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**University of Southampton**

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Department of History

**The 'shrine of manly virtues': Gender, Empire, Anti-Socialism, and the  
Restoration of H.M.S. Victory, 1922-1930.**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2019



University of Southampton

## Abstract

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Department of History

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**The 'shrine of manly virtues': Gender, Empire, Anti-Socialism, and the Restoration of**

**H.M.S. *Victory*, 1922-1930**

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In 1922, the Society for Nautical Research launched an appeal for funds to restore H.M.S. *Victory*. Their 'Save the *Victory*' publicity appeal was concerned with celebrating the ship as a 'shrine of manly virtues': a monument to Nelson, the Royal Navy, and to the latter's role in expanding, and defending the British Empire.<sup>1</sup> It was a monument, as well, to the white 'Anglo-Saxon' race. This thesis explores the fundamental roles which political, racial, and gender ideologies played in the ship's 1920s preservation.

The men co-ordinating the *Victory's* restoration were generally political conservatives, anxious about the future of Britain's navy following the Great War. In this thesis, I show that their fears were also greatly exacerbated by the steady rise of popular socialism, internationalism and the Labour party. I argue, as well, that the logic by which these men believed the *Victory* could further their anti-socialist cause was centred on ideologies of race, and of masculinity: that Admiral Nelson was an exemplar of white 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues, and that encouraging Britons to cultivate these virtues within themselves would lead them to reject 'alien' left wing principles. It explores how these racialised gender ideologies spread into the wider interactions these men had with supporters, as well as in the decisions they made around curating the ship, the visitor experience, and the ship's preservation itself. And in so doing it shines light on the impact which imperialist masculinities had on both heritage preservation and popular anti-socialism within interwar Britain.

This thesis also suggests that we need to build a more nuanced picture of heritage preservation in interwar Britain. Existing scholarship has almost always focussed on Britain's anti-restoration campaigners, and has also paid limited attention to maritime heritage. But when we begin to study historic ships like the *Victory* in this wider context, we begin to see a very different picture.

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<sup>1</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 1 June 1923, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, Caird Library, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.



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## Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Sarah Frances Westbury

Title of thesis: The 'shrine of manly virtues': Gender, Empire, Anti-Socialism, and the  
Restoration of H.M.S. Victory, 1922-1930

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- Parts of this work have been published as:-

Sarah Westbury, 'Saving H.M.S. *Victory*: Admiral Nelson, Anti-Socialism, and Heroic Masculinity', in Joanne Begiato, Karen Downing and Johnathan Thayer (eds.), *Maritime Masculinities in a Modernising World, 1815-1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

Signature:

Date:



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This thesis is for my late mother, Louise Westbury, who shared her love of books with me and encouraged my young feminist instincts – and so sent me off down this rabbit hole (quite unknowingly). And it is also for my sister Alice – who would be horrified if I ever asked her to read it, but who has nonetheless been here every step of the way.

## Definitions and Abbreviations

- NMM** – National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.
- SNR** – The Society for Nautical Research.
- SNR Records** – The Records of the Society for Nautical Research, Caird Library, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.
- Sturdee Papers** – Admiral Doveton Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archive Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge.



## Introduction

In January 1922, the Editor of *The Times* received a letter from Geoffrey Callender, Honorary Secretary of the Society for Nautical Research. ‘Sir’, Callender’s letter began,

Drake’s Golden Hind, after putting a girdle round the earth, was by Royal command of Queen Elizabeth laid up at Deptford in a dock of her own as a perpetual and everlasting memorial of a tremendous achievement.... But when 100 years were accomplished, competent surveyors pronounced that neglect had gone too far and that the vessel could no longer be preserved. She was in consequence broken up.

The story of HMS *Victory* has been different.<sup>2</sup>

And with this introduction, Callender launched into his true purpose for writing: HMS *Victory*, the flagship of Admiral Horatio Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and also his death-place. HMS *Victory*, Callender told the readers of the newspaper, had survived into the modern age because of the custodianship of the Royal Navy. They had maintained the ship in Portsmouth Harbour since 1812, and for much of this period had given it the ceremonial role of flagship to the Commander-in-Chief of Portsmouth.<sup>3</sup> They had also found practical uses for the *Victory* in harbour, including as a training ship, signal school, and court martial venue.<sup>4</sup> ‘But’, Callender explained, ‘such activities could not be indefinitely extended’.<sup>5</sup> A few days earlier, the *Victory* had been moved permanently into dry dock in Portsmouth Dockyard, where it was to become a popular tourist attraction, and more, a monument for ‘the veneration and instruction of posterity’ [Figure 1].<sup>6</sup> But as a monument, the ship currently lacked a certain atmosphere. Visitors to the ship in harbour had encountered a working – if elderly – ship, rather than a historical monument.

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<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, undated, circa January 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, Caird Library, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

<sup>3</sup> Alan McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*. (London: Chatham Publishing, 1999), pp. 27-30.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Lavery, *Nelson's Victory: 250 Years of War and Peace* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2015), pp. 174-178.

<sup>5</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

## Introduction

It had acquired noticeably-Victorian features, including steel wire rigging and a boiler house. A small museum hut had been built on the open deck.<sup>7</sup> And so Callender's society had volunteered themselves to raise funds to restore the ship back to how it had looked at Trafalgar. His letter in *The Times* was an 'appeal to the public for help and assistance in the matter.'<sup>8</sup>



Figure 1 W.L.Wyllie, 'The Nelson Touch': Restoring HMS Victory, 1805-1925. Oil on canvas, 1925. BHC3701, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Caird Collection. <https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/15174.html> [Accessed 18 September 2019].

What, exactly, did 'Drake's Golden Hind' have to do with any of this?<sup>9</sup> To modern eyes, there is precious little connecting the Elizabethan galleon in which Francis Drake circumnavigated the globe, and the *Victory*, a Georgian warship. The parallel seems to begin, and end, with the fact that both had been deliberately preserved, and then been displayed to the public. Not so for Geoffrey Callender. For him, the Golden Hind was the *Victory's* natural predecessor because

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<sup>7</sup> Admiral Phillimore to Admiral Calthorpe 4 May 1922, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

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together these two ships represented two formative events in the creation and expansion of Britain's maritime empire. Generations of British schoolchildren had been taught that Elizabethan merchant adventurers like Drake had made England's first concrete steps into becoming a maritime power.<sup>10</sup> Britons were told, too, that Nelson's defeat of the combined Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar marked the start of the so-called 'Pax Britannica', wherein Britain's naval supremacy created a period of relative peace at sea that had lasted until the outbreak of the Great War.<sup>11</sup> This was, as Callender himself wrote, about English ships - and the English men who had sailed in them - 'putting a girdle round the earth'.<sup>12</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the use of maritime history to celebrate the 'discovery' and colonisation of continents by white Europeans, while also honouring white men, and their grand acts of personal sacrifice, was intimately caught up with promoting the British Empire.<sup>13</sup> This was a narrative about the ascendancy of Britain as an empire through 'Sea Power' and 'the magnificent services of a fine race of seamen' – to borrow the words of SNR President Admiral Doveton Sturdee, Callender's friend and colleague.<sup>14</sup> In this thesis, I will use the SNR's 1920s restoration of H.M.S. *Victory* to explore how a small group of men, headed by Sturdee and Callender, came to project this narrative onto a series of political concerns, of which many had nothing to do with either Nelson or the Royal Navy, at least on the surface.<sup>15</sup>

This thesis examines the years of the SNR's 'Save the *Victory*' fundraising appeal (1922-1924), the practical restoration work (1923-1928) and ends in 1930, by which point Callender and his colleagues had been able to partially recreate the ship's interiors and their contents.<sup>16</sup> It will

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire: The Politics of History Teaching in England, 1870-1930*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 88-89.

<sup>11</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', unknown newspaper, circa 16 June 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM; Mary A. Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack: Representing Naval Manhood in the British Empire, 1870-1918*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 20-22.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>13</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*.

<sup>14</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, '365 years ago', circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/2, Sturdee Papers, The Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Geoffrey Callender, *The Story of HMS Victory*. 2nd edn (Philip Allan, 1929), pp. 10-11 & 14-15.

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analyse how it was that these men believed that fundraising to preserve a maritime heritage site would further their various political causes; the essential role that heroic masculinities and racial ideology played in their thinking; and how many of these concerns reared their head again when it came to deciding how, exactly, it was that the ship should be preserved and curated. In so doing, this thesis offers a window onto the recent history of the relationship between right wing ideology, anti-socialist paranoia, heroic masculinities, and preserving Britain's imperial maritime past.

### i.i Historiography

The male authors who wrote about H.M.S. *Victory* in the later twentieth, and early twenty-first centuries no doubt felt that they should be indulged in their preoccupation with the ship's construction and military career.<sup>17</sup> It was, after all, a national icon: a worthy and natural subject for historical research. What almost none of them did, however, was give any reflection as to *why* they viewed the *Victory* in this way (it was Nelson's ship, obviously, and Nelson's heroism was timeless). 'Our modern ships have capabilities unimaginable to Nelson', Vice Admiral James Burnell-Nugent wrote in his foreword to Iain Ballantyne and Jonathan Eastland's *HMS Victory: Warships of the Royal Navy*, 'but I believe that the values and traditions, which won Trafalgar and kept our country free are still embodied in the men and women of the Royal Navy'.<sup>18</sup>

There is an obvious link between these modern publications on the *Victory* and the nationalist rhetoric of Geoffrey Callender and the SNR. More recent publications have, however, made some attempt to remove the elements which most modern readers would now see as obviously offensive: namely the explicit imperialism, racism, and male chauvinism. The 1960

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<sup>17</sup> For the *Victory's* military career, see: Kenneth Fenwick, *H.M.S Victory*. 2nd edn (London: Cassell, 1960); Iain Ballantyne and Jonathan Eastland, *HMS Victory: Warships of the Royal Navy*. (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Maritime, 2005). For the *Victory's* construction and restoration, see: Arthur Bugler, *H.M.S. Victory : Building, Restoration & Repair*. (London: H.M.S.O., 1966); McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*.

<sup>18</sup> Ballantyne and Eastland, *Warships of the Royal Navy*, p. vii.

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edition of Kenneth Fenwick's *H.M.S. Victory*, for example, promised a history of the ship contextualised by 'world events and the wars, campaigns, and battles of [the *Victory's*] time'.<sup>19</sup> The British Empire is visibly absent from this description, even though the Trafalgar campaign had been closely linked to defending Britain's colonial possessions: specifically trade from Britain's slave plantations in the West Indies, a trade which was intimately tied to the security of the British economy.<sup>20</sup> In 1960 the decolonisation of the British Empire was fast becoming reality, and it seems reasonable to presume that this influenced Fenwick's choice of words on some level. Celebration of empire was out (at least on the surface), 'world events' were in.<sup>21</sup> There is a tradition of wilfully un-reflective nostalgia within '*Victory*' research and commemoration, and particularly where the British Empire is concerned.<sup>22</sup>

This is not to say that previous *Victory* research has never paid attention to the politics of the ship's 1920s preservation and restoration. It is just that most books specifically about H.M.S. *Victory* itself lose interest in the ship after the events of Trafalgar, and offer only brief sketches of its nineteenth century career in Portsmouth Harbour, and of its subsequent restoration. A welcome exception is Brian Lavery's *Nelson's Victory*, a well-researched popular history which dedicates several chapters to exploring the ship's post-Trafalgar history. Lavery quotes from 'Save the *Victory*' publicity material, and acknowledges the 'rather dated' imperialist rhetoric contained therein.<sup>23</sup> Even more useful are the histories of the SNR itself, which dedicate significant space to the society's work on the *Victory*, and acknowledge the restorers' imperialist and navalist political

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<sup>19</sup> Fenwick, *H.M.S. Victory*, p. ix.

<sup>20</sup> Christer Petley, 'The Royal Navy, the British Atlantic Empire and the Abolition of the Slave Trade', in *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c. 1750-1820*, ed. by John McAleer and Christer Petley (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016), (p. 129 & 137).

<sup>21</sup> Fenwick, *H.M.S. Victory*, p. ix.

<sup>22</sup> I should acknowledge, however, that modern *Victory* and Trafalgar commemoration is starting to acknowledge the presence of sailors of colour in Nelson's fleet. See: Ludmilla Jordanova, 'Marking Time', in *History, Commemoration and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar 1805-2005*, ed. by Holger Hooch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), (p. 12); Brian Lavery, *Nelson's Victory: 250 Years of War and Peace*. (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2015), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Lavery, *Nelson's Victory*, p. 184.

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agendas.<sup>24</sup> To be a 'navalist' meant supporting the idea that a 'strong' navy - large, well-funded, and well-armed - was essential to the defence of the British Empire.<sup>25</sup>

Don Leggett's recent article 'Restoring *Victory*' takes this further, and begins to establish the presence of several different 'actors' who shaped, added, and responded to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, of whom the SNR were just one. Leggett explores their various political agendas, including navalism, Conservatism, and Unionism, and also the influence of the wider culture of Great War memorialisation and commemoration on the appeal. He highlights, quite naturally, the navalist anxiety around the future of the Royal Navy in the post-war culture of financial stringency, naval reductions, and public disappointment at the lack of decisive naval victories during the recent Great War.<sup>26</sup> But Leggett's piece, while insightful, is only one article, and so not in itself enough to substantially unpick the web of conscious politics and unconscious biases that shaped the ship's preservation.

This thesis is interested in how Callender, Sturdee, and their colleagues linked navalist politics, and heritage preservation, to their *other* political causes. Firstly, it agrees with Leggett that Callender and Sturdee hoped that the 'Save the *Victory*' fundraising appeal would promote the continued relevance of the modern Royal Navy to the defence of the British Empire.<sup>27</sup> For several decades, navalist propaganda had trained Britons to view climatic battles like Trafalgar as the epitome of a successful naval campaign. And with this as their measure, the Royal Navy's performance in the Great War appeared to be somewhat lacklustre. The Battle of Jutland, for example, had delivered huge loss of life but with very unclear outcome: so much so that both Britain and Germany attempted to declare it as a victory. The Royal Navy's work to disrupt enemy

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<sup>24</sup> K. Littlewood and B. Butler, *Of Ships and Stars: Maritime Heritage and the Founding of the National Maritime Museum Greenwich*. (London: Athlone Press / National Maritime Museum, 1998), pp. 31-40; Hugh Murphy and Derek J. Oddy, *The Mirror of the Seas: A Centenary History for the Society for Nautical Research*. (London: The Society for Nautical Research, 2010), pp. 22-46.

<sup>25</sup> Huw W. G. Lewis-Jones, 'Displaying Nelson': Navalism and 'the Exhibition' of 1891', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 17 (2005), 32-34.

<sup>26</sup> Don Leggett, 'Restoring Victory: Naval Heritage, Identity, and Memory in Interwar Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 28 (2017).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 64-65.

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trade, and the enemy submarines that threatened Britain's own merchant ships, was not going to be enough to restore public confidence, no matter how tactically successful.<sup>28</sup>

Sturdee and Callender had other reasons to fear that the British public needed reminding of the national (and imperial) importance of the Royal Navy. Their ideas about naval defence, and public support for the navy, had been shaped by the politics of the 'new navalism' of the 1890s, which combined strong Nelson-worship and nostalgia with a driving principle that the British navy must be able to outnumber and outgun any other navy afloat by a considerable margin.<sup>29</sup> As such, they held views that were increasingly out of date even within naval circles, at least where the latter was concerned. Both men were passionately (and in Sturdee's case, very vocally) against naval reformers who campaigned for more resources to be spent on air power and submarines, and at the expense of traditional vessels.<sup>30</sup> Both had been shocked by the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922, which had given America equal treatment to Britain in setting acceptable limits on battleships numbers for each nation.<sup>31</sup> The *Victory* appeal launched just months after Britain signed this treaty.<sup>32</sup> And it is clear that for Callender, Sturdee and their allies the *Victory* was a powerful antidote: a symbol to incite nostalgia for the 'strong' fleet of Britain's past, and especially for Trafalgar as an overwhelming victory that had crushed Britain's enemies, and ushered in the so-called 'Pax Britannica'.<sup>33</sup> Imparting this message, especially amongst children, was just as important to them as raising the restoration funds. Sturdee encouraged children to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. pp. 63-64; Lisle Abbott Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 1, the Age of Navalism, 1890-1918*. (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2007), pp. 233-234.

