Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of The Nelson Society of Australia Inc. Newsletter July 2011

Members and Friends at the 2005 Annual Service outside St Michael’s.

Program of Events

All meetings begin at 7pm for a 7.30 start unless otherwise stated. St Michael’s Hall, Cnr The Promenade & Gunbower Rd, Mt. Pleasant. Please bring a plate for supper.

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<td>Sunday September 11</td>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Visit to Cannington Maritime Museum #</td>
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<td>Saturday October 15</td>
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<td>RNA Trafalgar Dinner at RAAFA Estate Bull Creek #</td>
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<td>Saturday October 16</td>
<td>3pm</td>
<td>Trafalgar Memorial Service, St George’s Cathedral</td>
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<td>October—November</td>
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<td>Batavia Lecture, Maritime Museum Fremantle*</td>
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<td>Friday November 11</td>
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<td>Pickle Night, St Michael’s Hall</td>
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<td>Monday November 28</td>
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<td>Quiz Night and End of Year Supper St Michael’s Hall</td>
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<td>Sunday January 8</td>
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<td>Commemorative Service of Nelson’s Funeral</td>
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<td>Monday 13th February</td>
<td>6pm</td>
<td>Picnic, Wireless Hill Park*</td>
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# see enclosed flyer

*to be confirmed
Our Achievements Over Ten years

- March 2001 Inaugural Meeting in St Michael’s Hall,
- Talks given at meetings on life times and achievements of Nelson and those surrounding him.
- 2001-2011….Production of four-monthly Newsletters.
- October 2007-2010…Contributions to Batavia Lectures at WA Maritime Museum Fremantle.

- October 2002-20004
  Commemorative Services for the Battle of Trafalgar and death of Nelson on the Esplanade Perth.

- October 2005-2011
  Commemorative Services now take place in St George’s Cathedral Perth on the Sunday nearest Trafalgar Day
  Supported by HMS Stirling
  And a contingent of Australian Naval Cadets.

- November 2003-2010
  ‘Pickle’ Night Dinners in St Michael’s Hall, to celebrate the arrival of news to England by the little ship ‘Pickle’ of the great victory at Trafalgar and the death of Nelson.

- January 2004-2010
  Commemorative Services in St Michael’s Church Mt Pleasant of Funeral of Nelson on 9 January 1806.

- 2005…Bi-Centenary Celebrations of Battle of Trafalgar 1805 —2005.
- July 31 2005….Presentation of Haydn’s Nelson Mass in St Patrick’s Church, Fremantle.
- October 2005…. Three lectures at the WA Maritime Museum Fremantle.

- 2005
  Production of 300 bottles of Port. No 1 bottle presented to HMS Stirling, Garden island.
  One also donated to the Lord Nelson Brewery Hotel in the ‘Rocks’ in Sydney.

- July 2004
  The Bowman Flag
  donated by a member Ivan Hunter, It was the last available of 100 replicas, the original being in the Sydney Museum.

- 21 October 2005
  Joint Organisation with RNA of the Trafalgar Dinner at South Perth Yacht Club, to celebrate the 200 years since the Battle.

- 8 January 2006
  Burial of 50 year Time Capsule at St Michael’s Church Mt Pleasant.
Oct 23 2005
Dedication of Nelson Sword of Excellence, sponsored by Barminco Ltd, and awarded each year to an outstanding Officer of the RAN.

Recipients of the Sword of Excellence

Oct. 2006
Commander Justin Jones
First Recipient of the Sword

Commander David McDonald
2007

Lieutenant Commander David E Graham
2008

Lieutenant Commander Kerry Rohrsheim
2009

Lieutenant Commander Mark Sirois
2010

April 2008
A Nelson medallion was produced to be given to worthy recipients.

Sept. 28 2008
Dinner at RAAF Association, Bull Creek to celebrate 250th Anniversary of Nelson's Birthday.

October. 21 2010
Official Opening of Display on Nelson's life and achievements in the Swan Bell Tower in Perth.

October 2011
Inaugural Award of the Midshipman's Dirk, to Mid Rebecca Poulteny ANC sponsored by Australian Defence Credit Union, to the outstanding Australian Cadet on a leadership course at HMAS Creswell, Jervis Bay.

