

Slaughden Sails



The Newsletter of Slaughden Sailing Club

Autumn 2005

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A NOTE FROM ED.

As a sailing club I feel we cannot let this year pass by without paying tribute to the Battle of Trafalgar, Lord Nelson and HMS Victory. As such I hope you are not too disappointed if articles on these subjects take up the majority of this newsletter. The unsung heroes of the battle of Trafalgar and all sea battles of the Napoleonic war were the ordinary seamen who, often victims of the press. These men carried out the extraordinary sometimes at the loss of their lives. Hopefully the articles in this edition reflect something of what life was like for the average foremast jack. Life aboard an early nineteenth century man-of-war was no picnic, but it is arguable that the nation owed as much to these common sailors as it did to the great Lord Nelson albeit in a more modest way.

Also in this edition we have contributions from our YOTAS as they reflect on a season's sailing.

Those of you who were present at the AGM will be aware that we have a new Webmaster for our Web Site. Richard Walker is taking on this mantle and inside is a short note from him explaining how you can contribute to the website.

Well, all that is left is to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Eat, drink and be merry, but above all take care over the festive season.

CLUB NEWS

VICE COMMODORE – DINGHIES

BY BARRY SKELCHER

I am sorry that I was not able to attend the AGM and the lunch that followed. I understand that, despite my protestations and pleas, I drew the short straw for the job of Vice Commodore Dinghies. In any club it is important that there is a flow of new members through its management committees and consequently a new V C Dinghies will be required next year.

The Sailing Committee for the coming season will have some new faces. Jack Gifford is now away at University and Paul Eaton has moved to V C Cruising. Maurice Brown and David Pegg have agreed to take their place. I am also looking for a non-racing dinghy sailor to represent their interests.

Our first task is to draw up next season's programme, any comments or suggestions will be welcome, but please make them soon. The programme has to be finalised by early January to meet deadlines for the Year Book.

Sailing is fun, racing is even more fun as it encourages helms and crews to push themselves to the limits of their abilities. Whether racing or pottering on the River let us look forward to another enjoyable season.

On a personal note, I have now sold Blue John. That does not mean that I will not be racing. My beloved "Puff" is recovering well from her restoration in Upson's and I anticipate racing her in '06. The Mirror 16 is about the same size as a Wayfarer but lighter and carries a tad more sail. As a consequence it is a little faster,

especially off the wind. Like the other Mirror designs she is made of thin plywood, which makes her a little fragile and prone to rot. The 16 Class did not gain the popularity of the Mirror 11 and only about 500 were built. All were made from kits produced by Bell Woodworking Company, which in turn were made from templates. There are no drawings. Bell is no longer in existence and the templates are lost so the Mirror 16 is very much an endangered species. Puff and her companion are amongst the few that survive.

AGM - CLUB ACCOUNTS

BY CHRIS BEST

Copies of the club accounts for the year ended 30th September 2005 were presented to all members attending the AGM. We save postage and printing costs by not posting these out to all members. If anyone who didn't attend the AGM would like a copy these are available by email from ChrisJBest@aol.com. You will need to be able to open an excel file to read them.

AGM - ELECTION OF OFFICERS

BY CHRIS BEST

At the AGM in November the following were elected to serve the club in the year ahead:-

Commodore	Graham Silsbury
Vice Commodore Dinghies	Barrie Skelcher
Vice Commodore Cruising	Paul Eaton
Rear Commodore	David Bizzell
Honorary Treasurer	Michael Rowe
Honorary Secretary	Chris Best
Membership Secretary	Elizabeth Wright
Safety & Security	Allen Carr
Junior Representative	Andrew Ford

TC Principal Graham Silsbury

Committee Members (Special interests)
Pam Durham (YOTAS)
Sarah Jones (Fundraising)
Karen Hayes-Baker (Newsletter)
Richard Walker (Website)
John Hayter (Special Needs)
Bob Upson
Nick Sinclair

We were unable to fill the positions of Social Secretary and Powerboat Administrator.

After many years of excellent service to the club, Leslie Downing did not stand for re-election this year. Our thanks go to Leslie for all the hard work in providing all the excellent catering over the years. We now need someone to take over from Leslie and to be in charge of the catering arrangements. We are seeking someone who can organise the catering, and this should not necessitate being at all the functions yourself. If you are able to help arrange the provision of food and drinks at the various club events please contact Graham, any committee member or myself.