<sup>29</sup> Lewis-Jones, 'Displaying Nelson'. For the influence of the 'new navalism' on Callender and Sturdee, see: Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 27.

<sup>30</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender, 6 October 1923 SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM; F. C. D. Sturdee, 'The Importance of Battleships, Cruisers, and Suitably Placed Bases for Maintaining the Overseas Communications', *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, 68 (1923).

<sup>31</sup> Geoffrey Callender, *The Naval Side of British History*. Second edn (London: Christophers, 1940), p. vii; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, untitled statement re: Washington Conference, circa 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>32</sup> Press release, 'Save the Victory' Fund, undated, circa October 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>33</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

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donate a penny from their pocket money, and any adult 'who recognises that he has benefitted from the Navy to give us perhaps more than a penny'.<sup>34</sup>

Just as Sturdee and Callender's naval politics influenced their work on the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, so too did certain aspects of the wider naval culture to which they belonged. Sturdee had entered the Royal Navy as a twelve year old cadet.<sup>35</sup> Callender's career had been spent in several Royal Naval colleges as a Professor of History, and he remained in post at Greenwich Royal Naval College for the duration of the *Victory's* restoration.<sup>36</sup> The training of young naval officer recruits mimicked that of public schools, which in this period were specifically concerned with training white (by default if not always in practice) boys as future leaders, administrators, and soldiers of the British Empire.<sup>37</sup> Like public schools, naval colleges borrowed many of the accoutrements of aristocratic culture (for example stately home settings and country sports) while primarily catering to the upper middle class. And also like public schools, naval colleges were far more concerned with building masculine 'character' than they were with specialist knowledge: with instilling in cadets reverence for the virtues of service and duty, particularly towards the monarchy.<sup>38</sup>

Unsurprisingly, then, the Royal Navy was, as an institution, very wary of socialism and trade unionism. Royal Navy sailors were officially banned from membership of any union, in fact.<sup>39</sup> On naval vessels, the presence of women - and 'feminine' pursuits - were also carefully policed.

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<sup>34</sup> 'Saving H.M.S Victory. Gift of £50,000. Anonymous Reader's Generosity', *The Times*, circa March 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>35</sup> 'Obituary. Sir Doveton Sturdee. The Victory of the Falklands', unknown newspaper, circa May 1925, SNR 7/7, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>36</sup> Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, pp. 215-216; Harry Dickinson, *Wisdom and War: The Royal Naval College Greenwich 1873-1998*. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), p. 4 & 129.

<sup>37</sup> Quintin Colville, 'The Role of the Interior in Constructing Notions of Class and Status: A Case Study of Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, 1905-39', in *Interior Design and Identity*, ed. by Penny Sparkle and Susie McKellar (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 114-132 pp. 119-120); J A Mangan, 'The Grit of Our Forefathers': Invented Traditions, Propaganda and Imperialism', in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. by John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 113-139 pp. 115-127).

<sup>38</sup> Colville, 'Role of the Interior', pp. 116-121, 126-128.

<sup>39</sup> Laura Rowe, *Morale and Discipline in the Royal Navy During the First World War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 163 & 172; Anthony Carew, 'The Invergordon Mutiny, 1931: Long-Term Causes, Organisation and Leadership', *International Review of Social History*, 24 (1979), 159-160.

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Indeed masculine conformity, respect for authority, and adherence to a carefully prescribed social hierarchy linked to both rank and age were essential elements of officer training on both land and sea.<sup>40</sup> This background had instilled Sturdee and Callender with a deep suspicion of social and political change, leaving them faintly horrified with 1920s Britain, and making them all the more likely to cling to the past for reassurance.

And so this thesis also finds that privately, Callender and his colleagues believed that true reverence for the Navy and Empire only came with the 'right sort' of political thinking and societal values. It argues that the restoration of the *Victory* came to symbolise, for Callender and Sturdee, a stand *against*, variously, Bolshevik Russia, Socialist Sunday Schools, middle class women who worked as antiques dealers, internationalists, the League of Nations, and the Labour party. It stood *for* the pre-eminence of the 'Anglo-Saxon' race within the British Empire. The key to understanding how it was that Callender and Sturdee came to connect such disparate causes were the racial and gender ideologies which they projected onto Admiral Nelson's hero cult, as well as their plan to preserve the *Victory* as a shrine to him, and to white male sacrifice in general.

This brings us onto another glaring oversight in all of the prior histories of H.M.S. *Victory*. Even those texts which do explore the 1920s restoration fail to make any reference to the wider history of heritage preservation in Britain. A reader could be forgiven for thinking that the ship's preservation was a unique event. In reality though, by the 1920s and 1930s, the British heritage preservation sector was large, active, and increasingly professionalised.<sup>41</sup> In 1882, the Ancient Monuments Act had had enabled a government department, the Office of Works, to designate particular sites as 'ancient monuments' worthy of safeguarding for the nation, and had also given this department the power to oversee their future use and preservation.<sup>42</sup> By the 1920s the

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<sup>40</sup> Colville, 'Role of the Interior', pp. 120-125; Quintin Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity and Idealised Masculinity: Royal Naval Officers and Their Shipboard Homes, 1918-39', *Gender & History*, 21 (2009).

<sup>41</sup> Timothy Champion, 'Protecting the Monuments: Archaeological Legislation from the 1882 Act to Ppg 16', in *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain*, ed. by Michael Hunter (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1996), pp. 38-56 pp. 41-50).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41.

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scheme was flourishing. By 1932 the Office of Works had care of 3,195 scheduled monuments, compared to just 344 in 1921.<sup>43</sup> This was also a period of active preservationist campaign groups, most notably the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (founded 1877) and the National Trust (founded 1894), the former more concerned with preserving built monuments, the latter with countryside sites.<sup>44</sup> Heritage preservation was common, and often high-profile.

Equally, the wide body of literature on the preservationist movement in nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain is just as guilty of ignoring maritime heritage preservation, and its place within the movement as a whole.<sup>45</sup> The *Victory* may not have been officially scheduled as an 'ancient monument', but it is almost impossible that mainstream preservationists were not aware of the SNR's work. The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, and reports on the ship's subsequent restoration, were a constant presence in the British press through most of the 1920s.

Because both preservation histories and *Victory* histories have failed to engage with each other, researchers in both fields have missed an obvious contradiction. *Victory* publications present the plan to restore the ship back to its 'Trafalgar' appearance as the natural, indeed only, choice for the Admiralty and SNR to make.<sup>46</sup> But preservation histories have primarily been interested in the British movement's *anti*-restoration campaigners, of whom John Ruskin, William Morris, and the Morris-founded Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings are the most

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<sup>43</sup> John Sheail, *Rural Conservation in Inter-War Britain*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 49; Champion, 'Protecting the Monuments', p. 48.

<sup>44</sup> On the Victorian origins of both the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the National Trust, see: Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789-1914*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 78-95. On the former society's interwar activities, see: Gavin Stamp, 'The Art of Keeping One Jump Ahead: Conservation Societies in the Twentieth Century', in *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain*, ed. by Michael Hunter (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1996), pp. 77-98 pp. 77-86).

<sup>45</sup> See, for example: Jane Fawcett, ed., *The Future of the Past: Attitudes to Conservation 1174-1974* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976); Michael Hunter, ed., *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1996); Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997); Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler, eds., *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, C.1800-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press / British Academy, 2013); Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*.

<sup>46</sup> For example: McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*, p. 33; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 30.

famous examples.<sup>47</sup> In Britain, this would seem to imply, heritage sites were generally preserved 'as found': the structure reinforced, but with no attempt made to restore them back to their appearance at an earlier point in time. We might even presume that restoration was seen by the vast majority of Britons as a wholly unethical practice. But the very fact that the *Victory* was restored, and with almost no objections, either from preservationists or members of the public, is a clear sign that this was not actually the case.

This thesis uses the example of the *Victory's* restoration to show that preservationists in 1920s Britain did not apply a blanket anti-restoration policy to all heritage sites. Context was important. A Georgian warship presented different considerations to the medieval ruins which made up the bulk of Britain's official 'ancient monuments'.<sup>48</sup> More than this, for the *Victory* to be a suitably awe-inspiring monument to Nelson, navy, and empire, it had to look the part. Restoration, the restorers claimed, 'recaptured the beauty that was hers when she flew Nelson's flag at her mast-head'.<sup>49</sup> And so the *Victory's* restoration gives us an important opportunity to begin to explore the range of attitudes towards restoration by British preservationists, and the conditions under which the majority found restoration to be acceptable, and perhaps even actively desirable.

This thesis is also heavily indebted to the 'New Imperial History', and to its ethos and approach as well as for the specific findings of previous researchers. The 'New Imperial History' consists of a large collective of researchers interested in exploring the varied and often contradictory experiences of empire. These researchers have set out to, variously, de-centre the 'metropole' from the history of empire; study how racial identities and imperial policies were

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<sup>47</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Scrape and Anti-Scrape', in *The Future of the Past: Attitudes to Conservation 1174-1974*, ed. by Jane Fawcett (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), pp. 34-53; Chris Miele, 'The First Conservation Militants: William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings', in *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain*, ed. by Michael Hunter (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1996), pp. 17-37; Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, pp. 78-86.

<sup>48</sup> For examples, see: Frank Baines, 'Preservation of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings - Part II', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 31 (1924).

<sup>49</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 12.

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created in response to localised pressures in British colonies; study empire from the perspective of the colonised; and to understand the impact of empire, and of people of colour, on Britain itself. In a related field, Bernard Porter and John Mackenzie's lively debate around the impact of 'popular' imperialism in Britain has spawned a considerable body of work (much of it also part of the 'New Imperial History') on how British popular culture depicted and engaged with the British Empire, and on the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that individuals and communities adapted, ignored, and sometimes rejected it.<sup>50</sup> This thesis, with its focus on unpicking the complex links between imperialist ideology, popular anti-socialism, and heritage restoration as a form of propaganda, very much falls within these traditions.

As such, this thesis belongs within the strand of the 'New Imperial History' which is interested in the 'everyday' experience of empire. It is, previous scholars have stressed, very difficult to separate out imperial identities and politics from local politics, and indeed, from daily life.<sup>51</sup> Previous work has highlighted that interwar Britons actively debated when, and how, they should celebrate their empire: most agreed that 'jingoism' and 'militarism' were unacceptable, but they struggled to agree on what, exactly, these terms meant in practice.<sup>52</sup> There were anti-imperialist activists on the Left, certainly, but not nearly as many as Conservative activists like Callender and Sturdee tended to believe.<sup>53</sup> When, and how, different civic bodies celebrated the empire in schools, and through public events, was heavily dependent on local pressures.<sup>54</sup> And so

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<sup>50</sup> For a summary of the debate, see: John M. MacKenzie, 'The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43 (2015). See, as well: Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). This debate has inspired numerous studies re: the complex relationship which individuals and communities might have with popular imperialism, of which two excellent examples are: Jim English, 'Empire Day in Britain, 1904-1958', *The Historical Journal*, 49 (2006); Brad Beaven, *Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870-1939*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, 'Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire', in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. by Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), (p. 3).

<sup>52</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 156-163.

<sup>53</sup> English, 'Empire Day', pp. 268-269.

<sup>54</sup> Beaven, *Visions of Empire*.

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the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal is perfectly placed to explore this sense of right-wing imperialist paranoia in Britain, and why individuals like Callender and Sturdee came to see heritage preservation as a partial solution to their fears about the decline of the navy, and the rise of the Left.

At its heart, the 'New Imperial History' is about identity and 'difference': how gender and racial identities are closely interlinked; how both are constructed against the idea of the 'other'; and how white British men used these ideologies to justify and maintain their position at the top of the imperial hierarchy.<sup>55</sup> There is, as a result, a natural overlap with the discipline of museum and heritage studies (or 'museology'), which has a longstanding interest in how museums and exhibitions have historically collected and depicted empire and colonised peoples.<sup>56</sup>

It is therefore common to find scholars from the 'New Imperial History' applying themselves to the history of the museum sector (and vice versa). The field has benefitted from their interest in museums outside of the metropole: the ideologies, practical and political pressures, and individual whims which influenced how these depicted empire; and in the imperial power structures and networks which facilitated museum work as a whole.<sup>57</sup> There has been a recent shift, as well, towards studying the international links between national heritage preservation initiatives, and awareness that heritage preservation could be encouraged by international rivalries.<sup>58</sup> An empire could declare its 'modernity' via its 'enlightened' custodianship of heritage, which went hand in hand with their pride in their supposedly

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<sup>55</sup> For a useful summary, see: Kathleen Wilson, 'Introduction: Histories, Empires, Modernities', in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660-1840*, ed. by Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-26; Hall and Rose, 'Introduction: Being at Home with the Empire'.

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter H. Hoffenberg, eds., *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); John McAleer and John M. MacKenzie, eds., *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of Display and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

<sup>57</sup> Sarah Longair and John McAleer, eds., *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); John M. MacKenzie, *Museums and Empire: Natural History, Human Cultures and Colonial Identities*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

<sup>58</sup> Swenson and Mandler, *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, C.1800-1940*; Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*; Melanie Hall, *Towards World Heritage: International Origins of the Preservation Movement 1870-1930*. (Farnham, Surrey, England and Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2011).

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'enlightened' rule over the colonised peoples to whom this heritage belonged.<sup>59</sup> This body of work stresses that nineteenth and early twentieth century museums were shaped by imperialism, and that they were also important agents of it. But again, much of this prior work on museums, empire and heritage tends to overlook the specific role that maritime heritage and maritime museums had in promoting the British Empire, even though Britons of this period distinctly thought of themselves as an 'island race'.<sup>60</sup>

Ultimately, this thesis sets out to explore the links between heritage preservation in interwar Britain, and what the 'New Imperial History' refers to as 'everyday' imperialism. It shows that 'Save the *Victory*' publicity material, which was on the surface dedicated to celebrating Nelson, navy, and empire, was influenced as much by its creators' anti-socialism, triggered by events such as the expansion of the electorate in 1918, and subsequent rise of Labour, as it was by their anxieties about the future of the Royal Navy itself. It demonstrates that the logic which these men used to connect the two was centred on ideologies of race, and of masculinity: that Admiral Nelson was an exemplar of white 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues, and that encouraging Britons to cultivate these virtues within themselves would lead them to reject 'alien' left wing principles. It explores how these (racialised) gender ideologies spread into the wider interactions they had with supporters, as well as in the decisions they made around curating the ship, the visitor experience, and even, to some extent, into preservation itself. It argues, too, that we must study the *Victory's* 1920s restoration within the wider context of the British preservation sector, while also remembering that its status as 'maritime' heritage made some decisions quite distinct. Altogether, this work shows why it is that we must study the history of the *Victory* with less reverence and more critique.

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<sup>59</sup> Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>60</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 87-88. It must be said though that histories of the SNR and their work on the National Maritime Museum do discuss the important link between this museum, maritime history, and imperialism, but this is not their main focus: Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, pp. 46, 73-74 & 91-94; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 55.