5 April 2011
Luncheon to celebrate ten years of the Nelson Society in Australia.
The Tenth Anniversary Luncheon
5th April 2011
held at Quinlivan’s Restaurant
East Fremantle

Bob Woollett    Mike and Margaret Sargeant    Richard Savage, Gillian Mead
John and Cynthia Lyall    Peter and Helen Edmonds
Audrey and David Clark    David Orr    Roy Clark
A Talk given by our Founder and Life President Graham Perkins on the Occasion of the Luncheon to Celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the Nelson Society of Australia

Chairman Mike has allocated me ten minutes to talk to you. That is, one minute for each year of the Society's existence. Be grateful therefore that this is not our 20th or 25th Anniversary.

Mike has welcomed you all here today but I wish to add my greetings to Patron Commodore David Orr, the sheet anchor in the early days of the Society performing the duty of Inspecting Officer at Memorial Services and instituting the ceremony of toasting the Immortal Memory at their conclusion.

Now I would like to welcome my personal guests. Not all of you are or have been paid up members but all of you have supported our events over the years in one way or another and have given me encouragement in my venture. Thank you.

It is with pleasure we have here today the Standards and Standard Bearers of Associations, who have attended our parades from day one. They are the Royal Naval Association Perth, The Royal Marines Association, The Royal Air Force Association and the Para Regiment. Their numbers have often been swelled by others unfortunately not present today.

These ladies, one being our indefatigable member Audrey Mantle and gentlemen, have graced our services and other events, immaculately turned out, giving up their time and travelling considerable distances for no reward. The Society has, however, been delighted to present them with the Society's Commemoration Medal.

My final greeting is to those of you who were present at the Memorial Services held at the Bell Tower and the Supreme Court Gardens. They were heady days. The first Service took place in a howling gale and members had to carry chairs loaned from a nearby café.

We had a large contingent of RAN Sea Cadets providing a Guard and Band, plus a display team. A replica of the “England Expects” signal was paraded by them. Up spirits was piped by the late Ted Slinger and the Standard Bearers received a tot of rum.

One year we had the Perth Town Crier in all his finery announcing the event. We had the drama of “should we cancel the Service being held two days after the Bali Bombing?” and Patron David deciding “the show goes on”. We experienced the non-arrival of two Guests of Honour but Patron David Gallantly filled the breach. At the third Service the Act of Homage ceremony was introduced and carried out by the Commanding Officer of the Sea Cadets with member, John Ashworth acting as his escort.

Then there was the first parading of the Bowman Flag reminding us of the gratitude and appreciation of the early settlers of Nelson's Trafalgar victory. It was a sad but correct decision to abandon the colourful arena of the Supreme Court Gardens for the Memorial Services and move to the Cathedral. The cost and work load of staging the event at the gardens had become excessive and one year we would have certainly been washed out.

Sad, too, that the fourth year saw a change of direction by the Sea Cadet authority but I am pleased that the presentation of a Midshipman’s Dirk to the ANC as an award to their Cadet of the year and other efforts that have been made, have led to a resumption of greater participation by the Perth Cadets in 2010 and hopefully this will continue in the years ahead.

I cannot pass these early years by without special reference to the input of the Rev Tim Harrison, who conducted these services with great dignity in the face of many trials and tribulations and also Ron Ingham, the commentator whose dealings with the Returned Services League and their borrowed Tannoy system provided enough material for a TV sitcom.

Now how did the Society begin? I transferred my UK Naval Association membership to the Perth Branch when I emigrated in 1993. I found the Branch a tightly run ship under the Chairman, the late Ivan Hunter and his Secretary Geoff Paige.

The highlight of the Branch’s year was its Trafalgar Dinner, the toast to the Immortal Memory being prefaced by a speech from a Flag Officer or a four ring Captain.

Come the year 2000 Ivan could not find such an officer available so he asked me if I would undertake the task. I have attended over 30 Trafalgar Day functions worldwide but at none had the toast to the Immortal Memory ever been made by a Royal Marine. I considered that I was being highly honoured.

Dancing for joy.

Ivan Hunter and David Orr at the very first toasting to the ‘Immortal Memory’ at a Trafalgar Dinner.
I had knowledge of Nelson akin to that of the average Naval Officer so the speech presented no worries. This was until I was informed that the Governor of WA, His Excellency Major General Jeffries, was to be the Guest of Honour. Being a friend of Government House I had met His Excellency and he had informed me that on his several attachments to UK Military establishments he had made friends with numerous senior Royal Marine officers, who were all well known to me. I then realised that the honour of my Corps was at stake and from then until the event I read nothing but Nelson. By August I was completely hooked on his Lordship's life and career.