The Powerboat Administrator should appeal to someone who is mad about powerboats. The role is to be in overall charge of the clubs motor driven boats. For details please contact Barrie Skelcher.

FUNDRAISING by Val Tyndale-Biscoe

We have now had a third successful fundraising year and with the sale of the calendars, I think the fund raising for the past 3 years will exceed the £6000 mark. Incidentally, this year we have received sponsorship from 5 companies

which has paid for producing the calendars.

I am retiring as fund raiser as at the end of the year and I wish to thank all those members who have helped at the various events, the ladies who have made and donated food items and raffle prizes. In particular I wish to thank David Quilter for his brilliant compeering at our entertainment evening, Pauline & John Hayter who have done fantastic work, June Walker, Shirley & Barrie, Lesley & the ducklings to name but a few.

As you now know, Sarah Jones is your new fund raiser, so please support her well in her new venture.

PS. Profit on the calendars so far is £315. However, we do have more and Graham will be happy to let you have as many as you want.

WEBSITE UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT.

BY RICHARD WALKER

I have taken over the running and development of the SSC website. My initial changes will be focused on getting information online in a timely manner but, as I'm not in Suffolk all the time, I will rely on people sending me information. So please, if you have anything to pin on a notice board on the clubhouse, send me a copy and I'll pin it up for **all** to see! Boats for sale, working parties, fund raising events, social gatherings etc are all candidates as are photos, anecdotes and gossip! Let me know and they'll all have a front page spread! I'm not short of ideas for the longer-term development of the site but I would dearly like to know what you would like to see. All suggestions gratefully received. All info to richard@saxroad.co.uk, please, or see

the yearbook for phone or snail mail details.

Watch this space:

www.slaughdensailingclub.co.uk

*A few people have expressed a wish for a guide on how to use e-mail, open attachments, post photographs etc. It is easy to forget these days that not everyone is familiar with using computers, which can seem quite fickle instruments if you are not an avid computer buff. With this in mind we will aim to publish a "rough guide" to e-mail know-how in the next newsletter.
ED.*

ENTERPRISE'S BIRTHDAY

Allen & Leslie's Leigh Cockler was 100 this year. We thought we should celebrate this, so what better than a party. On July 15th we set off to Dunkerque to give her (& us) a summer holiday. We found the sun & lots of wind in the wrong direction (what's new).

The old lady had some knocks from big plastic things in marinas but came out virtually unscathed but we arrived back in Ramsgate at 7am on 21st with sail damage. We usually try to avoid Ramsgate as it is very expensive & we don't like marinas but the sail maker there came up trumps had all the repairs done by 5pm. We were off again at 11pm & eventually floated into SSC creek at 3am on Sat 23rd.

A lot of tidying & polishing and flags hoisted and she was ready for her party on Sunday looking, may I say, very grand and proud of her years.

We had a lovely day despite the rain & mist. So many people came to help celebrate the day and give her a toast: lots of club members, lots of 'Carrs' from Brightlingsea & Parham, various friends, and we were especially pleased that Terry & John Lepine, her previous owners, were able to come all the way up from Rochester. I think they were happy to see the change in her since their last visit when she was on the quay undergoing extensive repairs (by Allen).

A big thank you to all of you who came & helped us celebrate the day and for the many gifts- and- we always enjoy extra crew aboard- don't hesitate- just ask.

Allen, Leslie & Dudley

HMS VICTORY

HMS Victory stands today as the world's oldest commissioned warship. Still manned by Officers and Ratings of the Royal Navy, the Victory has seen over 200 years of almost continuous service.



Best known for her role in the Battle of Trafalgar, the Victory currently has a dual role as the flagship of the Second Sea Lord and as a living museum to the Georgian navy.

Launched in 1765 at Chatham Dockyard after six years building, the total cost of construction was £63,000 (approximately £20 million in today's money). In the construction, 2,000 oak trees were used and the sail area covered 4 acres. Overall HMS Victory was 227ft (67m) and 52ft (16m) wide.