## i.ii Methodology: historical approaches

This is a thesis about heritage preservation, imperialism, and anti-socialism. But it is also a thesis about the cult of Admiral Nelson, and about the SNR's desire to turn the *Victory* into a more effective monument to him. And it is impossible to understand their work, I argue, without 'gendering' it, and without turning a critical lens on the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal's implicit (and sometimes explicit) assumption of the racial superiority of white Britons. The ship was, after-all, officially lauded as a 'shrine of manly virtues' to the journalists gathered for the restoration launch ceremony in 1923 - and one which was, the Portsmouth Evening News commented to its readers, 'intimately associated with Britain's greatness and unconquered sea power'.<sup>61</sup>

The hero-cult of Horatio Nelson itself has, of course, been well-studied by cultural historians, including a particular boom around the bicentenary of Trafalgar in 2005.<sup>62</sup> Such work makes a distinction between the history of 'Nelson the man', a topic exceptionally beloved of white male biographers, and 'Nelson the cultural icon'.<sup>63</sup> It is interested in how the hero-cult of Nelson has been created, reinforced, and adapted in response to social attitudes and political pressures, both during his lifetime, and after it. John Mackenzie refers to this as the Nelson 'myth', and by 'myth', he means the heightened significance which later generations have attached to real events, rather than that the events in question did not actually take place.<sup>64</sup> Still, though, the number of publications which have actively applied themselves to studying how

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<sup>61</sup> 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>62</sup> David Cannadine, ed., *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Holger Hock, ed., *History, Commemoration and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar 1805-2005* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Colin White, ed., *The Nelson Companion* (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1995); Marianne Czisnik, 'Nelson, Navy and National Identity', in *Nelson Navy & Nation: The Royal Navy & the British People 1688-1815* ed. by Quintin Colville and James Davey (London: Conway, 2013), pp. 188-207; C. I. Hamilton, 'Naval Hagiography and the Victorian Hero', *The Historical Journal*, 23 (1980).

<sup>63</sup> Recent Nelson biographies include Edgar Vincent, *Nelson: Love & Fame*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Brian Lavery, *Horatio Lord Nelson*. (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory [Electronic Book]*. (London: Allen Lane, 2005; repr. London: Penguin Books, 2006); John Sugden, *Nelson: A Dream of Glory*. (London: Random House, 2004; 2012); John Sugden, *Nelson: The Sword of Albion*. (London: Random House, 2012; 2014).

<sup>64</sup> John M. MacKenzie, 'Nelson the Hero and Horatio the Lover: Projections of the Myth in Canada, the Cinema, and Culture', in *History, Commemoration, and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar, 1805-2005*, ed. by Holger Hock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 65-80 (p. 66).

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Nelson's hero cult was shaped by contemporary masculinities is surprisingly small.<sup>65</sup> And we also lack an in-depth study of how this cultural image of Nelson was influenced by contemporary ideas about race, despite it being self-evident that Nelson was, and is, worshipped as an exemplar of white British masculinity.

There is an obvious reason for this oversight. Traditionally, maritime history is a field which has been dominated by white men. It has therefore been very good at devoting its attention to topics which our culture codes as 'masculine' (battle tactics, technological developments, naval recruitment and bureaucracy, 'high' politics).<sup>66</sup> It has been similarly devoted to white male 'worthies' (witness the excessive number of Nelson biographies), and also to social histories which focus by default on the white, male, sailor. Take, for example, N.A.M. Rodger's second edition of *The Wooden World*, his celebrated social history of the Georgian Royal Navy, which relegated women to a seven page chapter in a 445 page book.<sup>67</sup>

A later book by Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, claimed to thoroughly contextualise the Royal Navy of 1649-1815 within wider British history.<sup>68</sup> Women did feature in *The Command*

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<sup>65</sup> Teresa Michals, 'Invisible Amputation and Heroic Masculinity', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, (2015); Kate Williams, 'Nelson and Women: Marketing, Representations and the Female Consumer', in *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy*, ed. by David Cannadine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 67-89; Kathleen Wilson, 'Nelson and the People: Manliness, Patriotism and Body Politics', in *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy*, ed. by David Cannadine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 49-66.

<sup>66</sup> Jesse Ransley, 'Boats Are for Boys: Queering Maritime Archaeology', *World Archaeology*, 37 (2005). Ransley's point is that this kind of research is not invalid in itself, but that its traditional predominance has left us with an incomplete, and sometimes incorrect picture of our maritime past. She discusses the problem with regards to maritime archaeology, but her comments are widely applicable to maritime history as well. Take, for example, the many texts concerned with charting the rise and fall of nations, navies, and naval technologies across their several eras – Lisle Abbott Rose's 'Power at Sea' series being an obvious example. See: Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 1*; Lisle Abbott Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2, the Breaking Storm, 1919 - 1945*. (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2007); Lisle Abbott Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 3, a Violent Peace, 1946-2006*. (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2007). Other examples include Roger Morriss, *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy: Resources, Logistics and the State, 1755-1815*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*. (London: Allen Lane, 1976). On the bureaucratic/ manpower side, see: N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World : An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*. (London: William Collins, 1986; repr. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996); N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean : A Naval History of Britain 1649-1815*. (London: Allen Lane, 2004; repr. London: Penguin, 2006).

<sup>67</sup> Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 75-81.

<sup>68</sup> Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*.

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of the *Ocean* – but infrequently enough for the index to be able to list ‘women’ under a collective heading, and one with a relatively small number of pages.<sup>69</sup> Sailors of colour were referred to, but again, in passing and anecdotally.<sup>70</sup> Enslaved black women who were brought on board ships, and then presumably raped, received a single-sentence mention.<sup>71</sup> And as for ‘homosexuality’ – a ‘subject beloved of some modern writers’?<sup>72</sup> It was ‘rare’, and not deemed worthy of detailed investigation.<sup>73</sup> This is not a volume which presented gender, race, or sexuality as topics for specific or detailed analysis.

Rodger, to be fair, was well aware of the limits of his book, at least with regards to maritime women. There was, he admitted, ‘an enormous void of ignorance’ on the subject, and ‘our knowledge of the social history of the Navy will never be complete until someone fills it’.<sup>74</sup> This is, of course, the problem of a discipline which has always been heavily dominated by white men. Other ways of studying history – the gendered, the queered, the postcolonial – are often (but not always) welcomed in *theory*, but in practice left for others to do.

Fortunately, there are signs of change. In recent years both gender historians and ‘coastal’ historians have applied themselves to exploring the social and cultural links between the sea and the land, and this has promoted increased interest in, variously, the cultures of Port Towns, the lived experience of ‘maritime’ women, and how they were represented in popular culture, and, slowly but increasingly, into maritime masculinities.<sup>75</sup> Jan Rüger’s *The Great Naval Game* reflected

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. pp. lxiii-lxv & 907. A small number of individual women do also get their own index entries – but these are few and far between, unlike the vast numbers of individual men similarly honoured.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 394.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 407.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. In reality, the number of authors who have studied sex between men (including non-consensual sex and sex with minors) in the Georgian Royal Navy is relatively small. See: Seth Stein LeJacq, ‘Buggery’s Travels: Royal Navy Sodomy on Ship and Shore in the Long Eighteenth Century’, *Journal for Maritime Research*, 17 (2015); B. R. Burg, *Boys at Sea: Sodomy, Indecency, and Courts Martial in Nelson’s Navy*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Arthur N Gilbert, ‘Buggery and the British Navy 1700-1861’, *Journal of Social History*, 10 (1976).

<sup>73</sup> Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 407.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Examples include: Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, eds., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996); Margarette Lincoln, *Naval Wives & Mistresses*. (London: National Maritime Museum Publishing, 2007); Isaac Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750-1850*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Brad Beaven,

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on the political impact of popular naval 'theatre' (ship launches, fleet reviews, and similar) in Britain and Germany in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, which were, he argues, heavily gendered events.<sup>76</sup> Mary Conley's *Jack Tar to Union Jack* provided us with our first in-depth study of the Victorian 'Bluejacket', or ordinary sailor, as a cultural icon: a working class hero whose masculine qualities represented the supposed strength of the British as an 'imperial' race.<sup>77</sup> Other researchers have turned their attention to sailors of colour in the British Empire, including the racialised division of labour on merchant ships, and on race and immigration laws within Britain itself.<sup>78</sup> It is the aim of this thesis to tie these various threads together: to add to our cultural history of the Nelson cult, but in a way that actively explores both its gendered *and* racialised elements.

As such, it benefits, once again, from the 'New Imperial History'. One volume in particular - Peter Yeandle's *Citizenship, Nation, Empire* - has been particularly influential on this thesis because it explores the important relationship between hero cults, history teaching, and white racial identities in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain. Yeandle shows that English state school children were taught to read from 'moral biographies' of white English heroes (and occasionally heroines), in which these figures were presented as exemplars for the English as an 'Anglo-Saxon' race. The stories used these heroes to promote a carefully selected range of moral

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Karl Bell, and Robert James, eds., *Port Towns and Urban Culture: International Histories of the Waterfront C.1700 – 2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Quintin Colville, Elin Jones, and Katherine Parker, 'Gendering the Maritime World', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 17 (2015); Joanne Begiato (Bailey), 'Tears and the Manly Sailor in England, c. 1760–1860', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 17 (2015); Margarette Lincoln, 'Emma Hamilton, War, and the Depiction of Femininity in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 17 (2015); Melanie Holihead, 'Cut Adrift or Towed Astern: Sailors' Wives in Mid-Nineteenth Century Portsea Island Considered in Perspective', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 17 (2015).

<sup>76</sup> Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>77</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*.

<sup>78</sup> G. Balachandran, *Globalizing Labour?: Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, c. 1870-1945*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Laura Tabili, "'A Maritime Race': Masculinity and the Racial Division of Labor in British Merchant Ships, 1900-1939', in *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), pp. 169-188; Laura Tabili, *"We Ask for British Justice": Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Laura Tabili, 'The Construction of Racial Difference in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994).

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virtues, including piety, duty, self-sacrifice, stoicism, and mutual respect between leaders and followers, and strongly implied that the English had a racial pre-disposition towards these qualities.<sup>79</sup> Maritime heroes, including Nelson, featured heavily, and were used to emphasise the supposedly natural affinity between the English and the seas.<sup>80</sup> The purpose was to train children as 'enlightened citizens' who believed that every Briton had a different role to play in supporting their empire, and that this work began with honouring their everyday responsibilities. It is no coincidence that the working class were steadily becoming enfranchised during the same period.<sup>81</sup> We can see, immediately, the natural affinity which anti-socialists like Sturdee and Callender would have had with this ideology of racialised 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues.

This thesis is, primarily, a study of how gender, race, and various political ideologies were inherent in both the public rhetoric and private decision-making surrounding the *Victory's* 1920s restoration. It finds that Geoffrey Callender and Admiral Doveton Sturdee attempted to use the appeal to promote Nelson as an 'Anglo-Saxon' hero. They believed that Nelson's example could encourage racial regeneration, and that this would play a vital role in their plan to inhibit the spread of communism and socialism in Britain. These men also used the appeal to promote their idea that 'Britishness' should be synonymous with 'whiteness': an ideology which underpinned the racist hiring practices of the British shipping industry, major donors to the restoration fund.<sup>82</sup> We cannot understand the politics of Nelson-worship without also understanding the racial ideologies which lay behind it.

Neither can we understand how the ship was preserved as a 'shrine of manly virtues' without exploring the project's relationship with women and femininities.<sup>83</sup> Masculinities and femininities are always created in reference to each other.<sup>84</sup> And so this thesis is particularly

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<sup>79</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 119-121 & 127-130.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 87-91 & 130-133.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 38-40.

<sup>82</sup> Re: race and the shipping industry, see: Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference'; Tabili, *British Justice*.

<sup>83</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>84</sup> John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2005), p. 2; Martin Francis, 'The Domestication of the Male?'

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concerned with recovering the expectations that Callender and his colleagues placed on white British women, alive or historical, and their place in the *Victory* story. Ultimately, then, it offers a cultural history of the interwar Nelson cult (or one facet of it) with 'whiteness' problematized; women placed back in; and with the relationship between Nelson-worship, 'Anglo-Saxon' masculinities, and anti-socialist, imperialist, paranoia fully on display.

### i.iii Sources

This thesis is a study of H.M.S. *Victory* as a cultural and ideological icon, rather than as an archaeological object.<sup>85</sup> It is also a study of specific personalities - SNR Honorary Secretary Geoffrey Callender, and, to a lesser extent, SNR President Admiral Sturdee - and the political and personal ideologies which they projected onto the ship. Its most important source, therefore, is the H.M.S. *Victory* papers in the archive of the Society for Nautical Research, which is held on loan in the Caird Library, National Maritime Museum.

The SNR papers include the biggest surviving collection of 'Save the *Victory*' campaign material. They also contain the majority of Geoffrey Callender's *Victory*-related correspondence, which offers an excellent record of the day to day management of the fundraising appeal and restoration. Just as importantly, these papers also allow us to recover Callender and his fellow restorers' 'off the record' opinions of events as they unfolded. Altogether, they offer rich material from which to study the political aims and ideological positions of the restorers and fundraisers, their interactions with supporters, and also the various set-backs, controversies, and compromises that inevitably surfaced around the restoration itself. A certain number of previous

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Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity', *The Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), 638 & 652; Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity', p. 500.

<sup>85</sup> In 2013, the National Museum of the Royal Navy, (custodians of H.M.S. *Victory* since 2012), began a new conservation and restoration programme based on their own extensive archaeological surveys. See: National Museum of the Royal Navy, 'More Restoration News', *Restoration Log*, (2013) <<http://www.hms-victory.com/restoration-log/more-restoration-news>> [accessed 13 January 2015]; National Museum of the Royal Navy, 'Original, Significant, or Both?', *Restoration Log*, (2015) <<http://www.hms-victory.com/restoration-log/original-significant-or-both>> [accessed 13 January 2015]; National Museum of the Royal Navy, 'HMS *Victory* Repainted in Battle of Trafalgar Colours', (2015) <<http://www.hms-victory.com/restoration-log/hms-victory-repainted-battle-traffic-colours>> [accessed 8 February 2018].

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publications on the history of the SNR, and of the *Victory*, have drawn from these papers, but in a more limited sense.<sup>86</sup>

Another important source is the Admiral Doveton Sturdee papers held at the Churchill Archive Centre, University of Cambridge. Like Callender, Sturdee kept copies of 'Save the *Victory*' appeal press cuttings, correspondence, and speech notes. The real strength of the Sturdee papers however are the folders containing notes for his explicitly anti-socialist public lectures, which have been almost entirely overlooked by previous researchers.<sup>87</sup> It is these folders that allow us to identify and explain Sturdee's belief that the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal was another facet of the greater anti-socialist cause. Chapter One, in particular, draws from them heavily.

Other useful sources include the British Library's *British Newspaper Archive*, and *The Times Digital Archive*, which provide further examples of 'Save the *Victory*' publicity material, and also public responses to the restoration project. The thesis also draws on Geoffrey Callender's published works, and from contemporary issues of the *Mariner's Mirror*, the journal of the Society for Nautical Research. Contemporary issues of the Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects archived by the Bodleian Library also provide valuable insight into interwar British heritage preservation theory and practice within Chapter Five.

Chapter Five also draws on papers relating to the *Victory's* restoration kept within the Admiralty Records, now held in the National Archives at Kew, and those collected by Portsmouth Dockyard, now held in the National Museum of the Royal Navy Library at Portsmouth. Both archives would provide rich material for any researcher interested in studying the practical side of the *Victory's* 1920s restoration in far closer detail than this thesis attempts. They would especially benefit from beginning at Portsmouth, where staff generously alerted me to their large collection

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<sup>86</sup> Leggett, 'Restoring Victory'; Lavery, *Nelson's Victory*; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*; Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*. Leggett's article is concerned with analysing the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal exclusively, rather than the restoration project as a whole. The other authors primarily use the papers to sketch out the factual events of the fundraising appeal and restoration in brief, and for anecdotes.

<sup>87</sup> Hugh Murphy and Derek Oddy at least saw them, however, since they include a short list of example titles from Sturdee's anti-socialist speeches: Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 27.

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of uncatalogued papers relating to the *Victory's* historical restoration. It is my understanding that very few modern researchers have seen these papers, and so at present they are a mostly-untapped source of material.

### **i.iv Structure**

This thesis is interested in why the SNR restored H.M.S. *Victory* in the 1920s: their ideologies, political agendas, and unconscious biases. As such, it takes a thematic approach, albeit one with a loose chronology that begins with the 'Save the *Victory*' fundraising appeal and ends with the ship's restoration and ongoing curation.