The evening went well. Later Chairman Ivan Hunter suggested that we should form a Nelson Appreciation Group. He pledged the support of his Branch. Commodore David accepted the invitation to become Patron and as Chairman of the Royal Australian Naval Historical Society, pledged its support as well. Come March 2001 the inaugural meeting was fixed, following a wide distribution of the flyer which you see on the back of your menu card and publicity by the West Australian and ABC radio. Some thirty people attended the meeting, twenty of whom came from the Australian Naval History Society and the RNA. The meeting was held in the Hall attached to my Church, St Michael's, Mount Pleasant.

The modest rental of this facility and its proximity to my home was one of the more fortunate happenings in those early days, to be followed by the active involvement of the Rector Joe Newbold who was later to become the Society's Chaplain. Joe regrettably is not with us today due to a special church commitment. In hindsight I am now well aware that I was over ambitious in the early days with both the number of meetings and additional special events. I soon became aware that members would give their time and practical help at meetings but were reluctant to take on any form of office.

Typical of being over ambitious was the formation of a drama Group to stage a play the 'Death of Nelson'. My Guest today, John Bayley, with forty odd years producing all manner of theatricals, agreed to school our cast and act as the narrator of the play. He soon knocked Nick Bell into shape as Nelson and a play reading took place with probably the largest attendance ever at a Society meeting. The reading went well. At the end 50% of those present were in tears or openly crying. The other 50% expressed such remarks as "God he took a long time to die!"

The group could not satisfy John of the commitment needed to progress with the production and it fell by the wayside. As we approached our fourth year I was finding that I could not cope alone with the heavy and continual demands of the Society. This caused me to consider whether it could continue unless the membership took on some of the load. I called an emergency meeting to acquaint it with this situation.

At this meeting came an offer by Bob Woollett to become Secretary or Treasurer but not both. This gesture probably saved the Group from disbandment which is now known as the Nelson Society of Australia Inc. Later a lady member agreed to become Treasurer. I then approached Mike Sergeant, who had been unable to attend this meeting to become Chairman. Much to my relief he accepted and set about forming a committee.

Shortly afterwards Richard Savage became a member and agreed to assist me with the Memorial Service. Ultimately he took over this responsibility and retains the brief today. Richard's contribution to the Society has been immense, orchestrating among other things the production of the Society's Commemorative Medal.

I must now congratulate Betty Foster on such an attractive souvenir menu for this luncheon. Betty produces similar items for Pickle Night and her editorship of our quarterly Newsletter make her a crucial and central figure of the Society. Long may this continue.

Though not envisaged in the early years, it is now a historical fact that the Society has resurrected, throughout the Royal Australian Navy, the legacy left by His Lordship. With regret I tell you that in 2000 no special parades or social functions recalling Trafalgar took place. There was indeed even hostility in some quarters towards Trafalgar and Nelson, it being said that neither had place in the modern and independent Australian Navy.

A Commanding Officer known to me was quietly told by higher authority to forget the idea of a Trafalgar day social function. It so happened that many years ago my daughter served at the same UK naval establishment as the Commanding Officer of HMAS Stirling, a former British Royal Naval Officer Phillip Orchard.
This enabled me to approach him concerning the Society and also raise with him the prospect of obtaining the service of the Reserve Band of the RAN, for our Trafalgar Bi-Centenary Celebrations, the Band being part of his command. Phil showed interest in the Society and pencilled in my request. I approached him again when member Ron Ingham suggested that a Ceremonial Sword should be procured and presented to the RAN to be awarded annually to the officer who had displayed qualities, akin to those set by his Lordship. Phil was enthusiastic about the idea but expressed grave doubts about its possible acceptance. How he steered the project through the command channels of the RAN I do not know but his diplomacy eventually succeeded and the project became reality.

Last October saw the pinnacle of the project when the Chief of Navy, Admiral Crane came to Perth to make the presentation of the now styled ‘Sword of Excellence’. Phil Orchard become a member of the Society and later confirmed the availability of his band for the Trafalgar Bi-Centenary Celebrations. He has recently been awarded Life Honorary membership of the Society. Unfortunately he cannot be with us today.

Having retired from the Service to become Head of Post, WA, in the UK Consular Service, he has now moved on again and started a new position yesterday. We wish him well.

