



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of the Kennington History Society
Issue 29
Winter 2020

KENNINGTON HISTORY SOCIETY IN 2020

2020 was to have been a year with a wide range of speakers, with subjects as varied as 19th Century Women, Oxford's Botanic Garden, Canals, Rowing, Medieval Music, and the Great Exhibition, to name just a few. Some members were lucky enough to hear Anni Byard talking about Recent archeology in Oxfordshire, and our members' talks at the AGM, before the Virus caused the first lockdown. The committee felt it unsafe and unwise to resume meetings again in the autumn, as social distancing would be a problem, but are hopeful that after Easter 2021 we may be able to resume regular meetings.

CHATHAM DOCKYARD

Chatham Dockyard evolved in the early 16th Century from a place where ships could safely drop anchor, then revictual, into a thriving and successful naval dockyard, at it's height occupying 400 acres and employing over 10,000 men. Chat-

ham became a naval dockyard in 1567. Over 500 ships were built for the Royal Navy, and many others for overseas customers.

Probably the most famous ship built there is HMS Victory which was launched in May 1765 after nearly six years of construction. She



was later refitted there just before the Battle of Trafalgar, having played a significant role in two other battles in the Atlantic, where she suffered considerable damage.

Over the years extra facilities were added to the site, including a rope making facility (still working today, and can be seen as part of the museum), steam powered sawmills, a railway, covered dry docks etc. The Dockyard went on to build steam and steel ships

besides carrying out repairs. Some of the last ships built were a class of 6 submarines (one of which HMS Ocelot is in the museum) until the dockyard's closure in 1984. Since then a museum has been established covering about 80 acres, where there are three ships- the aforementioned

submarine HMS Ocelot, HMS Cavalier a WW2 Destroyer and HMS Gannet, a Victorian sloop, built at Chatham in 1878. Besides the principal ships there are a number of other displays including the rope making factory, lifeboats and models, plus some 70,000 artefacts.

It is a place well worth a visit.

Mark Horseman

November 2020

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 15th February Society's A.G.M. will be held online starting at 19.45.

A link to the meeting will be published in the February edition of the Kennington Chronicle, or please e-mail to:

kenningtonoxfordhistorysociety@gmail.com

HISTORY SOCIETY WEBSITE

Keep up to date with the latest details of the Society's events via the village website.

www.kennington-pc.gov.uk and clicking organisations and clubs, then History.

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2021 (NO INCREASE)

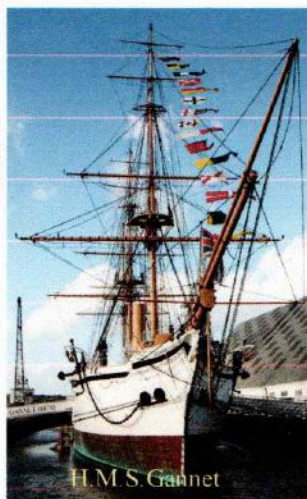
Members who paid their subscriptions in 2020 will not need to pay again in 2021.

New members: £12 individual £20 family

QUOTATIONS

"The best way to predict the future is to create it."
Abraham Lincoln

"It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but ourselves."
William Shakespeare



WHO SHOT NELSON AND WHAT BECAME OF HIM ?



Nelson in full battle regalia.



The musket ball that killed Nelson – now in Windsor Castle.

The battle of Trafalgar occurred on October the 21st 1805 and some of us were discussing that Nelson was sadly killed by a French sharp shooter. The question arose - who killed Nelson and what became of his killer ?

We knew that Nelson was on the poop deck of the Victory and we also know that he was in his full regalia shown above, against the advice of his fellow officers. He was wearing the Order of Bath, Order of Ferdinand, the Order of Merit, the Order of Malta and the Ottoman Crescent. In addition, attached to his distinctive hat was the famous 7 inch chelengk containing 300 diamonds, which had a clockwork mechanism that rotated the jewel for extra effect – given to him by the Sultan of Turkey after the Battle of the Nile in 1798 and held in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, until it was stolen in 1951.

To the French snipers he must have been an easily distinguishable target highlighted by all his sparkling bling!



Nelson's ship had just broken through the French line and was engaged at close quarters in a ferocious hand to hand combat with the crew of the Redoubtable. The Redoubtable was sandwiched between the HMS Téméraire and HMS Victory, body parts were flying in a cloud of gun smoke, grapeshot, confusion and deafening noise levels. At about 1.15pm Lord Nelson was struck, fell and was taken below decks. Immediately, midshipmen Francis Collingwood and John Polard returned fire with shot supplied by a third man also on Victory's poop deck. They aimed at the Redoubtable's mizzen-top where two snipers had been seen.

Lord Nelson died about 4.30pm from complications of his spinal cord injury – just after hearing of their victory.

The French sniper, thought to be Nelson's killer, was shot dead in the head and chest. There are some differences in the stories about the incident and it was Pollard or Collingwood who fired the killing shot. We know that Pollard was congratulated by Thomas Hardy, flag Captain of the Victory, as the man who avenged Nelson's death and was promoted to Lieutenant.

We know much less about the two French snipers and which fired the shot that killed Nelson. Alexandre Dumas, author of *The Three Musketeers*, wrote a "lost" novel called *The Last Cavalier*. He names Hector, the Count de Sainte-Ermine as the man who shot Nelson.

More recently in 2007, the author Robert Guillemard claims that Sergeant Guillemard (possibly an ancestral relative ?), a soldier of the infantry of the French Army of Napoleon, was the man who shot Nelson.