It is structured around three distinct themes. The first two chapters are concerned with the propagandist content of the fundraising appeal, and especially with the influence of popular anti-socialism, and of contemporary racial ideology. Chapters Three and Four are interested in the interactions between Geoffrey Callender and *Victory* supporters: how Callender's correspondents expressed their support for the project, and the gendered judgements he made about them as would-be relic donors and sellers and as self-proclaimed patriots. Chapters Five and Six explore the restoration, and then curation, of the ship itself, including how the imperialist and gender ideologies that had been inherent in the project from the very beginning came out in practice.

Previous work on the 'Save the *Victory*' fundraising appeal has always overlooked its links to popular anti-socialism, and so this is where the thesis begins. Admiral Doveton Sturdee, SNR President and 'Save the *Victory*' appeal chair, was also a vocal anti-socialist and anti-Labour campaigner. Sturdee was convinced that British state schools had been infiltrated by communist agents who were set on undermining the stability of the British Empire through its children.

**Chapter One** uses Sturdee's personal archive to explore the paranoia felt by right wing activists in the wake of the 1918 Representation of the People Act; their resentment at the recently expanded state education system; their anxiety about the growing popularity of the Socialist Sunday School movement; and, above all, their terror at the rise of the Labour party. And it

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explains how Sturdee could convince himself that the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal was the antidote to all of these things. The Left, he believed, were inherently anti-imperialist, anti-navy, and anti-patriotic. What better symbol than the *Victory* – monument to Nelson, navy, and empire – to show them the error of their ways?

Sturdee's plan to eradicate socialism through the symbol of the *Victory* relied on his belief that socialism and communism were foreign to the British character. **Chapter Two** analyses the racial ideologies inherent within 'Save the *Victory*' publicity material. Popular imperialist rhetoric claimed that the English had inherited moral virtues from their 'Anglo-Saxon' ancestors which had made them uniquely suited to imperial rule. Admiral Nelson was already a popular exemplar for some of these virtues, a model for patriotic duty and heroic sacrifice. But in the hands of Sturdee and Callender these familiar themes took on a distinctly anti-socialist tone. According to their logic, if 'foreign' socialist influence had weakened the moral strength of the British, then Nelson's example could re-awaken it. This chapter argues, too, that the *Victory* appeal's celebration of 'Anglo-Saxon' masculine virtues was also rooted in the politics of empire, immigration law in Britain, and the racist hiring practices of their principle funders, the British merchant shipping industry. The racialised heroic masculinity of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal was a product of its wider political culture; but was also used by its organisers as a political tool in its own right.

'Save the *Victory*' propaganda needed to generate a positive emotional response from the British public in order to be successful. **Chapter Three** places the *Victory* appeal within wider historiography about emotional expression in interwar Britain. It explores how *Victory* supporters expressed their feelings about the ship to Geoffrey Callender, and how he responded to them in turn. How did these supporters reconcile the cultural expectation that Britons behave in a 'rational' fashion with the strong emotions that many of them felt about the *Victory*? And how might they be a 'humble' patriot while also having less-than-selfless motives for wanting to support the appeal? It is particularly interested in the greater scrutiny under which Callender placed the women who attempted to convince him of their 'rational' and 'humble' patriotism, in

comparison to the men: not least his regular correspondent Beatrice Suckling, who was both a distant descendent of Nelson, and a spiritualist medium.

**Chapter Four** continues this work on Callender's gendered judgements of his supporters, this time in the context of his curatorial decisions. After the launch of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal in 1922, Callender was inundated with letters from people who wanted to donate or sell their 'relics' to the ship. In practice, very few of these correspondents could prove, with evidence, that their object had a genuine Nelson or *Victory* connection. This gave Callender, who acted unofficially as the *Victory's* curator, considerable power over whether or not to endorse their claims. The chapter explores the conditions under which Callender was prepared to endorse a relic as 'authentic', irrespective of evidence gaps. It argues that he placed the owner's character, and intent under just as much scrutiny as the evidence. These things became especially crucial when owners wanted to sell their objects to the ship rather than donate them, because they then had to convince Callender that they could justify their price. A family man might be indulged in his claim that circumstances required him to sell, rather than make a patriotic donation. But female relic-sellers were immediately placed under scrutiny – especially if Callender suspected them of being secretly 'in commerce'.<sup>88</sup> And Callender's gendered judgements about these collectors influenced which objects were enshrined in our national museum collections, and which were not.

Callender and the SNR had to navigate similar evidence gaps when deciding how, exactly the *Victory* should be preserved and restored. **Chapter Five** studies the *Victory's* restoration within the context of the wider heritage preservation sector in Britain. Most existing literature emphasises that British preservationists were strongly anti-restoration. How was it, then, that the SNR received almost no criticism for how they proposed to preserve the ship? In this chapter, I argue that context was very important in determining preservationists' attitudes towards restoration. Preservationists tended to object to the restoration of ruined medieval 'ancient

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<sup>88</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

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monuments', but the *Victory* was no medieval ruin. It had been launched in 1765, and was to be restored back to its presumed appearance in 1805. Some of the material that the restorers planned to remove was less than a hundred years old. As a working ship it had also been heavily rebuilt and restored throughout its life already. The restorers justified their plan to restore on the basis that it was essential for the ship to recover its historical 'accuracy', and also become a visually satisfying monument to Nelson, navy, and empire. In so doing, this chapter uses the *Victory* as a starting point to begin to explore the conditions under which most Britons, including professional preservationists, considered heritage restoration to be acceptable, and perhaps even actively desirable.

**Chapter Six** is interested in how the *Victory* was curated as a 'shrine of manly virtues' in practice.<sup>89</sup> Callender and his colleagues designed the visitor experience as a pilgrimage to Nelson's death, sacrifice, and heroic martyrdom. They expected due reverence from their visitors as a result. Irreverent behaviour threatened Callender and his colleagues' ideas about the specific roles which visitors should play in building this shrine to white male sacrifice. Women were a particular problem in such a space, and carried with them the grave potential to be a distraction to male heroic endeavour. Narratively speaking, they were meant to be supporting naval heroes from off-stage, a removed symbol of the sailor's sacrifice and devotion to duty. The restorers therefore made sure that Emma Hamilton, by this time a hugely popular historical character in her own right, was relegated to a few replica mementoes in Nelson's cabin. In so doing, they projected the modern anxieties of the Royal Navy about female influence within naval ships onto their recreation of the *Victory's* Georgian interiors. Heroic white masculinity was extremely fragile, even while it was all-pervasive.

The SNR's desire to restore the *Victory* as this 'shrine of manly virtues' therefore lies at the heart of this thesis.<sup>90</sup> It finds that for the men behind the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, this meant

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<sup>89</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

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using the figure of Nelson, as well as the valorisation of white male sacrifice, and devotion to duty, to encourage Britons to reject the linked-threats of socialism, internationalism, and naval reductions. But creating this shrine meant policing the behaviour of the many men and women who chose to support the project, and especially the women. The idea was to encourage humble, altruistic patriotism amongst all white Britons. In so doing, the SNR hoped, Britons would be encouraged to cultivate the inherent virtues of the 'Anglo-Saxon' race within themselves, and turn away from the 'alien' forces attempting to destabilise the British Empire from within. As such, the natural place for this thesis to begin is with SNR President Admiral Doveton Sturdee, and his anti-socialist conspiracy theories.

## Chapter 1 Educating Citizens: Anti-Socialism and the 'Save the *Victory*' Appeal

No matter how decayed, a historic structure will only ever be preserved as 'national heritage' if stakeholders agree that its cultural value outweighs the financial cost. This means that 'cultural' value is always political, and to preserve is always a political act.<sup>91</sup> The Society for Nautical Research's 'Save the *Victory*' fundraising appeal of 1922-1924 is a prime example.<sup>92</sup>

In 1923, SNR President Admiral Sir Frederick Charles Doveton Sturdee ended a lecture on 'The British Empire' with the request that his audience 'subscribe some money to enable your children to have the privilege of' H.M.S. *Victory* 'sharing her inspiration with you':

LET NO BRITISH MAN FORGET THAT THE BRITISH EMPIRE IS THE ENVY OF THE  
WORLD.

Further it stands between Freedom & Bolshevism, its downfall is the aim of all  
Communists.<sup>93</sup>

In essence, Sturdee claimed that to donate to his society's 'Save the *Victory*' fundraising appeal was to protect the British Empire against Bolshevik attack. This particular lecture was not part of Sturdee's official *Victory* tour. But since his promotion to Admiral of the Fleet in 1921, Sturdee had limited official duties as a naval officer. He had time to spare, and he filled it as a public speaker.<sup>94</sup> Imperial defence was, as we shall see, one of his favourite subjects, and his audience probably believed that he could speak on this with some authority. Sturdee was a former

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<sup>91</sup> For a discussion of the context-specific meaning of the term 'heritage', see Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, pp. 1-13.

<sup>92</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>93</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'the British Empire', for unnamed university, circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>94</sup> Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, pp. 26-27 & 210.

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Assistant Director of Naval Intelligence, and a former Chief of the Admiralty War Staff.<sup>95</sup> Perhaps even more importantly, he was the celebrated 'victor' of the 'battle of annihilation' at the Falklands in 1914, at which his fleet had captured or destroyed almost all of the German East Asia Squadron [Figure 2].<sup>96</sup> When Sturdee claimed that restoring H.M.S. *Victory* would defend the British Empire from communist attack, his audience were probably inclined to trust him. For a modern reader, however, his logic requires a little more explanation.



Figure 2 Glyn Philpot, 'Admiral Sir F C D Sturdee, Bart, KCB, KCMG, CVO, 1918'. Oil on canvas, 1918. Image © IWM (Art.IWM ART 1325), Imperial War Museums. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/21694> [Accessed 26 July 2019].

<sup>95</sup> 'Obituary. Sir Doveton Sturdee. The Victory of the Falklands', circa May 1925.

<sup>96</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

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Previous publications on the SNR's *Victory* appeal have noted its connection to Conservative and navalist politics.<sup>97</sup> They have failed, however, to appreciate the extent to which Sturdee projected his anti-communist paranoia onto the appeal.<sup>98</sup> They can be forgiven for this, because the above lecture appears to have been the only occasion when Admiral Sturdee drew a link between the *Victory* and communism in public, and his notes for it are preserved in his personal archive rather than with the SNR's official 'Save the *Victory*' papers.<sup>99</sup>

In fact, Sturdee's private archive reveals quite a different story. It is a record of Sturdee's work as a public speaker between 1922 – the launch of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, and 1925, his death.<sup>100</sup> His favourite topics ranged from obvious subjects for a famous Admiral (naval defence, patriotism), to the less so (citizenship and Anglicanism).<sup>101</sup> Some of them were delivered in exclusive venues – the Royal United Services Institute, the Institution of Naval Architects, and at least one university.<sup>102</sup> Some were more accessible. In 1923, Sturdee contributed a lecture titled 'Astronomy and Religion' to the 'men's Sunday Afternoon Conference' programme hosted by his local drill hall in Camberley, which was chaired by the local vicar.<sup>103</sup> A closer reading of these documents reveals that Sturdee considered all of these topics to all be inextricably linked to

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<sup>97</sup> Leggett, 'Restoring Victory', p. 61. Also Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, p. 34; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 27.

<sup>98</sup> A brief allusion to it is, however, made by Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 27.

<sup>99</sup> Namely, in SDEE 5/14-15, Admiral Doveton Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge. The official 'Save the Victory' papers can be found under SNR 7, Records of the Society for Nautical Research, Caird Library, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

<sup>100</sup> 'Obituary. Sir Doveton Sturdee. The Victory of the Falklands', circa May 1925.

<sup>101</sup> For example: Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'How Sea Power Has Enabled the Empire to Be Formed', Portsmouth, circa 1923-1924, SDEE 5/15, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Empire Day', undated, SDEE 1/16, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'the Need of Patriotism for the Empire' circa 1924, SDEE 5/15, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'the British Empire', circa 1923; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924, SDEE 5/15, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>102</sup> Sturdee, 'The Importance of Battleships, Cruisers, and Suitably Placed Bases for Maintaining the Overseas Communications'; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Strategical and Tactical Considerations Governing Warship Design', for the Institution of Naval Architects, 9 April 1924, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'the British Empire', circa 1923.

<sup>103</sup> 'Astronomy and Religion. Address by Sir Doveton Sturdee' *Camberley News and Yorktown Observer*, 20 April 1923, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

countering the communist threat – and with the ‘Save the *Victory*’ campaign. To understand the *Victory*’s restoration, we must first unpick this political context.

How could Sturdee claim, with complete sincerity, that the ‘Save the *Victory*’ appeal could protect the British Empire against communist attack? This chapter finds that Sturdee’s imperialist and anti-socialist politics were so intertwined that he saw the two as completely inseparable. Between 1918 and 1924, he had witnessed the enfranchisement of a large number of female and working class voters; the steady reduction of Britain’s navy following the 1922 Washington Treaty; Britain’s first Labour-led government; and a series of public scandals around socialism, secularism, and the education of working class children.<sup>104</sup> Sturdee made little distinction between socialism, secularism, and communism. He feared, as well, what the rise of the Left would mean for Britain’s naval strength, which he believed to have been severely weakened even before Labour came into power. And these events had collectively reinforced his conviction that communist agents were infiltrating British schools in order to ‘undermine [British] children’, and thereby attack ‘the Empire that most stands in the way of their demonical policy’.<sup>105</sup> He was not alone, either, in the paranoia he felt about socialist school teachers.<sup>106</sup> For Sturdee, and for like-minded men and women, the future stability, and security, of the British Empire was on the line.

In this context, H.M.S. *Victory* had great symbolic power. Sturdee advertised the ‘Save the *Victory*’ appeal as ‘an education in patriotism’.<sup>107</sup> If the supposed influx of socialist teachers meant that children were not receiving a sufficiently-patriotic education in school, then the *Victory* could begin to fill this gap. Firstly, the ship represented ‘the wooden walls of GREAT Britain’, the sailing navy, the power of which had ‘enabled the [British] Empire to be formed’.<sup>108</sup> And secondly, it

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<sup>104</sup> Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, pp. 29-35; Jessica Gerrard, ‘“Little Soldiers” for Socialism: Childhood and Socialist Politics in the British Socialist Sunday School Movement’, *International Review of Social History*, 58 (2013), 72 & 82-83; Brian Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement 1870-1920*. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1965), pp. 352-353.

<sup>105</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, ‘Citizens of Rotherham’, circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre

<sup>106</sup> Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 169-174.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Saving H.M.S *Victory*. Gift of £50,000. Anonymous Reader’s Generosity’, circa March 1923.

<sup>108</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, ‘the British Empire’, circa 1923.

could be promoted as a nationalist counter to ‘alien’ socialism, and to other revolutionary movements within British-controlled territories.<sup>109</sup> Sturdee was, he proudly admitted, just as concerned with reaching ‘every boy and girl in the empire’ with the appeal, even if they ‘only [donated] a penny’, as he was with the actual funds raised.<sup>110</sup> This was not just a fundraising appeal – it was imperialist, anti-socialist political propaganda.

Appropriately, contemporary Britons tended to use the terms ‘advertising’, ‘publicity’, and ‘propaganda’ somewhat interchangeably.<sup>111</sup> We tend to associate ‘propaganda’ with politics, but it does not have to be. Defined broadly, ‘propaganda’ is just a process by which someone attempts to persuade others to think, or do, a certain thing.<sup>112</sup> And so when this thesis refers to the ‘Save the *Victory*’ appeal as ‘propaganda’, it embraces both the political, and the commercial connotations of this term.

## 1.1 Admiral Sturdee and anti-socialist paranoia

In May, 1923, Admiral Sturdee addressed a Nottingham audience on the ‘Duties of a Citizen’.<sup>113</sup> The previous week, Andrew Bonar Law had resigned from the office of Prime Minister. He was terminally ill. ‘Are you’, Sturdee asked his audience, ‘careful how you vote?’<sup>114</sup>

Sturdee probably sensed that a lecture on responsible voting and citizenship was timely. He could not have predicted by how much, however. Stanley Baldwin, Bonar Law’s replacement as leader of the Conservative Party, and as Prime Minister, had no legal obligation to call another

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<sup>109</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, ‘Citizens of Rotherham’, circa 1923.