I approach the end of my talk by recalling with great sadness the sudden death of member Ivan Hunter. His contribution to the Society was immense. Ivan could get anything done and to a high standard. He was responsible for the mounting of all our artefacts, the Nelson statuette, the ship’s bell, the extremely valuable HMS Nelson tampion and his outstanding cordage on the Bowman Flag staff stands as a fitting memorial to him. Ivan was a royalist and patriot of the highest degree and his many years as Coxswain to her Majesty on board the Royal Yacht Britannia earned him a personal award from Her Majesty which he gratefully treasured. He left us, as he would have wished, at the very end of the Anzac Day march last year, marching at the head of the Perth Naval Association contingent.

The souvenir menu gives you details of the many projects, services and social events that have been brought to fruition by the Society’s Committee and I am not going to repeat them but I will merely state that the Society has a program of events that any similar Society would be proud of. Let us make sure that it continues and the Society flourishes.

May I conclude by imploring all our members to try and recruit just one new member this year, thus enabling the Society to embark upon its second ten years strong in numbers and with achievements to come as good as those of the first ten years.
Editor: The 'Bristol Savages' is a Bohemian club begun in England in 1894 and the Wigwam is based on an old tithe barn where in 1905 Art exhibitions were held. These exhibitions still take place today.

For some years I have sat in the Wigwam on Wednesday evenings close to 'The Nelson Dirk', under which there is a description by its donors, and it reads: "This dirk has been presented to Bristol Savages by Brother Savage John Stephenson and his wife, Elizabeth".

Six of these dirks were made to be worn by the Midshipmen who were pall bearers at Admiral Nelson's funeral, following his death at the Battle of Trafalgar, 1805. Each of the pall-bearers was later presented with the dirk which he wore at that solemn occasion.

This dirk was worn by officer Cadet Henry Lancaster who, at the age of fourteen, served in H.M.S. "Victory" at Trafalgar. He completed a distinguished and adventurous career as Commander Henry Lancaster, R.N. Commander Henry Lancaster was an ancestor of Elizabeth Stephenson.

I often wondered who the other Cadets were, and if their dirks were still in existence. In February 2005, and with the 200th Anniversary of the death of Lord Nelson due in October 2005, in pursuit of my query I contacted several Nelson Museums and people within the Nelson community. They all replied with a similar theme - "This is a myth! The only thing presented was the Nelson Memorial Ring to friends and family".

The report of Nelson's funeral in The Times clearly states that the pall-bearers were Admirals of the Fleet, even though the coffin was placed on a carriage for the procession. The carriage was elaborate, modelled in imitation of the hull of Victory, with a figurehead at the bow, and the stem carved and painted in naval style with the word "Victory" in yellow raised letters on the lantern over the poop. The side panels were decorated with representations of the many awards he had been given. The Times also reports that upon arrival at St. Paul's the coffin was taken from the carriage by 12 seamen from Victory and carried into the Cathedral, and that 48 seamen and 12 Marines from Victory lined the steps. I then contacted the National Maritime Museum Greenwich. They provided some information which was positive, but again, their Nelson expert, Colin White, who confirmed certain information, ended one email by saying - "my hunch is that the link with the dirk Lancaster, and it is known that the father of Henry Lancaster was Vicar of Merton, Surrey from 1789 until his death in 1823. Admiral Nelson, whose father was a Vicar, moved to Merton in 1801, and the two families became friends.

Henry Lancaster was born 1791 at Wimbledon and the Cadet was given Admiral Nelson's patronage and he is shown on the Victory MacKenzie Roll as a Volunteer First Class at the Battle of Trafalgar, having joined Victory on 14th September 1805. He later rose to the rank of Commander in 1851 and died in 1862.

The National Maritime Museum provided much valuable information, but were unable to complete my quest. They regretted they did not have the staff to investigate my query further, but gave several references which could only be followed up with a visit to the National Archives, Kew.

One member of Bristol Savages, Don Jones, a research historian and retired lecturer from Bristol University and the University of West of England, went to Kew to view all the references given by Greenwich.

He concluded:

1. There were eight Cadets who were issued with special 'clothes' prior to the funeral on 9th January 1806. (The eight Cadets are also listed in the Victory MacKenzie Trafalgar Roll).
2. 'That naval officers who were not wearing mourning cloaks, or official gowns, appeared with mourning swords'.
3. Henry Lancaster was one of the Cadets walking ahead of the coffin into St. Paul's Cathedral.
Following this information, Greenwich asked a final question, ‘Is the hilt black?’, to which I was able to reply ‘Yes’, and they agreed the provenance and that the dirk was carried by Cadet Henry Lancaster at the funeral.