The Victory was commissioned in 1778 and continued in active service for the next 32 years. She was rated as a first class ship-of-the-line. In 1812 the Victory was retired from frontline duty and anchored in Portsmouth Harbour. For the next 110 years the Victory remained at her moorings in Portsmouth Harbour fulfilling a combination of practical and ceremonial roles.

In 1922, amid fears for her continued survival, the Victory was moved into Portsmouth's Royal Naval Dockyard and placed in No2 Dry Dock. Work then began on restoring the Victory to her 'fighting' 1805 condition. With 100 Guns and a crew of over 800 men the Victory was one of the largest warships the Georgian Royal Navy sent into battle.

Overall length:
227ft 6in
69.34m

Length on lower gun deck:
186ft
56.70m

Extreme breadth (widest point):
51ft 10in
15.80m

Height of mainmast from waterline:
205ft
62.50m

Burthen (weight fully loaded):
2,162 tons
2,197 tonnes

Displacement:
3,500 tons
3,556 tonnes

Depth in hold:
21ft 6in
6.55m

Draught - forward:
23ft 9in
7.24m

Draught - aft:
24ft 5in
7.44m

Guns
104 (12, 24 and 32 pounders)

HMS Victory had a crew of 820 men commanded by Captain Thomas Masterman Hardy. There were 9 Commissioned Officers, 21 Midshipmen and 77 Non-commissioned Warrant and Petty Officers, the rest of the crew comprised of Able and Ordinary Seaman, Landsmen, supernumeries and 31 boys.

Also within this complement was a detachment of 146 Royal Marines from the Chatham Division, commanded by Captain Charles Adair.

She suffered some of the worst casualties of the Allied Fleet at the battle with 57 of her crew killed or dying of their wounds a few days later, and a further 102 wounded.



LIFE ABOARD A SHIP-OF-THE-LINE: HMS VICTORY

There were many nationalities on board. Most of the crew came from the British Isles and the rest of the crew came from as far away as the West Indies, Brazil, Canada and America. Some came from much nearer home, as in the case of the Germans, Danes and Maltese sailors. They ranged in age from a boy, 12 year old Thomas Twitchett, to 56 years old John King, a yeoman of signals. Only when there was a shortage of sailors were men 'press ganged,' into service aboard, and they were usually merchant seamen. Sometimes mistakes were made and some poor passer-by was abducted and their family had to wait a long time before they returned, if they ever did. Some of the sailors were on board because the magistrates had sent them there as a punishment for a crime they had committed.

The recruitment of officers usually presented no problems. They queued up to join the Royal Navy as midshipmen from as young as 14 and most were from the middle class. Men like Richard Roberts, James Green and Robert Smith joined to embark on a career that they hoped would take them to the top and, with prize money, make them rich. The prize money system worked on 'the higher the rank' the greater the prize money.

To all on board a man-of-war, life was full of risks and hazards to their health. They risked life and limb in battle, but they feared disease most of all. They could not see it as it crept upon them, not like the enemy, which they could see. For every man killed in action, nearly forty died of disease. No wonder it was feared. So, what was life aboard HMS Victory really like?

According to able seamen Thomas Smith and William Jones, life on board was primitive. What follows is their account.

"Most of the food was eaten cold. Fires were only lit in calm weather. Typically they had coarse oatmeal and water for breakfast. To wash it down they had coffee made from burnt breadcrumbs and hot water, sweetened with sugar. To have a fire on board a wooden ship was dangerous for obvious reasons. Their other meals consisted of cheese so hard you could carve it into shapes.

The meat became rotten and stank after a while at sea. The biscuits could almost walk about the table they had so many maggots in them. To get rid of maggots a dead fish was put into the barrel of biscuits and the maggots crawled out of the biscuits into the fish. Then the fish was thrown away.

Biscuits were often shared with rats and weevils that had a free run of the ship. The 'fresh' water to wash the biscuits down was stored in barrels and slowly turned to a green slime as time went by. The strange thing was, many sailors joined the navy because of the food. It was often better than they would have got at home, at least early on in the voyage!