<sup>110</sup> ‘Saving H.M.S Victory. Gift of £50,000. Anonymous Reader’s Generosity’, circa March 1923.

<sup>111</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *The Projection of Britain: British Overseas Publicity and Propaganda 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 5-6. Taylor notes, however, that during the interwar period Britons also began to associate the term ‘propaganda’ with something negative, namely political manipulation for nefarious purposes (an association which has remained). See *ibid.* pp. 1-2.

<sup>112</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: War Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Nuclear Age* 3rd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2003), p. 2 & 7.

<sup>113</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, ‘Duties of a Citizen’, 29 May 1923, SDEE 5/14/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre, .

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

general election until 1927.<sup>115</sup> But in reality, this new election was just seven months away. It would shock Sturdee and his fellow Conservative voters to the core by ushering in the first Labour-led government, in coalition with the Liberals, in January 1924. Baldwin had hoped that by calling this early election he could win a public mandate to introduce controversial new tariffs that protected trade within the British Empire. But his gamble badly misfired, and Baldwin failed to win a parliamentary majority.<sup>116</sup> And then, more upheaval: the new Labour-led coalition collapsed in October 1924 after only nine months. There is no doubt that these dramatic political events strongly reinforced Sturdee's fear that current voters did not take sufficient 'care' at the polls.<sup>117</sup>

Sturdee blamed Britain's 'expanded electorate' for this rapid political change, and openly shared this opinion with the public.<sup>118</sup> This time he was speaking the day before the October 1924 General Election, following the collapse of the Labour-led government. Six years earlier, in 1918, the Representation of the People Act had enfranchised female property-holders over thirty, and removed property restrictions for men over twenty one. The British electorate tripled in size.<sup>119</sup> Sturdee believed, however, that 'most of the men & women of the nation' were actually woefully under-educated about the 'great responsibility & privilege' that they had as voters.<sup>120</sup> Britain's 'future w[ould] largely depend' on how voters 'avail[ed] themselves of this duty'.<sup>121</sup> In reality, new voters were already predisposed to vote in a way that Sturdee, a staunch Conservative, would have considered to be 'responsible'. There was already strong support for the

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<sup>115</sup> Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929-1931*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 4.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 1-4.

<sup>117</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923.

<sup>118</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>119</sup> Ross McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-1951*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 26-27.

<sup>120</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

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Conservative party amongst working class men, and amongst women.<sup>122</sup> Sturdee's political speeches are therefore a wealth of evidence about Conservative anxiety.

The problem was not just that new voters might vote for Labour. It was also that they were not guaranteed to respect the political status quo at a more fundamental level. 'Do not be impatient', Sturdee warned the public in May 1923, 'if changes are not made as quickly as you would wish. The whole Machine is very complicated'.<sup>123</sup> It had to accommodate 'many diverse opinions, some [of which] may be better than our own.'<sup>124</sup> There was a strongly paternalistic air to all this. The working class may have had the vote, but it was the traditional political classes who truly appreciated the great virtues of the British 'parliamentary system'.<sup>125</sup> Its power was in its 'great elasticity,[which] allows ample means of regulating any internal inequalities'.<sup>126</sup> These were comments published by Sturdee in the left-leaning *Guardian* newspaper. He did not entirely trust that the Left actually respected the slow-moving, innately conservative mechanisms of British democracy. By inference, the Right followed due parliamentary process – the Left took direct action. Sturdee would die before the General Strike of 1926, but he was clearly deeply unnerved by the possibility of industrial action as a political tactic. And so when he lectured Britons on their 'duties' as 'citizens' and 'voters', he was not just warning them against the Labour party – he was also warning them against Trade Unionism.

Socialism and trade unionism were the dividing line of interwar politics. Labour and minority left-wing parties stood on one side of this line. An 'anti-socialist alliance' (to borrow Ross McKibbin's term), led by the Conservatives, stood on the other.<sup>127</sup> Sturdee's political opinions, fears, and aspirations had been shaped by this very black and white political culture. The Labour party was dangerous because it maintained close links to the Trade Union Congress (TUC), and

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<sup>122</sup> McKibbin, *Parties and People*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>123</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> 'Armistice Day. An Admiral's Message', *Guardian*, 9 November 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> McKibbin, *Parties and People*, pp. 35-36 & 67-68.

was nominally socialist.<sup>128</sup> The Trade Union Congress were, in Sturdee's words, 'unscrupulous agitators'.<sup>129</sup> The trade unions were guilty, in Conservative eyes, of having resorted to strike action in war time, with potential consequences for Britain's troops.<sup>130</sup> It was this that has made them 'unscrupulous'.<sup>131</sup> They were guilty, as non-combatants, of putting their own wealth above the welfare and equipment of Britain's armed forces.<sup>132</sup> And Conservative suspicions would have only increased after the war, when the British Trade Union Congress began to cultivate a friendly relationship with the Russian Comintern, the international body dedicated to spreading communism around the globe.<sup>133</sup>

Despite the TUC's diplomatic relationship with the Comintern, however, they were hardly the revolutionary communists that Sturdee made them out to be. Like other members of the mainstream labour movement, they broadly sympathised with the revolutionary aims of the Russian government, but tended to be critical of the British Communist Party itself.<sup>134</sup> The TUC was relatively tolerant of the communists within its ranks, but its membership actually spanned a broad spectrum of political views. Some of its members were not even socialists.<sup>135</sup> Admiral Sturdee, of course, had been too well trained by anti-socialist propaganda to be able to see this nuance. For him, the rise of Labour, linked so closely to the TUC, which was in turn linked to communist Russia, was an obvious threat. New voters had been duped: in their political inexperience, they had not understood the dangers. He took it upon himself to provide them with a better political education.

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<sup>128</sup> Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party*. 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), pp. 10 & 19-21.

<sup>129</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, notes, 'Problems of Today' circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre

<sup>130</sup> McKibbin, *Parties and People*, p. 35.

<sup>131</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, notes, 'Problems of Today' circa 1923.

<sup>132</sup> McKibbin, *Parties and People*, p. 35.

<sup>133</sup> Jennifer Luff, 'Labor Anticommunism in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, 1920-49', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53 (2016), 118-120.

<sup>134</sup> Hugh Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889: Volume II: 1911-1933*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 363; Luff, 'Labor Anticommunism', p. 120; Daniel F. Calhoun, *The United Front: The TUC and the Russians 1923-1928*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 82.

<sup>135</sup> Luff, 'Labor Anticommunism', pp. 117, 120 & 122; Calhoun, *United Front*, pp. 38-40.

## 1.2 Political education and imperialist responsibility

From 1923, Stanley Baldwin, the new Conservative Prime Minister, styled himself as an educator of the British electorate. Baldwin maintained that the Great War had left the Britons confused about what a healthy economy was supposed to look like. To his mind, it was the working class who particularly required advice on this matter. Otherwise they might be taken in by socialist rhetoric about the social evils of capitalism; rather than appreciating the latter's power to raise up all classes of society.<sup>136</sup> But no matter – Baldwin offered them a simple message to be their guide. The nation would save itself through 'faith, hope, love, and work'.<sup>137</sup> Admiral Sturdee's admiration for Baldwin was such that he often repeated this slogan in his own public lectures.<sup>138</sup> It is very clear that Baldwin was the model for Sturdee's own, more modest attempt at educating the British electorate.

For Baldwin, and for Sturdee, 'faith, hope, love, and work' were Christian obligations.<sup>139</sup> To their mind, industrial action was the opposite of hard work. 'Ten Million working days were lost last year due to Strikes not being avoided', Sturdee complained in October 1924.<sup>140</sup> 'True Citizens of a Christian country', he insisted, should resolve industrial disputes through 'Arbitration' rather than walk outs.<sup>141</sup> Sturdee's emphasis on arbitration was again inspired by Baldwin, who cultivated an image as a man of business who understood the value of practical negotiation, and had an unusually positive relationship with the trade unions for a Conservative leader.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 177-178.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* p. 281.

<sup>138</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923, p. 5; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>139</sup> Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 281.

<sup>140</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 188-194.

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Sturdee's insistence that industrial arbitration was a Christian duty was not, however, just because he believed hard work to be both the opposite of strike action, and a Christian virtue. Stanley Baldwin's political rhetoric drew heavily on Christian Conservatism, an ideology which held that all levels of society held mutual obligations to each other.<sup>143</sup> And Sturdee, naturally, copied him: 'good & loyal Leadership' was 'essential for the happiness & prosperity of the Nation & Empire', he told his audience in October 1924, just over a week before Ramsay Macdonald's Labour government collapsed.<sup>144</sup> And in industry, good leadership meant that workers could trust absolutely in the success of 'arbitration' to resolve 'any supposed difference between Employer & Employee'.<sup>145</sup> What he meant, by implication, was that when a business was run by responsible owners, its workers had no need for industrial action. Sturdee's faintly patronising tone here was again reminiscent of Stanley Baldwin, who maintained that hostility between the classes had been stoked up by certain militant elements on the Left, and was to the benefit of no one, least of all the working class themselves.<sup>146</sup>

Neither would this class hostility benefit the nation and its struggling post-war economy.<sup>147</sup> Sir Robert Hadfield, owner of Hadfield's Steel Foundry Co. Ltd, had some thoughts on this. His 'urgent appeal' was published in a newspaper column collected by Sturdee in, or around, the year 1924.<sup>148</sup> If, Hadfield argued, workers and employers could agree to come to an 'industrial truce' of at least five years, then

...a beginning would soon be made with the clearing off of our war debts ; capital, a source of power and progress, in which the worker shares equally, would be heaped up again and used for the much-needed development of our Empire ; confidence and stability, which are worth even more than capital, would be re-established ; cheaper

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 167.

<sup>144</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. pp. 144-145.

<sup>148</sup> Sir Robert Hadfield, 'an Industrial Truce. Strike Losses and Perils. An Urgent Appeal', unknown newspaper, circa 1924, SDEE 5/15, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre

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production would be brought about ; and better conditions all round would prevail for the workers.<sup>149</sup>

For Sturdee to keep this column for future reference, he must have been sufficiently impressed with what Hadfield had to say. He certainly took a similar tone when he spoke on the topic of 'Patriotism', that same year. 'Unrest in a Country', he informed his audience, 'does not mean true Patriotism.'<sup>150</sup> Between Baldwin, Hadfield, and Sturdee, we can see how middle class Conservative men reinforced amongst themselves the conviction that they knew what was best for the working class. To be good Christians, and good patriots, workers needed to ignore divisive talk, and trust their employers.

Like Stanley Baldwin, and like Robert Hadfield, Admiral Sturdee was convinced that many Britons simply failed to understand the benefit which capitalism brought to all members of society. These men believed that support for the Left had been bred largely from ignorance, but that simple facts could clear their vision.<sup>151</sup> Baldwin's government, Sturdee told audience in October 1923, had put aside £90 million that year for public pensions and unemployment relief. The 'anti-bourgeois Government of Russia', on the other hand, had 'abolished Capital', and therefore could only 'raise money... by squeezing the peasantry & workers.'<sup>152</sup> The message was that capitalist profits made state welfare possible. Equally, capitalism allowed the working class to help themselves. Although Baldwin believed that increasing state welfare was a political necessity in the 1920s, he also believed that a responsible government needed to be careful to not damage individual initiative through over-reliance on the state.<sup>153</sup> 'Remember', Sturdee lectured in 1923, 'that the term capitalist include[s] every one possessing property of any kind, the possessor of a sewing machine is literally speaking a capitalist, the owner of a cottage, a pensioner, as the capital

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>151</sup> Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>152</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>153</sup> Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 179-183.

value of his pension is very considerable'.<sup>154</sup> The essence of his message was that capitalism was for the benefit of all classes, and that all classes should identify themselves as 'capitalists'.

To vote Conservative was to the great benefit of the working class – at least according to Sturdee. But he spoke, as well, to remind these new voters of their imperialist responsibility. 'Besides having the Civic rights of your town', Sturdee told his Nottingham audience when he lectured them on the 'Duties of a Citizen' in May 1923, 'you possess them for an Empire Containing [sic.] people of most Nationalities, religions, & colour.'<sup>155</sup>

Between 1919-1920, groups in Egypt, Iraq, India, Trinidad, Jamaica, and British Honduras had all staged protests against British rule. Riots had broken out in British-controlled Palestine. In 1922, after years of war between unionists and the IRA, Southern Ireland broke from direct British rule and became an independent Dominion, the Irish Free State. Britain itself had been disrupted by a series of industrial strikes.<sup>156</sup> Just like the Russian Revolution, Irish independence had come as an extreme shock to the British political establishment.<sup>157</sup> For men like Sturdee, instability and upheaval seemed to be reining everywhere.

Ireland and Russia were a warning – or so he told his audiences. 'Revolution with all its horrors has not given them freedom'.<sup>158</sup> Irish republicans had been granted their Irish Free State in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, and Sturdee reminded his audience that this had not ended the suffering of the Irish people. The IRA were divided over the treaty, which kept Northern Ireland under direct British rule, and civil war had continued until 1923.<sup>159</sup> A ceasefire had been called just days before Sturdee's speech, in fact. What would 'the women of these countries... not give to

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<sup>154</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>155</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923.

<sup>156</sup> Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*. (London: Abacus, 1995), pp. 371-372.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* p. 385.

<sup>158</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923, p. 1.

<sup>159</sup> Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*. 3rd edn (London: The Folio Society, 2005), pp. 398-399.

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live in our grand country?’ he exclaimed.<sup>160</sup> The safety of white women was the traditional rallying cry of the right wing.<sup>161</sup>

By contrast, Sturdee insisted that in Britain, ‘what amounts to a revolution has been peacefully gained in the last century’ through slow, but dependable parliamentary reforms.<sup>162</sup> The proof was ‘female suffrage’, and ‘the granting of self Government to our Dominions’.<sup>163</sup> It did not seem to occur to Sturdee that the primary beneficiaries of these reforms had been the white citizens of empire. It was his belief, though, that Indian and Egyptian activists were ‘prematurely’ campaigning for independence.<sup>164</sup> They should wait for Britain to grant it in a ‘humane & statesmanlike act’, when it judged them ready.<sup>165</sup> And thus Sturdee heralded the institutional structures of British imperial governance to be a progressive force in and of themselves. They stood for order and controlled reform instead of violent civil unrest: white female emancipation on the one hand, gender-based violence on the other.<sup>166</sup> Socialist and nationalist revolutions would sweep this liberal system away, and might replace it with horrors.

Admiral Sturdee’s public lectures of 1922-1925 were therefore partly an exercise in promoting the Conservative party, and partly general scaremongering about the dangers of rapid social and political change. Sturdee saw something deeply sinister in all of these industrial strikes and imperial protests. He feared that they were actually all connected: ‘fostered & encouraged by every possible means by forces outside the Empire, who are much more concerned in undermining the British Empire than in the welfare of the native population’.<sup>167</sup> He believed that ‘Bolshevist Russia ...by means of money & agents is poisoning all countries, notably Great Britain’,

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<sup>160</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923, p. 1.

<sup>161</sup> Matthew Hendley, 'Women and the Nation: The Right and Projections of Feminized Political Images in Great Britain, 1900-18', in *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain*, ed. by Julie V. Gottlieb and Thomas P. Linehan (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 13-26 pp. 15 & 17-18).

<sup>162</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> James, *Rise and Fall 1st Ed.*, p. 385.