Mission accomplished.

The hilt of the dirk rests upon a fragment of English oak, which came from the timbers of H.M.S. “Victory.”

The fragment of oak was gathered from the Victory by the late Brother Savage, Terry Cleeve, who, when young, visited Victory with his father when timbers were being replaced on the ship, and were to be thrown away! Terry Cleeve made the presentation box the dirk is displayed in.

I am grateful to Don Jones who visited the National Archives, Kew, and with his extensive knowledge knew how to locate and search the following references given to us by the National Maritime Museum:

LC 2/37 Funeral: Lord Nelson 1806
LC 2/2/38/2
Funeral: Lord Nelson 1806 LC 2/40
Funeral: Lord Nelson 1806 work/6/363/2
Preparations for Lord Nelson’s funeral.

Miscellaneous papers 1805 Admiralty Papers AD36 1590 I,
Muster Roll for the “Victory”, 1st Nov 1805 - 15th Jan 1806
Naval Chronicle, Vol. 3, 1804 -1806
Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy 1660 -1815, Vol. II

Advertisements for our first meeting

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Those present at the 10th Anniversary Dinner

Michael Sargeant
Margaret Sargeant
Bob Woollett
Rev’d Tim Harrison
David Orr
Ron Ingham
David Clarke
Audrey Clarke
Roy Clark
Rob O’Connor QC
Ian Downland
Audrey Downland
John Lyall
Cynthia Lyall
Ian Wallace
John Ashworth
Graham Perkins
Joan Perkins
Toni Roberts
Audrey Mantle
Lynda Ford
John Bailey
Kerry Newman
Val Luce
Arnold Thompson
Vanda Thompson
Harry Morgan
Frank Walsh
Reg Marriot
Sandra Marriot
Peter Woodward
Colin Merton
Colin Chapman
Bettine Chapman
Graham Chapman
Annette Chapman
John Foster
Betty Foster
Peter Edmonds
Helen Edmonds
Imelda Williams
Robin Reid
Mike Kiff
Celia Miraglia
Geoff Paice
Elise Paice
Mick Coyle
Jacqueline Coyle
Ken Peberdy
Peter Greenfield
Ann Markin
Glyn Davies
Richard Savage
Gillian Mead
David Bennett
Nigel Bennett
Ted Pitts
Peter Board
Geoff Sadlier
Lillian Toomer
Ron Brown
Wendy Brown
Don Bantock
Alison Thomson
Interviewer — Welcome back from the grave Sir William. It’s very good of you to make the journey and join me for this interview for the Nelson Society of Australia’s newsletter.

Sir William — Thank you for the invitation and it’s a pleasure to be here. My resting place is a tomb at Slebech Church in South Wales, which is now completely sealed up because of the erosion of the nearby coast. It’s a very cold place running with damp and existence is only made bearable by the presence of my dear first wife, Catherine, who has been there for 20 years longer than I have.

Interviewer — Catherine was a member of the Barlow family wasn’t she and through her you inherited Slebech House and Estate, when she sadly died in 1792?

Sir William — Yes, that’s right, and although I spent little time there on account of my duties in Naples, I always thought of it as my spiritual home, which it did literally become after my demise in 1802.

Interviewer — The Slebech Estate became the major part of your assets but you chose to leave it to your nephew, Charles Greville, rather than your second wife Emma, Lady Hamilton.

Sir William — That is so. It was important to keep it in the family. He was the second son of my sister, The Countess of Warwick, a fine young man and one for whom I had the highest regard. I must hasten to point out, however, I did leave Emma a generous legacy, the house in Clarges St, London and a ₤800 annuity from the Pembrokeshire Estate which should have been enough for her to live in reasonable comfort if only the dear creature had been more careful with money.

Interviewer — I believe you attended Westminster School in London for 7 years and then went into the army when you were 17.

Sir William — Yes, I joined the Foot Guards as an ensign and saw service in the Netherlands fighting the French. But I was never cut out to be a soldier and resigned my commission in 1758, married Catherine and commenced my career as a diplomat. I became His Majesty’s Envoy in Naples in 1763.

Interviewer — Your early years in Naples were notable for your involvement in the arts and the acquisition of antiquities.