Sleeping arrangements meant a hammock slung below decks and each sailor had a piece of deck 14 inches (37cm) wide to call their own! They had to be careful just in case someone stole the hammock in the dark by using a fishing hook and line. Below decks, it was gloomy and damp; it smelled of unwashed bodies, damp clothes, and other odours that go with crowded unhygienic conditions. It was almost impossible to clean yourself or your

clothes. (Soap was not issued until 1825.) Only half the crew could sleep at any one time. The other half was on watch. At the end of each watch, sailors just swapped places.

If you were caught stealing, the punishments were terrible. You could receive a 'checked shirt' flogging. This method of flogging resulted in a diamond pattern across your back. For real punishment you could receive up to 300 lashes. Mind you, they did have a doctor standing by to make sure sailors did not die immediately!

For minor offences men might be put in leg irons and left on the deck in all weathers, burnt by the sun or soaked by the rain and sea. It was a way of letting everyone know you had done something wrong.

As fires were not allowed, there was no smoking, so sailors chewed tobacco and spat it into a tub. If you missed and it landed on the deck, (that had to be kept scrubbed spotless) a tub was fastened round your neck, and the crew used it for target practice! Scrubbing the deck with a stone as big as a bible (known as a holy stone), on your hands and knees was no fun.

Tattooing was one way of passing the time at sea. It was done with a needle and then ink or ash was rubbed into the wounds to make it permanent. The favourites were the names of ships and sweethearts. After years at sea some of the sailors ended up nearly covered in tattoos. Some of them were nearly works of art, done by their more artistic shipmates, often for money. They had learned how to tattoo from sailors returning from expeditions to the Pacific Isles, with captains like James Cook."

LEGACIES LEFT TO US

The men on board HMS Victory ate their meals off square wooden plates; hence square meals!

Surgeons prescribed lime or lemon juice for those suffering from scurvy. This earned British sailors the nickname 'limeys.'

NAPOLEON TAKES ON THE ROYAL NAVY

The Emperor Napoleon desperately wanted to invade England, but before he could do so, he had to destroy the Royal Navy. His general plan was to get a fleet of French and Spanish ships together so they would be numerous enough to defeat the Royal Navy.

Unfortunately for Napoleon, his fleets were continually being blockaded by the British ships, which restricted them to port and thus preventing them from forming a fleet large enough to take on the British fleet. Adding to Napoleon's problem was his lack of experienced officers. Many had fled France in fear to escape being guillotined for being aristocrats. The officers that were left universally felt that the fleet's objective of defeating the Royal Navy was doomed to failure.

This wasn't good for morale amongst the officers and men of the French fleet and in further to these problems, the French tactics were of a defensive nature, that is, they fired at the masts and rigging to cripple the ship so it could not move and thus they, in turn, could escape the blockade. The British tactics were offensive, their commanders aim was to get alongside

or behind the enemy ship and blast it at point blank range with great destructive broadsides until the enemy surrendered.

So the scene was set for a disaster on a massive scale for the French and Spanish fleet. The confrontation was to take place off the coast of Spain between Cadiz and Cape Trafalgar on October 21 1805. It came to be called the 'Battle of Trafalgar' and was to be one of the greatest naval victories in history.

TRAFALGAR~OCTOBER 21 1805

At the order "clear for action" the drums rolled for 'beat to quarters' throughout the ship. HMS Victory's crew sprang into action. They were terrified and excited at the same time. Cooking fires were doused. Furniture and loose items were stowed away or thrown overboard so they wouldn't hinder the crew as the battle commenced. A gritty sand was thrown on all the decks to prevent fires and to stop the crew from slipping on the blood that would soon run on them. HMS Victory's well-trained crew could clear the ship for action in ten minutes.

The fleet under the command of Horatio Nelson was crewed by tough, experienced and confident officers and men. Nelson was a man of genius-the greatest hero of the Napoleonic era. His greatest quality was his ability to inspire everybody, irrespective of rank; that they were part of a brotherhood, and for this, the men loved him and there was nothing they would not do for him.

Nelson had set the tone that morning with a signal to the fleet; it read 'England expects that every man will do his duty.' The task of putting the flags together to send this message for Nelson to the fleet, fell to the yeoman of

signals, one Alfred Taylor. The only other message Nelson sent that day was 'Engage the enemy more closely.'