<sup>167</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

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and that they had singled Britain out because it and its empire were the greatest barrier to the spread of global communism.<sup>168</sup>

Sturdee was convinced that Russian communist influence lay behind the rise of British socialism, and trade unionism: indeed, in social, political, and religious upheaval of all kinds. And this very paranoid opinion would have been given credibility because (as convincingly argued by Lawrence James) a very high proportion of right wing Britons believed, just as he did, that the majority of the internal problems of the British Empire had been caused or exacerbated by secret communist agents. Believing in this conspiracy theory was significantly less politically uncomfortable than having to see these various acts of protest as legitimate criticism of the British state.<sup>169</sup>

It was Sturdee's opinion that these various threats - or the 'Problems of Today', as he titled one lecture - could all be linked to a sustained attack on British 'identity'.<sup>170</sup> Anti-socialists like Sturdee othored left-wing philosophy as inherently un-British. Stanley Baldwin accused left-wing voters of 'filling their bellies with the east wind of German Socialism and Russian Communism and French Syndicalism' to satisfy the nation's immediate economic and social problems, 'instead of going down deep into the hearts of their own people', and relying on the security of conservative British capitalism.<sup>171</sup> Sturdee kept a cutting of this speech, and marked this quote out for particular attention. He personally blamed three specific groups for failing to shore up British identity against these foreign influences: the Trade Union Congress, left wing intellectuals, specifically 'Fabians', and 'thousands of the clergy' who had failed to suppress rising secularism. He feared that the 'young' were particularly at risk, as we shall see.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

<sup>169</sup> James, *Rise and Fall 1st Ed.*, p. 374.

<sup>170</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, notes, 'Problems of Today' circa 1923.

<sup>171</sup> 'Fighting for Peace. Mr. Baldwin on His Task. The Importance of Education', unknown newspaper, 27 September, circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre

<sup>172</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, notes, 'Problems of Today' circa 1923.

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Sturdee's naval background had made him especially predisposed towards supporting such anti-socialist conspiracies. As far as the Royal Navy were concerned, trade union membership was a serious threat to order and discipline in their service, and ripe for exploitation by socialists. Sailors were accordingly banned from becoming union members.<sup>173</sup> The Admiralty were also anxious that alternative organisations for working class sailors might become trade unions in all but name. In 1923, for example, they ordered that 'benefit' societies dedicated to welfare provision for working class sailors could only meet if an officer was also present. 'Benefit' societies had been key players in an ongoing dispute between working class sailors and the Admiralty over pay, and as a result this was just the latest in a series of attempts by the Admiralty to bring them under increasing scrutiny and regulation.<sup>174</sup> In this context it is no wonder that Sturdee, who was deeply embedded in this professional culture, struggled to see union membership (and indeed, socialist politics) as anything other than a direct threat to national security.

Part of the problem was that trade unionism directly clashed with cultural ideals that were held very strongly by the upper echelons of the Royal Navy. Naval promotion was egalitarian in theory, but heavily dictated by class in practice. 'Commissioned' officers, who sat at the top of the naval hierarchy, were primarily drawn from the upper-middle class.<sup>175</sup> This meant that civilian class relations also had a great deal of influence on relationships between different naval ranks. As in civilian life, relationships between officers (employers) and their men (employees) were strongly characterised by virtues of paternalism from above, and deference from below.<sup>176</sup> A naval officer was meant to act as a father to his men: responsible for their welfare, but as a result also owed considerable respect and obedience from them.<sup>177</sup> If individual sailors had grievances, they were expected to express them discretely to their immediate superiors, or, if this failed, to appeal

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<sup>173</sup> Rowe, *Morale and Discipline*, p. 163 & 172; Carew, 'Invergordon Mutiny', pp. 159-160.

<sup>174</sup> Carew, 'Invergordon Mutiny', pp. 157-162.

<sup>175</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 55-57; Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity', pp. 500-501.

<sup>176</sup> Rowe, *Morale and Discipline*, p. 21; G. D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000), pp. 70-72.

<sup>177</sup> Rowe, *Morale and Discipline*, pp. 20-21 & 172.

to the higher chain of command. They were not meant to take group action – or seek alternative, external platforms for their complaints.<sup>178</sup> Meanwhile the idea that naval employment was a form of ‘service’ (requiring strong adherence to discipline, and considerable personal sacrifices) was similarly embedded in naval culture.<sup>179</sup> Sturdee had been indoctrinated in this paternalistic culture since joining the Royal Navy aged twelve.<sup>180</sup> It is easy to see why Christian Conservatism – (‘arbitration’ as a Christian duty) came to him so naturally – and ‘revolution’ filled him with dread.<sup>181</sup>

What, exactly, was the point of Admiral Sturdee’s ‘citizenship’ lectures of 1922-1925? There is no evidence that he was actively preaching his message amongst gatherings of Trade Unionists or the Fabian Society, even if he did write to the *Guardian* on occasion.<sup>182</sup> At any rate, his open criticism of the labour movement was surely never likely to successfully convert committed socialists into Conservative voters. Propaganda is often used to reinforce support amongst people who are already sympathetic to the cause.<sup>183</sup> His true goal, therefore, was to prevent political apathy. It was also to prevent moral and religious apathy, as we shall see. Chaos and disorder would only win if ordinary Britons failed to take a stand.

HMS *Victory* could not provide a political education, exactly. But it could promote pride in empire, in the Royal Navy, and in Britishness in general – all themes that might, Sturdee hoped, reawaken the Christian, and, linked to this, conservative values that he and Baldwin believed to be inherent in the ‘hearts’ of the British people.<sup>184</sup> And therefore, in Sturdee’s opinion, the pro-empire propaganda of the ‘Save the *Victory*’ campaign provided a form of patriotic ‘sustenance’

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<sup>178</sup> Carew, 'Invergordon Mutiny', p. 162.

<sup>179</sup> Rowe, *Morale and Discipline*, p. 3 & 172.

<sup>180</sup> 'Obituary. Sir Doveton Sturdee. The Victory of the Falklands', circa May 1925.

<sup>181</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923, p. 1.

<sup>182</sup> 'Armistice Day. An Admiral's Message', 9 November 1923.

<sup>183</sup> Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, p. 4.

<sup>184</sup> 'Fighting for Peace. Mr. Baldwin on His Task. The Importance of Education', 27 September, circa 1923. Baldwin promoted an accessible form of popular Christianity, and, further, argued that Conservatism was, of all political philosophies, the one that was most compatible with Christian doctrine: Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 288-292.

to protect Britons, and particularly new voters, from being tempted to support what he believed to be the patriotically suspect policies of Labour and other left-wing parties.<sup>185</sup> When Ramsay MacDonald's Labour cabinet visited the *Victory* with King George V in 1924, Sturdee and Callender celebrated, hoping that 'it gave H.M. [His Majesty] a chance of giving them some inspiration about our history'.<sup>186</sup> And thus Sturdee came to directly associate the restoration of the *Victory* with limiting the inevitable changes to Britain's political establishment after the 1918 Representation of the People Act, the rise of Labour within Parliament, and, as a result, with suppressing political revolution within the British Empire.

### 1.3 'Internationalism is the reverse of patriotism'

For Sturdee and his colleagues, the Labour party's policies on imperial defence were highly suspect. It was this, more than anything, that made them hope that a visit to the *Victory* might give Ramsay MacDonald and his cabinet some patriotic 'inspiration'.<sup>187</sup> Sturdee associated socialism with an extreme form of internationalism that would deny the British Empire any meaningful military force. Again, he understood this doctrine as a means by which foreign communist agents could undermine the British Empire's strength, this time by reducing its ability to defend both its borders, and its trade routes.

In the interwar period, to be an 'internationalist' meant, broadly speaking, that a person supported the newly-formed League of Nations. Created in 1920, the League was a symbol of international peace and co-operation.<sup>188</sup> It had been set up to act as an independent arbitrator between its member states. It had no army of its own, but in theory it could enforce its judgements through the combined military force of its members, in a system known as 'collective security'.

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<sup>185</sup> 'Fighting for Peace. Mr. Baldwin on His Task. The Importance of Education', 27 September, circa 1923.

<sup>186</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 2 August 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 158-160 & 162.

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This new era of peaceful arbitration and 'collective security' under the League of Nations encouraged military disarmament.<sup>189</sup> At the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922, Britain agreed to strict limits on the number of 'capital' ships (battleships and battle cruisers) which they were allowed to build and maintain.<sup>190</sup> The problem for many Britons, however, was that for some decades now politicians had constructed new battleships according to a nominal 'two power standard', which meant that they had attempted to maintain a naval fleet that was at least twice the size of its nearest rival.<sup>191</sup> The British fleet had rarely achieved it in practice, but the ideal was nonetheless enshrined within British political rhetoric.<sup>192</sup> But under the Washington Treaty, Britain agreed to no longer attempt to out-build the Americans, and that Japan, their main rival in the Pacific, could maintain a fleet that had three fifths the number of capital ships.<sup>193</sup> Britain had been a founding member of the League of Nations, but even so, the Washington Treaty was controversial, especially amongst Sturdee's navalist circles.<sup>194</sup> And since the Washington conference had ended less than a year before Sturdee launched the 'Save the *Victory*' campaign in October 1922, the issue was fresh in his mind.<sup>195</sup>

'Internationalism', Sturdee claimed, 'is the reverse of patriotism.'<sup>196</sup> He associated it, along with other left-leaning political movements, with foreign influence. 'It emanated from Germany', he warned a 1923 audience, but had not stopped 'the German proletariat' from supporting the invasion of Belgium 'in 1914'.<sup>197</sup> For Sturdee, to be an 'internationalist' meant to merely pay lip service to world peace without actually preventing military aggression between nations. Sometimes, he argued, military force was simply necessary. 'As a nation we have favoured

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<sup>189</sup> James, *Rise and Fall 3rd Ed.*, p. 478.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 478-479; Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, p. 29.

<sup>191</sup> Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, p. 21; Lewis-Jones, 'Displaying Nelson', p. 33.

<sup>192</sup> Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, p. 30.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>194</sup> Duncan Redford, 'Collective Security and Internal Dissent: The Navy League's Attempts to Develop a New Policy Towards British Naval Power between 1919 and the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty', *History*, 96 (2011).

<sup>195</sup> Press release, 'Save the *Victory*' Fund, undated, circa October 1922.

<sup>196</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

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arbitration' as a 'method of setting disputes and thus avoiding war', but 'without much success'.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, political reluctance to stage an early military intervention had been 'to our cost in 1914'.<sup>199</sup> And if, Sturdee hinted, these original German internationalists might have described themselves as a 'proletariat', then perhaps internationalism as a whole had too much affinity with communism, and was ripe for exploitation by their agents.

The reality, however, was that internationalism was a broad, cross-party political movement in Britain, although it did, certainly, have many supporters on the left. In fact, Britain's delegation to the 1921-1922 Washington Naval Conference had consisted of members of the cross-party coalition government of David Lloyd George, which was Liberal-led, but heavily dominated by Conservative politicians. To be an 'internationalist' did not necessarily mean that a person was a complete pacifist who wanted full military disarmament for all nations, or an anti-imperialist, although naturally some League of Nations supporters did advocate for these things.<sup>200</sup> Conservative internationalists existed – but Sturdee was very firmly not amongst them.

The biggest point of tension in all this for Sturdee was that the Washington Treaty had placed limits on the proportion of battleships and battle cruisers that could be maintained by each signatory nation.<sup>201</sup> By 1923 Britain had scrapped seventeen ships in order to comply with the treaty's terms.<sup>202</sup> In practice, this was a very small reduction to the British fleet as a whole.<sup>203</sup> But it came as a great shock to Sturdee and other navalists, for whom the battleship held great ideological power. For Sturdee, they were the spiritual heir to the sailing navy's 'ship[s] of the line', of which HMS *Victory* was a surviving example.<sup>204</sup> Whether wooden or steel, battleships

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<sup>198</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Seapower and Empire', Circa October 1924, SDEE 5/15, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism, c. 1918-45*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>201</sup> Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, p. 29.

<sup>202</sup> House of Commons, *Historic Hansard* (12 March 1923, vol. 161, col. 1084) [Online] <<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1923/mar/12/avy-estimates-1923>> [accessed 17 September 2019].

<sup>203</sup> Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>204</sup> Sturdee, 'The Importance of Battleships, Cruisers, and Suitably Placed Bases for Maintaining the Overseas Communications', p. 630.

were imperialist icons. In Sturdee's words, the battleship had 'enabled the Empire to be formed', 'defended it' and 'saved this country from invasion over the centuries'.<sup>205</sup> It had been a 'majestic presence' which had 'preserve[d]... the peace of the world' not by mutual security, but by 'dominating' military 'situations'.<sup>206</sup> Worse: even Sturdee's beloved Conservatives had made significant naval budget cuts as a result of the 'agreement at Washington', albeit with reservations. In 1923, Leo Amery, the Conservative First Lord of the Admiralty, would introduce that year's naval budget, or 'estimate', in the House of Commons with a warning that its cuts were 'the absolute and irreducible minimum' acceptable for 'our security'.<sup>207</sup> Sturdee naturally suspected that the Labour government, with its socialist sympathies, would go even further.

As a result, when Sturdee was canvassing on behalf of the *Victory* appeal, and lecturing various audiences on the subject of 'citizenship', he was also campaigning in naval circles against what he termed the 'extreme air and submarine advocates' who maintained that the British government should invest in these relatively new technologies instead of in the traditional naval fleet.<sup>208</sup> Battleships were expensive to build and maintain; aircraft and submarine were comparatively less so. Lisle Rose has argued that the Washington Treaty did not make any real commitment to disarmament: rather, it just gently pushed sea power into 'new, less expensive... channels'.<sup>209</sup> 'Patriotic Britons', Sturdee warned, should 'beware before they abolish' battleships, a 'well-tried instrument of warfare, in order to replace it with other types which are still in their infancy and have yet to prove their worth in war in defending our far flung world Empire'.<sup>210</sup> Sturdee was not lobbying for Britain to break the Washington Treaty, but he was worried that politicians bent on making savings might use it as an excuse to cut the size of the traditional fleet

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> House of Commons, *Historic Hansard* (12 March 1923, vol. 161, cols. 1084-7) [Online] <<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1923/mar/12/avy-estimates-1923>> [accessed 17 September 2019].

<sup>208</sup> Sturdee, 'The Importance of Battleships, Cruisers, and Suitably Placed Bases for Maintaining the Overseas Communications', p. 629.

<sup>209</sup> Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, p. 30.

<sup>210</sup> Sturdee, 'The Importance of Battleships, Cruisers, and Suitably Placed Bases for Maintaining the Overseas Communications', p. 630.

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far further than actually required. Sturdee no longer held any power within the Admiralty, but he hoped that his public lectures and published papers on defence might gain the ears of those who did.<sup>211</sup>

It was Sturdee's belief that these 'extreme air and submarine advocates' had grossly overestimated the abilities of these relatively new technologies.<sup>212</sup> Aircraft, he warned, had 'limitations' on distance and weather conditions that traditional cruisers did not.<sup>213</sup> 'Since the war, anti-submarine measures have been continuously developed', with the result that 'as the potency of the submarine increases, so will the means of dealing with it develop'.<sup>214</sup> Any advantage offered by the novelty of submarine and air power would soon be lost. And technological advances came with their own dangers. Sturdee believed that Britain's submarine programme had 'threat[en]d' Germany, and that Britain had therefore 'unwillingly forced' Germany to begin 'their extensive battleship-building programme' in the years before the Great War.<sup>215</sup> The end of the war had brought with it widespread public hostility to any act of arms manufacturing that seemed likely to spark another arms race, and it seems that even Sturdee had become caught up in this.<sup>216</sup> In the face of this dangerous advancement, he turned to the comfort of Nelson and tradition. Just 'as Nelson was always calling out for frigates, so our modern admirals were asking for cruisers in the late war'.<sup>217</sup>

Cruisers were smaller than battleships, but faster and still well armed. They had been necessary in wartime, Sturdee claimed, to 'protect' Britain's merchant convoys across 'thousands of miles of trade routes'; for reconnaissance; and 'to convoy the transports bringing the troops

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Strategical and Tactical Considerations Governing Warship Design', 9 April 1924.

<sup>212</sup> Sturdee, 'The Importance of Battleships, Cruisers, and Suitably Placed Bases for Maintaining the Overseas Communications', p. 629.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. pp. 631-633.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. pp. 630-631.

<sup>215</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Strategical and Tactical Considerations Governing Warship Design', 9 April 1924.

<sup>216</sup> Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, p. 25.