Sir William — I had always been keenly interested in these matters and Naples was an ideal place to pursue them further. After publishing a paper on Etruscan vases, I was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1768 and for the rest of my life, the acquisition and sale of objets d’art and paintings were a consuming passion for me. The transactions also helped me financially, although not always to the extent that I hoped for. My most famous acquisition was the Barberini Vase, later to be known as the Portland Vase after it was purchased by the Duchess of Portland in 1784. It ended up in the British Museum, where, despite being smashed to pieces by a manic visitor in 1845, it can still be seen today in its reconstructed form.

Interviewer — Natural history was another obsession of yours and you became and have remained something of an authority on Mount Vesuvius, the nearby volcano, and its frequent eruptions.

Sir William — A truly amazing phenomenon and I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity to experience it over the years at such close quarters and record my detailed observations in papers for the Royal Society. The experience was not without its dangers, mind you. I and a guide were on the mountain during the largest eruption for a century in 1767 and, faced with a fountain of fire and a torrent of falling lava, we had to turn and run for three miles to safety. We were indeed lucky to escape with our lives.

Interviewer — Your fascination with antiquities did at times subject you to ridicule by journalists and cartoonists of the day.
Later, one particular cartoon by the Thomas Rowlandson entitled ‘Contemplating Ye Beauties of ye Antique’ shows you, looking like the proverbial dirty old man, peering through your glasses at the bare torso of a female statuette.

Sir William — I was not the only figure to be the target of Rowlandson’s waspish work. But I wasn’t affected by it in any way and learned to take it all in my stride.

Interviewer — You also came in for some unfavourable comment for what many regard as an unhealthy interest in the fertility rites practised in the church at Isernia in central Italy which involved the worship of phallic ex-votos, wax objects made in the shape of the male penis.

Sir William — I assure you my interest in the subject was purely academic and my discovery of those objects and the paper I wrote about them, ‘The Worship of the Priapus’, were an important contribution to our understanding of the part which pagan ritual played in the early Christian church and of the influence it still exerted right down to the 19th century.

Interviewer — After you failed to get the Ambassador’s job in Madrid in 1776 and the unfortunate death of your wife in 1782, your life took a new turn when you received an interesting proposition from your nephew Charles Greville.

Sir William — Yes, Charles had rescued a young girl Emily Lyon, from the clutches of the lustful Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh (Fanshaw) of Uppark, Sussex, and had charitably provided a home for her and her mother, Mrs Cadogan, in Little Tichfield Street in London. All went well for a while, but the situation was difficult for Charles, who had several business commitments and was helping me by looking after my affairs in Wales, and so he asked me if I would find a place for Emma and her mother in my household in Naples. I had met Emma briefly on a visit to London and admiring her youthful beauty and vigour, had commissioned a portrait of her. But there were some aspects of propriety to consider and it was only after protracted correspondence that I somewhat reluctantly agreed to Charles’ suggestion. Initially Emma was very unhappy — clearly she had fallen in love with Charles — but eventually she realized he was not going to join her as promised and slowly accepted her situation. From my point of view she became a valuable asset, proving to be a delightful companion and efficiently helping to run the domestic routine at the Palazzo Sessa.

Interviewer — I also understand she entered wholeheartedly into the social life of Neapolitan Society and it was at this time, wasn’t it, that she became famous for performing her Attitudes, in which she acted out episodes from Roman and Greek history?

Sir William — Yes, and did so with such grace and beauty. They became immensely popular with our guests and on his visit to Naples in 1757 even won the acclaim of the distinguished German Poet Johan Goethe, a man not known for giving gratuitous praise.

I must claim a small part in the success of those occasions, suggesting as I did subjects for the performances and helping Emma devise their format.

Interviewer — Your friendship with Emma grew closer and despite the 35 year difference in age I believe the relationship eventually became intimate.

Sir William — Yes. I couldn’t believe my good fortune—it was like a new lease of life for me. I had rarely known such happiness. But a complication and a difficulty for me arose when Emma became concerned about her status and started to talk about our getting married. I could see little advantage in our doing this - our current arrangement was working well. But I finally gave way to her persistence and we were quietly married by special license from the King on September 9th 1791 in St Marylebone Church during a visit to London.

Interviewer — On your return to Naples, the next seven years were halcyon ones for you both, despite the threat to Naples posed by the Revolutionary Government in France.

Sir William — They were indeed domestically blissful apart from some problems with my health and a great opportunity for me to pursue my cultural and scientific activities. Volumes 1 and 11 of the Second Collection of Vases were published at this time and in 1794 I sent a graphic account of the recent eruption of Vesuvius to the Royal Society, held by many to be my best piece of writing. They were important years for Emma, too, as she consolidated her position in Society, importantly developing a close relationship with Queen Carolina and thus acquiring an influential voice in political affairs, whilst King Ferdinand was handing over more and more power to his wife and devoting all his time to his overriding passion - hunting.