With battle stations ringing in their ears one 32-pound gun crew set about their duty with a will. Preparing and firing the guns was a skilful and highly disciplined operation. Amongst the twelve-man gun crew was Richard Williams-the gun captain whose job it was to prime, aim and fire the cannon, Thomas Smith who turned and raised the cannon barrel and Jerimiah Thomas who loaded the cannon. James Evans moved the cannon barrel and passed the crew the cannon balls or canister shot, and the youngest member of the crew 18-year-old William Johnson brought the crew fresh supplies of gunpowder. In minutes the gun crew had loaded and primed the gun ready for use. All they could do now was wait in fear and trepidation until the enemy came into range.

THE BLOODY BATTLE COMMENCES

The gun crews watched nervously as they drew closer to the French fleet. They were waiting for the order to 'open fire' or be fired upon.

The French ships started to fire and suddenly the order 'open fire' came from midshipman Robert Smith. Within seconds, the gun deck was filled with dense choking smoke as they fired the deadly broadsides. Organised chaos reigned as dozens of gun crews leapt out of the way of recoiling guns. To be caught by a recoiling gun usually meant serious injury. Feverishly the crews worked to reload the guns. A well-trained gun crew could reload and fire in 90 seconds. Sparks were damped down, the gun was cleaned, loaded with 32lb (15kg) shot and powder and run out ready for the next murderous broadside. 'Fire' came the command and the fuse

was lit. The crews jumped back out of the way, covering their ears. As soon as it fired, they went back into action reloading the gun. To Thomas Smith the gun deck looked like a 'scene from hell'. He could hardly see and was coughing from the fumes and smoke.

Smashed and broken bodies lay on the deck; some skewered by long wooden splinters blasted from the hull. Blood ran through the sand in little streams everywhere. Young William Johnson thought he would go mad looking at the horrors of war all around him and thought briefly about running away. Then he came to his senses as he spotted the royal marines standing guard on deck. Corporal William Turner and his three privates, John Smith, William Wright and Jonathan Brown were stationed on the gun decks to prevent men like William Johnson from leaving their posts in the madness of battle.

The only men leaving the gun decks were the dead and mortally wounded being taken to the cockpit. The cockpit was filled with dead and dying men and resembled, in the words of one sailor, 'a mad butchers shop'.

"Men lay there with shattered and missing limbs, some had huge splinters sticking out of their body and many were horribly burnt as well. The place was filled with the screams and cries of the wounded. The surgeon and his assistants were covered in blood feverishly amputating a sailor's leg, shattered below the knee. They had to work fast to reduce the risk of infection that usually killed more men than the surgery itself. The sailor had rum poured down his throat to help deaden the pain. They forced a rope gag into his mouth to prevent him biting his

tongue off, fortunately the patient usually fainted before long."

Razor sharp knives and saws were used to cut through skin and bone as quickly as possible. Afterwards the end of the amputated limb was dipped in boiling tar to seal the wound and stop the bleeding. Later the sailor would make or be given a wooden leg and probably be called 'peg leg.' The rule for receiving treatment was "*you were attended to in the order in which you arrived, irrespective of your type of wound.*" Many men died needlessly because of this rule. Untreatable, badly injured and dead men were thrown overboard because; there were no facilities for preserving the dead until they reached shore, which could be weeks later.

Meanwhile on the gun deck the sweating, filthy gun crews worked like men possessed to load and fire their guns as the men-of-war drew closer to each other.

Suddenly at 1.10pm, HMS Victory came alongside a French man-of-war and their rigging locked them together. The gun crews, with their guns nearly touching the French ship, continued to fire into the hull and decks, whilst the French ship fired at their masts and rigging.

On the main deck, the royal marine privates John Thompson, William Cook, John Jackson and William Smith were firing their muskets at the French crew and mentally preparing themselves for hand-to-hand combat. At 1.25pm, the privates witnessed a moment in history they never forgot. Nelson was walking on the quarterdeck in the full Admirals uniform he had decided to wear. It was to be a fateful decision. A sharp shooter on the French ship spotted Nelson and,

taking aim, fired. The ball struck Nelson in the shoulder, passed through his lung and shattered his spine. The crew watched horrified as Nelson collapsed to the deck. Thomas Hardy, Victory's captain, rushed to his side and as he knelt down to comfort him Nelson said '*they have done for me Hardy, my backbone is shot through.*'

They took Nelson below decks and made him comfortable. At approximately 4.30pm Nelson died. (The spot where he died is now a shrine to his memory on HMS Victory, moored in Portsmouth) To preserve his body for burial in England they put Nelson in a barrel and filled it with brandy.