<sup>217</sup> Sturdee, 'The Importance of Battleships, Cruisers, and Suitably Placed Bases for Maintaining the Overseas Communications', p. 632.

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from the distant parts of the Empire to the critical points where their presence was urgently required'.<sup>218</sup> The Washington Treaty may have restricted battleship numbers but it had placed no restrictions on cruisers, and Sturdee was keen to exploit this fact. 'For our security', he insisted, 'we must possess more cruisers than any other single Power'.<sup>219</sup> In his mind they were more reliable than aircraft or submarines: the effectiveness of which were weakened by weather and range in the case of the former, and by anti-submarine measures in the case of the latter.<sup>220</sup>

Sturdee's arguments were extremely emotive ones. He believed that Britain's status as a maritime empire meant that it should not be held to the same naval restrictions as other world powers: it had more need of a large navy than, for example, a 'self contained and selfsupporting [sic.] nation such as the United States'.<sup>221</sup> In so doing, he appealed to popular rhetoric that Britain relied on its empire for its food supply, and on its navy to protect its safe arrival.<sup>222</sup> Writing notes for one of his many lectures on imperial defence, Sturdee jotted down a verse of a Rudyard Kipling's poem 'Big Steamers', first published in a 1911 school textbook:

For the bread that you eat & the biscuits you nibble,  
The sweets that you suck, & the joints that you carve,  
They are brought to you daily by All Us Big Steamers,  
If anyone hinders our coming you starve.<sup>223</sup>

Good propaganda has to resonate with its audience emotionally, and thus Sturdee appealed to popular anxieties to make his points; and also to popular pleasures: Kipling, Nelson, and nostalgia for the sailing navy.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid. pp. 632-633.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. p. 634.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. pp. 630-633.

<sup>221</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, untitled statement re: Washington Conference, circa 1922.

<sup>222</sup> MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>223</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, notes, 'Kipling's Big Steamers', circa 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre; Rudyard Kipling and C. R. L. Fletcher, *A School History of England*. 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), pp. 235-236.

<sup>224</sup> Regarding emotions and patriotic propaganda, see: Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, p. 42.

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It is no surprise therefore to see that Sturdee used this same rhetoric in the 'Save the *Victory*' campaign. In his hands the *Victory* appeal became, unofficially, another medium by which he could encourage public sentiment for naval ships over newer technologies.<sup>225</sup> According to Sturdee, the *Victory's* active military 'career' had 'been the greatest prevention during war of our enemies daring to trade across the sea – thus leaving the sea free for our trade to flow without their competition.'<sup>226</sup> Again, his message was that naval ships protected trade, which prevented Britain, an island nation, from starving in the event of war. Naval ships were also essential for winning wars: for blockading enemy harbours, and therefore severely inhibiting enemy trade. Both had been a central and ultimately successful part of British naval strategy in the First World War.<sup>227</sup> Sturdee was certain that ships – not aircraft or submarine – would protect Britain's future political and economic security, and he made sure that he promoted the *Victory* as historical proof of this.

However, despite Sturdee's clear navalist agenda for the *Victory* campaign, he never stated it outright. He was the chair of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, and its public face, but he delivered it in partnership with a professional P.R. firm, W.S. Crawford's Ltd.<sup>228</sup> There is no reason why the staff at W.S. Crawford's should have considered it to be their job to further Sturdee's private campaign against naval fleet reductions. It is possible however that Sturdee found a sympathetic audience there: W.S. Crawford, was, to quote his biographer, 'an Empire man'.<sup>229</sup> In 1926, four years after his firm began work on the *Victory* appeal, Crawford himself became Vice-Chairman of the Empire Marketing Board's Publicity Committee: responsible for propagandising to the British

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<sup>225</sup> Previous scholars have noted the link between the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal and navalism before. See: Leggett, 'Restoring *Victory*', pp. 61-65; Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, p. 34; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 27; Lavery, *Nelson's *Victory**, p. 184. Leggett in particular provides helpful analysis of how the *Victory* appeal attempted to improve public confidence in the Royal Navy, following a lack of decisive victories at sea in the Great War. None of this previous work, however, studies the campaign in the context of Sturdee's wider political papers, and therefore within the context of his anti-socialism.

<sup>226</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'an article for the mercantile marine', circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>227</sup> Leggett, 'Restoring *Victory*', pp. 63-64; Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 1*, pp. 244-245.

<sup>228</sup> W. S. Crawford to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>229</sup> G.H. Saxon Mills, *There Is a Tide...: The Life and Work of Sir William Crawford, K.B.E.* (Melbourne, London & Toronto: William Heinemann Ltd., 1954), p. 129.

public about their patriotic duty to 'Buy Empire' products, and, again, about the importance of trade routes for imperial stability.<sup>230</sup> Having said that, this narrative about the Royal Navy as the defender of Britain's imperial trade was common imperialist rhetoric, and did not have any particular party affiliation.<sup>231</sup> There was no reason why Sturdee's audience should connect his rhetoric about maritime trade in the *Victory* appeal with his specific concerns about the distribution of naval funding.

As such, it seems likely that Sturdee had no real intention of encouraging the British public to connect his work on the Save the *Victory* campaign with the politics which he personally associated with it. To do so would be to risk alienating several of them: the aircraft advocates, the League of Nations devotees, and, of course, the socialists.<sup>232</sup> It was possible, though, that if Sturdee's *Victory* audience could be reminded that Britain, an island nation and maritime empire, was dependant on naval ships to protect its food supply, then they might conclude for themselves that 'collective security' was inherently incompatible with Britain's military defence. Then, whether ordinary citizen or member of the 1924 Labour cabinet, they could cast their vote accordingly. Obviously, this was an optimistic hope. Nonetheless, the *Victory* was iconic, and popular, and Sturdee therefore viewed its history as the perfect vehicle for his cause.

#### 1.4 'Some inspiration about our history': empire and the Left

Admiral Sturdee's suspicion of internationalism did not end with the issue of 'collective security', however. Rather, it was a matter of loyalty to the British Empire in general. Both communists and

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<sup>230</sup>Stephen Constantine, 'Bringing the Empire Alive: The Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda', in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. by John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 192-231 pp. 194, 203-206 & 215); Scott Anthony, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Tallents and the Birth of a Progressive Media Profession*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2012), pp. 37-40.

Uma Kothari, 'Trade, Consumption and Development Alliances: The Historical Legacy of the Empire Marketing Board Poster Campaign', *Third World Quarterly*, 35 (2014); David Meredith, 'Imperial Images: The Empire Marketing Board, 1926-32', *History Today*, 37 (1987); Taylor, *Projection of Britain*, pp. 103-114.

<sup>231</sup>Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 87-92 & 151.

<sup>232</sup>Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 2 August 1924.

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socialists preached solidarity between workers across borders, and it was this version of 'internationalism' that provoked Sturdee the most.<sup>233</sup> 'Many of our strikes', he told an audience in 1923, 'have been fomented at Berlin & Moscow'.<sup>234</sup> British trade unionists might fancy themselves to be 'enlightened Briton[s]', but to Sturdee's mind they had allowed themselves to be 'gulled' by foreign agents with hostile, anti-British agendas: 'a great reflection on their intelligence!'<sup>235</sup> He was sure that internationalism was ripe for exploitation by the communist forces attempting to undermine the British Empire from within, even if the British Left had convinced itself otherwise.

Sturdee's strongly-held opinions about left-wing 'internationalism' had been shaped by his wider political culture. For some time now, anti-socialists had viewed the Left as inherently suspect in its patriotism, and especially in its support for the British Empire. This phenomenon has been well-studied in the context of 'Empire Day', a festival founded in 1904 by Lord Meath with the goal of propagandising on the merits of empire in British schools.<sup>236</sup> 'Empire Day' was often subject to protests from socialists, communists, and a range of progressive voices, and the right wing press made sure to stoke these protests up into public controversy.<sup>237</sup> Sturdee, it should be noted, had been an Empire Day speaker.<sup>238</sup>

There was some truth in Sturdee's presumption that the Left might be lacking in 'inspiration' when it came to the British Empire.<sup>239</sup> Communist ideology was very strongly anti-imperialist.<sup>240</sup> Many socialists also believed that the empire in its current form was an oppressive capitalist structure.<sup>241</sup> This, however, was just one side of the story. The Left had a far more nuanced relationship to empire than Sturdee would ever acknowledge. In reality, most Britons

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<sup>233</sup> Gerrard, '“Little Soldiers” for Socialism', pp. 80-81; F. Reid, 'Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain, 1892–1939', *International Review of Social History*, 11 (2008), 38.

<sup>234</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> English, 'Empire Day', pp. 247-248.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 267-273; Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 169-174.

<sup>238</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Empire Day', undated; English, 'Empire Day', p. 263; Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>239</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 2 August 1924.

<sup>240</sup> English, 'Empire Day', pp. 271-273.

<sup>241</sup> Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, p. 152.

who identified as socialists in this period did so without wholly rejecting the concepts of patriotism, imperialism, or national identity.<sup>242</sup> Children from socialist communities often participated in Empire Day with great enthusiasm.<sup>243</sup> Many of those who debated the festival's appropriateness wished to merely censor its traditional militaristic elements, and instead use it to promote the progressive qualities of empire, perhaps in combination with those of the League of Nations.<sup>244</sup> Despite the worst fears of their opponents, Left-wing activists generally campaigned for the British Empire to be reformed rather than abolished.<sup>245</sup> Sturdee and Callender may have worried that the Labour cabinet of 1924 required some historical 'inspiration', but the reality was that this cabinet would make relatively few changes to its predecessors' imperial policies.<sup>246</sup>

Sturdee may have worried about the imperial policies of Labour politicians, but he was far more concerned about whether or not British schoolchildren were likely to share these opinions in the future. 'The more our young people have our great past brought before them, the more loyal and patriotic they will become'.<sup>247</sup> He lectured audiences about the importance of encouraging pride in empire: promoting 'patriotism among all classes', including, therefore, the organised working class, and insisted that this was the means by which 'our great Empire' could be 'develop[ed]'.<sup>248</sup> He believed that working class children needed to hear this message as future voters, and, potentially, as future union members. They needed to learn that 'the employee honourably doing a fair-day's work for a fair day's pay' - refusing to take part in industrial action - was 'essential' for 'maintain[ing] the great heritage that our forefathers have gained for us'.<sup>249</sup> Children were to be prepared for how they, in their future roles as workers and voters, could best

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<sup>242</sup> English, 'Empire Day', pp. 267-273; Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, p. 152.

<sup>243</sup> English, 'Empire Day', pp. 249-253 & 260.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. pp. 267-273; Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 169-174.

<sup>245</sup> Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, p. 152.

<sup>246</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 2 August 1924; English, 'Empire Day', p. 268.

<sup>247</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> 'Armistice Day. An Admiral's Message', 9 November 1923.

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perform their duties as imperialist citizens.<sup>250</sup> Just like his fellow Empire Day activists, Sturdee calculated that imperial history could be a powerful propagandist force: a much needed antidote for children who might be exposed to the anti-imperialist criticisms of the Left.<sup>251</sup>

We have already seen that Sturdee recognised that the *Victory* could be used to narrate a version of imperialist history that emphasised the role of battleships in building and defending the empire. But even more importantly, he could manipulate its history to frame a version of Britain's imperial past that appealed to modern British pride – not shame. We shall see that Sturdee edited the history *Victory* to celebrate the foundation of the white Dominions, and erase its connection to the Atlantic slave trade.

Since the nineteenth century, each successive generation of British imperialists had worried about whether or not British children were sufficiently enthusiastic about their empire. They believed that every generation had a responsibility for the empire's maintenance, and thus children who were complacent or indifferent might be its downfall. Sturdee's quest to promote imperial 'inspiration' via the *Victory* was inspired by modern political events, but was also deeply entrenched in this long-standing tradition.<sup>252</sup>

Just like his predecessors, then, Sturdee believed that British children needed to 'study... the rise and fall of countries and Empire [sic.] in the past', because to do so would remind them that 'great nations can fall into decay' if not properly maintained.<sup>253</sup> Note that he considered an understanding of the 'fall' of historical empires to be just as important as their 'rise'.<sup>254</sup> British imperialists were fascinated with Roman history, and this was, in part, because they could use it to deliver a moral warning about over-extension, aggressive expansion without justification, and

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<sup>250</sup> This was a goal he had in common with others, including the authors of school reading books. See: Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>251</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Empire Day', undated; English, 'Empire Day', p. 263; Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>252</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 2 August 1924.

<sup>253</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'the Need of Patriotism for the Empire' circa 1924.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

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the danger of collapse.<sup>255</sup> Contemporary history- namely, recent events in Russia - could offer an equally powerful lesson. There, an empire 'one-sixth of the land area of the globe' had collapsed 'in a few years', to quote Rudyard Kipling in a press cutting archived by Sturdee.<sup>256</sup> Sturdee himself would cite Russia as an 'object lesson' against complacency.<sup>257</sup> But while warnings about the collapse of foreign empires could help to 'illuminat[e]' British children's sense of imperialist responsibility, nothing replaced the propagandist power of narrating the rise of the British Empire itself.<sup>258</sup>

H.M.S. *Victory* was the perfect vehicle for this. Educators in this period knew that reflecting on progress was a powerful tool for encouraging imperialist pride.<sup>259</sup> Newspaper columns written by the journalist Archibald Hurd on behalf of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal demonstrate this tactic perfectly. 'When Nelson died,' Hurd wrote, 'the British Empire had an area of just under two million square miles ; to-day it extends to over thirteen million square miles... and its population has been doubled'.<sup>260</sup>

As such, Sturdee and his colleagues presented the history of the *Victory* as interchangeable with the history of Britain's imperial expansion, the battles in which its 'guns ha[d] thundered' in particular.<sup>261</sup> For example: 'the age of the present *Victory*', he claimed in a speech titled 'the *Victory* and what it means to the Empire', 'is contemporaneous [sic.] with the foundation of the Dominion of Canada'.<sup>262</sup> Sturdee's logic was that construction began on the *Victory* in 1759, the same year that British forces had captured Quebec. This meant also that the ship was also roughly

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<sup>255</sup> Norman Vance, 'Anxieties of Empire and the Moral Tradition: Rome and Britain', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 18 (2011), 260-261.

<sup>256</sup> 'Chamber of Shipping. Annual Banquet. Mr. Kipling on "Warfare of Ill Will"', *The Times*, 1925, SDEE 5/15, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>257</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923, p. 7.

<sup>258</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'the Need of Patriotism for the Empire' circa 1924.

<sup>259</sup> This technique was used by the authors of imperialist textbooks and school reading books. See: Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 59-64; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 181.

<sup>260</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>261</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, notes, 'H.M.S. *Victory*', circa 1923-1924, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre

<sup>262</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The *Victory* and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922, SDEE 1/19/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archive Centre.

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contemporary to 'British rule in India': namely to the East India Company's control of Bengal, which had begun after the 'Battle of Plassy [sic.]' in 1757.<sup>263</sup> Continuing this theme, Sturdee proclaimed the *Victory* to be 'many years older than the other Dominions', which gave him the chance to list the dates of the colonisation of the Cape Colony, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>264</sup> He reminded his audience, as well, that the *Victory* was 'many years older than the Constitution of the [United] States', and had therefore witnessed British rule in America.<sup>265</sup> In Sturdee's hands, the *Victory* became a focal point through which he could educate the British public about selective episodes in the history of the British Empire.

Sturdee claimed, in fact, that the *Victory* had such extraordinary powers of historical witness that it also formed a 'direct connection between the Armada' in 1588, '& Trafalgar' in 1805. Sturdee's *Victory* was less than 160 years old, but this inconvenient fact was not about to stop him from invoking the ideologically powerful Armada episode. An Elizabethan '*Victory*' had been present at the defeat of the Spanish Armada. According to naval tradition, the Georgian *Victory* had not only inherited the Elizabethan *Victory's* name, but also its 'records'.<sup>266</sup> And Sturdee invoked this tradition to claim that his Georgian ship actually 'date[d] back to 1560!'<sup>267</sup>

The point of this sleight of hand was that it allowed Sturdee to emphasise the *Victory's* role in promoting Britain's 'love of liberty' and defence against 'foreign domination', or despotism.<sup>268</sup> This had been a central theme of British national identity since the long eighteenth century.<sup>269</sup> Britons had been taught to see England's defeat of the Spanish Armada as a symbol England's long defence of liberty against tyrannical forces, which in this case meant King Philip of Spain. They had also been taught to see the Armada episode as the beginning of England's status as a

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<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923, p. 5a; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The Victory and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922.