Interviewer — I understand these hunting trips took up a great deal of your time, too, Sir William.

Sir William — They di, and blood sports were not a particular interest of mine but the King was very insistent on my company. Although Carolina held the reins it was still important to have the ear of the King, whenever possible. His word was still the law, if and when he so chose.
Interviewer — Sir William, your world changed dramatically in September 1798, with the fateful arrival in Naples of Admiral Nelson.

Sir William — A dramatic change it certainly was, although I would empathically add that it was one for the better. But I disagree entirely with the suggestion that Nelson’s arrival was fateful. It was certainly a fateful time for that upstart Napoleon, stranded as he was with his army in Egypt after Nelson’s crushing defeat of his fleet at the Nile and with his plan for a glorious conquest of India in ruins. I was greatly impressed by Nelson whom I had briefly met years earlier and with whom I had maintained a businesslike and friendly correspondence in the interval. I was delighted to welcome him back to Naples. He was a great man and fine leader and we soon developed a mutual trust and respect which lasted for the rest of my life. This was affirmed by me in a section of my will in which I had bequeathed to him a picture in enamel of Emma: “to my dearest friend Lord Nelson, Duke of Bronte, a very small token of the great regard I have for his Lordship, the most loyal and truly brave character I have ever met with. God bless him and shame fall on those who do not say Amen.”

Interviewer — But the close friendship which began to develop between Emma and Nelson must surely have caused you some concern?

Sir William — Not at all, Emma shared my high regard for his Lordship and the three of us worked in complete harmony to preserve the Alliance of the Bourbon Monarchy with Britain and to combat the threat from the accursed French.

Interviewer — Initially, of course, without success, when the decision supported by you and Nelson, was made to send the rag tag and bobtail Neapolitan army north to Rome, where it suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the French Invaders.

Sir William — In retrospect that was an error but when the enemy drove south and threatened Naples itself, it was fully remedied by the efficiency and speed with which, helped by the indefatigable Emma, Nelson and I organised the evacuation of the royal Family and their possessions to Palermo in Sicily — a tremendous feat under the circumstances.

Interviewer — But in September of the following year, after the French withdrawal, a further error was made, with what was probably a premature decision to return to Naples.

This sadly led to your and Nelson’s involvement in the harsh treatment of the rebels who had collaborated with the French during the occupation.

Sir William — The decision in the matter was the King’s and Nelson, with my concurrence, was merely carrying out his lawful wishes. I did have some reservations about Nelson’s cancellation of the truce with the rebels, which had been made by Cardinal Ruffo and his band of patriots. The mayhem and widespread slaughter this produced was most unfortunate but that the mob was thirsty for revenge on those who had supported the invader was not surprising.

One decision of Nelson which I was completely at odds with, was his order, after a hastily convened court martial, for the immediate hanging on a Sunday of one of the rebel leaders, the unfortunate Admiral Carraciolo. Nelson was in no mood for compromise and my plea to him to reconsider his decision, or at least delay the execution, fell on deaf ears. Similarly, despite her influence at court, Emma’s later pleas to spare the lives of several old friends, who had stayed behind in Naples and unwillingly thrown their lot in with the new regime, was sadly unsuccessful.

Interviewer — With the situation in Naples so volatile the King then insisted on you all returning to Palermo and many have said that the next 6 months was probably the nadir of your many years of service in the Mediterranean.
Interviewer — It was during this time in Palermo that it is alleged that the relationship between Emma and your friend became intimate.

Sir William — I saw no evidence of that and despite some differences over the cost of entertaining in our home, the Palazzo Palagonia, the friendship between the three of us was as firm as ever. Emma described it at this time in terms of the motto of the order of the Bath a Trio Juncta in Uno — three joined in one.

It is true I was aware Nelson and Emma spent a lot of time together without me during the day, as I carried out my official duties at court or accompanied the King on his frequent hunting trips. Also during the evening when I usually retired early and gladly left them to pursue Emma’s passion at the gambling table until the early hours.

Interviewer — But Nelson and Emma’s relationship attracted a good deal of adverse comment from friends and visitors at the time. On his visit to Sicily, Captain Troubridge expressed his concern on several occasions and as Nelson’s Commander-in-Chief, Lord Keith, scornfully dismissed them as “a pair of sentimental fools”.