The French ship surrendered at 4.30pm by striking its colours. The battle ended at 5.45pm. The cost in lives to the French man-of-war was horrific; they lost a total of 487 men and officers out of a complement of 643. In fact there were only 25 fit men left to crew the ship. Compared to the total loss to the British fleet of 484 killed, and 1200 wounded, testified to the incredible ferocity of the English fleets offensive nature, experience and skills as a fighting navy.

The savage destruction of Napoleon's fleet had dealt a serious blow to the French navy from which it never recovered. Winning this battle ensured that Britain was to remain the major naval power for the next hundred years.

A NATION GRIEVES

The people of Britain were horrified to learn of Nelson's death and plunged into mourning. Few men in history have fired the imagination as did the battle scarred, one eyed, one-armed Lord Horatio Nelson. Nelson had won the

hearts and minds of his sailors and was going to be sorely missed. Many of his men felt the price paid was far too high for beating the French. The people of Britain honoured his memory by erecting a statue to their hero in Trafalgar Square.



ANCIENT MARINER.

Spanker

Nautical; Mizzen sail

Other; A device now outlawed under the Child Protection Act.

Scandalise

Nautical To trice up the tack and settle the peak of a sail.

Other; To tell a rude joke to someone who does not have a sense of humour.

Shank

Nautical; The shaft of an anchor.

Other; The owner of a pony.

Tender

Nautical; A small vessel such as a dinghy used to attend a parent vessel

Other; A sensitive place.

Tight

Nautical; Free from leaks.

Other; The effect of too many free drinks.

YOTAS –A YEAR OF SAILING

This season, under the umbrella of YOTAS, Slaughden Sailing Club has been able to offer taster sailing sessions to local schoolchildren through an outreach scheme. This has been a continuation of a project started last year in conjunction with Leiston Middle School. The project is called "Reaching Out" and pupils between the ages of 11 and 13yrs were offered twelve places. The aim is to welcome local young people into the club where they can experience the thrill of sailing, accompanied by club members in a safe environment, as well as seeing the YOTAS section in full action. This opportunity gives them and their parents an insight into our club activities. It will hopefully attract young members to our YOTAS section.

NOTES FROM OUR YOUNGER SAILORS.

Hannah Howard-Franks

"Over the last couple of years I've learnt a lot of things like how to rig a boat and the names of things on boats. I have learnt how to launch a boat in the safest way possible as well as sail. I can tack, gybe and come along side another boat. So far I haven't got my confidence up to sail a topper, but I'm working on it. Things I've learnt personally are to be brave at all times and not be afraid of cold water. I've had an excellent time at YOTAS."

Sophie

"This year I have enjoyed the introduction of games and challenges to test our skills and knowledge, but to have fun at the same time as well. Wind awareness has always been an issue for me but I think that I am now beginning to understand it. Other things I have learnt this season are: How to tie a clove hitch and a bowline and how to understand what of the phrases like 'harden up'. What I have learnt about myself is that I am not that confident about going out on my own, but I feel that I am gaining in confidence."



Shaun

"I enjoyed sailing last year, but I have lost my confidence this year."

Emily

"My first time at YOTAS gave me a lot of confidence on the water as I have only sailed twice before. Once on my own and once with my Dad.

While sailing on my first day here at YOTAS I was told names of parts of the boat and they let me sail on my own, which I enjoyed.

I would recommend the sailing club to any new beginners as all of the members here are extremely friendly."

Lucy Pilgrim

"I have enjoyed coming to YOTAS this year and going out with Jack in the powerboat. I have passed my powerboat level 2 this year."

Hannah

"Wayfarer: My first time at YOTAS The first time I went out in the Wayfarer I thought it was so much fun. I really enjoyed it. I can't wait to start properly next year."

Betsy

"My first time at YOTAS I enjoyed everything. The second time I fell in the mud!"



To contribute to this news
letter e-mail to:

leeandkaren01@btinternet.com

Or post to Karen Hayes-
Baker address in yearbook.