and French squadrons, also a list of killed and wounded. I have the pleasure to inform you, that eight of our ships have already top-gallant yards across, ready for any service; the others, with the prizes, will soon be ready for sea. In an event of this importance, I have thought it right to send Captain Capel with a copy of my letter (to the Commander-in-Chief) over land, which I hope your lordships will approve; and beg leave to refer them to Captain Capel, who is a most excellent officer, and fully able to give every information; and I beg leave to recommend him to their Lordship's notice'

I have the honour to be, &c.,

Horatio Nelson

PS. The Island I have taken possession of, and brought off the two 18-inch mortars, all the brass guns, and destroyed the iron ones.



Model of HMS Vanguard

Vanguard, off the Mouth of the Nile, Aug. 3

My Lord,

Almighty God has blessed His Majesty's in the late battle, by a great victory over the fleet of the enemy, whom I attacked at sunset on the 1st of August, off the mouth of the Nile. The enemy were moored in a strong line of battle for defending the entrance of the Bay (of Shoals), flanked by numerous gun boats, four frigates, and a battery of guns and mortars on an Island in their Van; but nothing could withstand the Squadron your Lordship did me the honour to command. Their high state of discipline is well known to you, and with the judgement of the Captains, together with their valour, and that of the Officers and Men of every description, it was absolutely irresistible.

Could anything from my pen add to the Character of the Captains, I would write it with pleasure, but that is impossible.

I have to regret the loss of Captain Westcott of the Majestic, who was killed early in the action; but the ship was continued to be so well fought by her First Lieutenant, Mr Cuthbert that I have given him an order to command her until your Lordship's pleasure is known.

The ships of the enemy, all but their two rear ships, are nearly dismasted; and these two, with two frigates, I am sorry to say made their escape; nor was it, I assure you was it in my power to prevent them. Captain Hood most handsomely endeavoured to do it but I had no ship in a condition to support the Zealous, and I was obliged to call her in.

The support and assistance I have received from Captain Berry cannot be sufficiently expressed. I was wounded in the head, and obliged to be carried off the deck, but the service suffered no loss by that event. Captain Berry was fully equal to the important service then going on, and to him I must beg to leave to you for every information relative to this victory. He will present you with the flag of the second in command, that I transmit you lists of the killed and wounded, and the lines of battle of ourselves and the French.

HORATIO NELSON

To Admiral the Earl of St. Vincent, Commander in Chief

End of Quote

In the narrative that followed it stated that Nelson was indeed severely hurt by the splinter which struck his head and eyes. The French Admiral, Brueys, was killed towards the end of the action and the two frigates which escaped are said to have made for a Turkish port, where they are detained as prizes. French casualties were calculated as being 5000 men, with the British totals being 16 Officers, 156 seamen, 46 marines killed. 37 officers, 562 seamen, 78 marines wounded. Overall Total 895.

Yours Aye!

Rex Williams