Sir William — Keith was a pompous ass and just jealous of Nelson’s popularity in the fleet and success in battle. He was also incompetent and had no grasp of the political or strategic situation. Nelson was later quite right to refuse to obey his inexplicable order to leave Palermo to the mercy of the French and go with his fleet to Minorca.

Interviewer — Eventually both you and Nelson were recalled to London but not before you undertook a voyage together with Emma, to Malta, later recalled by Nelson as one of “days of ease and nights of pleasure” and one on which it is alleged Emma conceived the child Horatia.

Sir William — I have no knowledge of the second matter but I do agree it was a most enjoyable four weeks and a fitting swan song to our wonderful life together in Naples and Sicily.

Interviewer — Attempts to arrange a passage home to England in a Naval ship failed and you were obliged to make the journey overland from Northern Italy to Hamburg.

Sir William — That was a severe trial for me as I was unwell with bronchial trouble and I found the endless string of official visits and receptions extremely tiresome. But I was content to take a back seat as we made our way through Austria and north through Germany. Nelson was acclaimed as the saviour of Europe, particularly in Vienna, and Emma, despite unchivalrous comments by some observers about her fulsome figure, was widely admired for her vitality and endearing charm.

Interviewer — Finally back in Europe in November 1800, there were cool receptions for Nelson from his wife Fanny and for you from your old friend, the King. But a happier experience was the festive Christmas you spent with Nelson and Emma as guests of Sir William Beckford, at the Gothic folly he had created on his estate at Wiltshire - Fonthill Abbey or Fonthill Splendens as it was known. Tell us about your relationship with this eccentric character.

Sir William — Beckford was a distant cousin of mine who had visited Naples back in 1780 after falling into disgrace over his affair with a young boy. My wife took a motherly interest in him and, with their shared love of music, a close friendship developed between them, followed by a correspondence which lasted until Catherine’s death.

For all his faults, Beckworth was a man of sensibility and style and a considerable connoisseur and patron of the arts. His offer in 1801 to organise a campaign to get me a peerage was much appreciated, although it was ultimately unsuccessful and was partly driven, I later realized by self-interest, hoping that in return for his efforts, I would make him heir to the title and so have his reputation in society restored.

Interviewer — You and Emma leased No 23 Piccadilly in London early in 1801 and Nelson, now separated from Fanny, took lodgings nearby. Shortly afterwards Emma gave birth to a daughter, Horatia. Admittedly the baby was immediately smuggled away to be looked after by a wet nurse, Mrs Gibson, in Little Tichfield St but it is amazing you were unaware of these events and apparently didn’t even know about the pregnancy.

Sir William — I agree it sounds incredible but it is true. Although still very close, Emma and I were no longer on intimate terms and with the style of dress fashionable at the time Emma was able to conceal her condition.
I feel I was very much a creature of the 18th century. As you probably know, I died in the arms of my dear Emma and with Nelson at my side holding my hand. A perfect illustration you could say of the *Trio Juncta in Uno* and confirmation of the enduring love and friendship we had enjoyed for the last five years.

**Interviewer** — By way of a conclusion, Sir William how would you sum up your life?

**Sir William** — In most ways, and compared with most people, it was very privileged and for that I am eternally grateful. I feel it was a life lived in the best way possible according to the light and opportunities afforded me. My one great regret was that I was not favoured with a son. Charles, my nephew, was in many ways a worthy substitute but it is not the same when the person is not your own blood. In the diplomatic sphere I can claim to have given useful service in Naples but must confess I was disappointed not to be rewarded with the more prestigious postings in Madrid or Vienna where I felt I could have achieved so much more.

This limited achievement professionally, was partly compensated for by the contributions I was able to make, through my writing an collecting, to the science of volcanoes and to the understanding of many aspects of our cultural heritage.

But the part of my life I am most proud of, by far, is the ineffable bond of friendship I was able to forge with many of my fellow mankind, but particularly, of course, with my two dear wives and with my great friend Nelson. Such a bond in my view is the ultimate mark of a life well lived.

**Interviewer** — Thank you Sir William, for agreeing to do this interview. I hope you have found the experience enjoyable and rewarding.

**Sir William** — Indeed I have and I thank you for the invitation. Existence underground at Slebech is very limited and uninspiring and I have relished the opportunity to alleviate the boredom and, with your assistance, to recall more eventful and interesting times.
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Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo

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