<sup>269</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. 2003 edn (London: Pimlico, 1992), pp. 5 & 367-368.

maritime power.<sup>270</sup> Trafalgar, meanwhile, marked the start of the so-called 'Pax Britannica', an era in which Britain became the world's dominant maritime power, and oversaw a period of relative peace at sea, at least when it suited them to do so.<sup>271</sup> Sturdee and his colleagues attempted draw a line of continuity between the Armada, the iconic example of Britain's defence of liberty, and the equally iconic 'peace... won at Trafalgar', which, the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal told its supporters, had enabled the 'expansion of England'.<sup>272</sup> Their aim was to manipulate the *Victory*'s history to present the British Empire as a progressive international force.

It is notable, then, that Sturdee and the SNR were very careful about how they framed certain episodes the *Victory*'s history. The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal failed to mention any connection between the ship and British slave plantations in the West Indies, even though this was important historical context for the 'Trafalgar' campaign. Just four months before the battle, Nelson had chosen, without orders, to take his fleet – and the *Victory* – to the Caribbean. He had feared for the security of Britain's West Indian colonies with the French fleet in the region.<sup>273</sup> Sturdee's 'Save the *Victory*' lectures provided an extended commentary on the tentative connection between the *Victory* and England's defeat of the Spanish Armada, but only mentioned Nelsons' 'historic chase' of Admiral Villeneuve's fleet 'to the West Indies and back' in passing.<sup>274</sup>

Sturdee may have celebrated Nelson's journey to the West Indies as a 'historic chase', but his silence about what actually happened, and why, is glaring. Nelson had taken the initiative to follow Villeneuve to the Caribbean because Britain's trade with its West Indian colonies was vital to its economy. It was also vital, as a result, for the funding of the Royal Navy, and anti-abolitionist campaigners made a great deal of this connection. Britain's maritime defence, they argued, was closely tied to the profits of plantation owners, and therefore to the slave trade itself.<sup>275</sup> Like

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<sup>270</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>271</sup> On Trafalgar marking the start of the 'Pax Britannica', see Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922. On the 'Pax Britannica' itself, see: Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 20-22.

<sup>272</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>273</sup> Petley, 'Royal Navy', pp. 129 & 137-138.

<sup>274</sup> Notes, 'H.M.S. *Victory*: 1560 to the Present Day. 1924', 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>275</sup> Petley, 'Royal Navy', pp. 136-138 & 140-143.

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many naval officers, Nelson supported the slave trade, and his wife, Frances Nisbet, was from a family of slave owners.<sup>276</sup> If the *Victory* was, to quote a 'Save the *Victory*' press release, 'the emblem of that Sea Power upon which the safety, honour and welfare of the Empire depend', then it also represented the history of the Royal Navy's complicity in upholding the institution of slavery under the British Empire.<sup>277</sup> This was, of course, a hurdle in Sturdee's mission to encourage children to have pride in Britain's 'humanitarian' empire. And thus Sturdee celebrated Nelson and the *Victory*'s West Indian voyage as a 'chase' of 'Villineuve' [sic.], a personal contest of skill and daring between two heroes, rather than as a tactical decision rooted in the defence of British profits from slave plantations.<sup>278</sup>

Sturdee's colleague, Geoffrey Callender, went even further. 'There is no connection whatever', he claimed, 'between Jamaica and Nelson's famous campaign of Trafalgar'.<sup>279</sup> This was in response to a letter from Pat a'Beckett, who had acquired an antique plate which had previously belonged to the Officers' Mess of the Port Royal Naval Dockyard, and hoped that Callender would be able to help him verify it as 'a relic' from 'the *Victory* at Trafalgar'.<sup>280</sup> A'Beckett knew that Nelson was 'intimately connected with Port Royal', and hoped that this might explain why a plate from the *Victory* had ended up there.<sup>281</sup> A'Beckett's hope that his plate had been on board the *Victory* at Trafalgar is indeed extremely dubious, but this does not explain why Callender explicitly denied any kind of link between Jamaica and what happened at Trafalgar. He would have known better. He was a naval historian who had recently edited a biography of Nelson.<sup>282</sup> It is highly likely, in fact, that Callender provided Sturdee with the vast majority of his information about the history of the Trafalgar campaign.

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid. pp. 129-130.

<sup>277</sup> Press release, 'Save the *Victory*' Fund, undated, circa October 1922.

<sup>278</sup> Notes, 'H.M.S. *Victory*: 1560 to the Present Day. 1924', 1924.

<sup>279</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Major Pat A'beckett, 12 April 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>280</sup> Major Pat A'beckett to Geoffrey Callender 2 April 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Robert Southey, *The Life of Nelson*, ed. by Geoffrey Callender. (London and New York: J. M. Dent and Sons LTD. and E. P. Dutton and Company 1922).

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As such, Callender's response to a'Beckett suggests what was only hinted at in Sturdee's lectures: that the creators of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal believed that the location of Nelson's 'historic chase' was irrelevant.<sup>283</sup> Callender believed that Nelson had gone to the West Indies because Villeneuve was there, not because of his appreciation of the economic importance of these colonies to Britain. By Sturdee and Callender's time, histories of empire preferred to gloss over slavery as a topic, or else celebrate Britain's later role in abolition: a marker of the enlightened qualities of the British as imperial rulers.<sup>284</sup> It is entirely possible that Sturdee and Callender were not actually conscious that they had erased slavery from the historical narrative of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal. To do so was simply the norm.

Instead, when Sturdee narrated the history of empire through the history of the *Victory*, he focussed on the history of the white Dominions. In the early twentieth century, the question of Dominion independence had suddenly become the central concern of empire politics. The Great War had sharpened Britons' sense of their dependence on these Dominions. These had been a major source of troops, and of economic resources. The 1926 Balfour Report would acknowledge their right to equal status with Britain within the British Empire as a whole, and the 1931 Statute of Westminster would pass this nominal political independence into law.<sup>285</sup> During the years of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, Britons had begun to imagine a future empire made up of independent Dominion states, a 'Commonwealth of Nations', made up of former colonies who had been granted Dominion status once their political systems had become sufficiently anglicised. They intended for friendship, common political institutions, and shared (white British) heritage to continue to bind these former colonies together, even as they enjoyed political autonomy from

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<sup>283</sup> Notes, 'H.M.S. *Victory*: 1560 to the Present Day. 1924', 1924.

<sup>284</sup> Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914*. (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2000), p. 184; Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 111-112; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 176. On humanitarianism and abolition more generally, see: Andrew Porter, 'Trusteeship, Anti-Slavery, and Humanitarianism', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Andrew Porter (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 198-221 pp. 199-204).

<sup>285</sup> John Darwin, 'A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, ed. by Judith M. Brown and WM. Roger Louis (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 64-87 pp. 66-69).

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Britain.<sup>286</sup> Archibald Hurd's imagined this commonwealth as 'a great family of nations', self-governed but 'using a common language, heirs of a common history, and defenders of common traditions', and told the British public so in one of his 'Save the *Victory*' columns.<sup>287</sup>

The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal may have celebrated the British Empire as a future 'commonwealth' made up of independent states, but this was Sturdee's empire, not Nelson's. The *Victory* actually had very little connection to Britain's colonisation of its future Dominions: the ship was 'contemporaneous' with British control of Canada because it was being built at the same time, and had not, in fact, played any part whatsoever.<sup>288</sup> But this focus on the history of the Dominions made it far easier to promote Britons' pride in empire as a modern, humanitarian force, while a proper acknowledgement of the history of the British West Indies (or indeed, of the treatment of indigenous peoples within the Dominions) would have had the opposite effect. 'Nelson's flagship gathers up all the sentiments on which the British Commonwealth exists today', Hurd concluded, 'and, if it can be preserved, a further step will have been taken in promoting those ideals for which the British Empire stands.'<sup>289</sup>

And if Sturdee felt that children needed to 'receive some patriotic instruction', and designed the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal accordingly, then this was because he strongly suspected that state-educated children – who were now future voters - were not getting this from their official teachers.<sup>290</sup>

### 1.5 State education, secularism, and the 'snowball' effect

Like most British imperialists, Sturdee believed that the British Empire had been granted through divine 'Providence'.<sup>291</sup> In his words, God had chosen the British 'to educate & train' their colonised

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<sup>286</sup> James, *Rise and Fall 1st Ed.*, p. 385; Darwin, 'Third British Empire', pp. 70-71.

<sup>287</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>288</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The Victory and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922.

<sup>289</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>290</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>291</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923, p. 5.

subjects 'to become capable of governing themselves, while still remaining under the British crown': namely, as an independent Dominion within the Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>292</sup> The British told themselves that they had been chosen for this divine work because of their great moral virtues. For example: British rulers would 'respect the religious beliefs of the inhabitants' of their colonies while 'at the same time' endeavouring 'to spare unnecessary... suffering caused by those beliefs', or at least according to Sturdee.<sup>293</sup> He may have been thinking of imperialist feminist campaigns against Hindu practices such as child marriage and Sati. The suffering of brown women was the 'other' against which white feminists could assert their own moral authority, and therefore their sense of civic responsibility.<sup>294</sup> Sturdee was no feminist, but paternalistic humanitarian rhetoric was endemic amongst British imperialists in this period.<sup>295</sup> And if the empire had been granted by divine providence, then Britons had a responsibility to God, and to their imperial subjects, to ensure the empire's future prosperity.

Like other Christian imperialists, Sturdee also believed that white British citizens had an important duty to pass this sense of imperial responsibility down to their children.

Take care of your children. Guard them guide them. The future is theirs – when we lay down our lives we... hand over our share of the national heritage granted us by Providence to guard and extend for the good of humanity. The under-miners & attackers realise this only too well & that is why they are inculcating these alien ideas to them.<sup>296</sup>

His logic was thus: if the British had been nominated by God to act as custodians to other races, to 'extend' their empire 'for the good of humanity', then to fail to maintain the empire was also to fail in their duty as Christians. As such, communist agents who wanted to weaken the British Empire could do so by weakening Christian belief amongst the British public. Sturdee presumed that children were particularly vulnerable to 'alien ideas' - namely secular, left wing, or

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-2.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid. p. 1.

<sup>294</sup> Antoinette M. Burton, 'The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and "the Indian Woman", 1865-1915', in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. by Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 137-157 pp. 137-138 & 144-150).

<sup>295</sup> Humanitarian imperialism also had a long history. See: Porter, 'Trusteeship'.

<sup>296</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923, p. 5.

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internationalist ideas - because imperialists had always projected their anxieties onto children.<sup>297</sup>

We can see this anxiety in the long series of imperialist education initiatives which had begun in the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth, which ranged from the academic (school reading books filled with stories of imperial heroes), to the physical (the military training of the Lad's Drill Association).<sup>298</sup>

Sturdee saw secular teaching in schools, and especially state schools, as just as dangerous to the empire as internationalism and socialism. Communist agents, he believed, were attempting to 'de-christianise' British children, spreading 'evil... like a snowball' down the generations, through the means of 'teachers in our schools'.<sup>299</sup> The danger was that 'insufficient true education' – insufficient Christian education- would encourage children to 'think that work is derogatory', which was 'contrary to biblical reading'.<sup>300</sup> He cited examples of the 'youths whose education we pay for' - state school children - joining 'processions' in support of their teachers' 'dispute[s] about their salar[ies]'.<sup>301</sup> The Lowestoft branch of the National Union of Teachers had gone on strike that year, 1923. So had the Southampton and Gateshead branches the year before.<sup>302</sup> As Sturdee saw it the erosion of Christian imperialist values meant that British children were more susceptible to the ideas of foreign agents, disseminated by the 'snowball' effect of indoctrinated state school teachers. It was through state-educated children, therefore, that communist agents could actively threaten the economic stability of the British Empire.<sup>303</sup>

Sturdee's anxiety about secular education had been exacerbated by two government bills: the 1918 Education Bill, which had passed into law, and the 1924 Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill, which had not. The 1918 Education Act had increased funding for state

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> J. O. Springhall, 'Lord Meath, Youth, and Empire', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5 (1970), 99-100; Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 59-64; MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>299</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923.

<sup>300</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Vincent Burke, *Teachers in Turmoil*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 16.

<sup>303</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923.

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schools, but without expanding provisions for religious education in these schools, to the great dissatisfaction of Anglican campaigners.<sup>304</sup> This did not mean that all state schools were secular: many were actually run directly by religious organisations, primarily the Church of England. The rest were run by Local Education Authorities, and although these technically did not have to provide religious training, in practice the vast majority did.<sup>305</sup>

Anglican campaigners like Sturdee still felt let down by the 1918 Bill, however.<sup>306</sup> The Bill more or less replicated the rules for religious education as set out in the 1902 Education Act, which had been an attempt at compromise between Anglican campaigners and the many groups, including religious non-conformists and atheists, who objected to the Church of England's influence over the vast majority of British schools. The compromise satisfied no one. The point of contention for many was this: If tax payers funded the state school system, then they should be able to influence its content.<sup>307</sup>

Sturdee had the same problem with the 1918 Act. It provided 'free education' but only at 'colossal' cost to the tax payer.<sup>308</sup> By this, he meant that the Act had abolished fees for state elementary schools, and also made it mandatory for children to stay in full time education until age fourteen. The previous minimum age had been twelve. The government had accordingly raised the education budget by four million pounds.<sup>309</sup> The fact that this had been a Conservative-Liberal policy, designed to promote inter-class harmony and reduce industrial disputes, does not seem to have mattered to Sturdee.<sup>310</sup> Labour had wanted to go even further and raise the leaving age to sixteen.<sup>311</sup> And thus Sturdee's objection to the 1918 Education Act is emblematic of the uncomfortable relationship that Conservative supporters tended to have with tax-funded public

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<sup>304</sup> Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, pp. 352-353.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 218-219.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.* p. 352.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 228-231.

<sup>308</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>309</sup> Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, pp. 351-352 & 355-356.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 343-344.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.* p. 348.

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services.<sup>312</sup> He had been happy to advertise how Conservative welfare reforms were superior to those of the 'anti-bourgeois Government of Russia', but was actually very reluctant to have the cost passed on to the tax payer.<sup>313</sup>

Just as it had been for campaigners of various religious persuasions in 1902, this was, for Sturdee, a question of accountability.<sup>314</sup> If, he believed, the taxpayer paid for education, then they should be able to dictate the content of lessons. Given the 'very heavy burden' taxpayers faced, Sturdee asked one audience, 'does the Minister of Education know how far these' socialist and secular 'doctrines are now being inculcated in the minds of the children during school hours in the week days?'<sup>315</sup> If 'the state has taken the children away from their rightful teachers the parents', some of whom might even themselves be 'neglecting their duty' when it came to providing a Christian imperialist education, then school teachers and the state had 'a great responsibility' to provide this instead.<sup>316</sup>

Contrary to Sturdee's claims, many socialist teachers did, of course, teach lessons on Christian imperialist themes.<sup>317</sup> The vast majority of state schools provided some kind of religious education, even though not all were legally obliged to.<sup>318</sup> And so Sturdee's comments originated much more from his own discomfort with state-funded education than from any actual reality. At any rate, he appears to have been attempting to whip up public paranoia and, in so doing, encourage parents to scrutinise their children's education more closely.

If Sturdee was anxious that state schools were a potential breeding ground for socialism, then he naturally took particular exception to education programmes that were explicitly socialist or secular in nature. 'There are some 271 anti-Christian Sunday Schools in England Scotland & Wales' he warned an audience in Rotherham. These contained 'upwards of 13.000 scholars', who

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<sup>312</sup> Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 181-182.

<sup>313</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>314</sup> Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, pp. 228-229.

<sup>315</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

<sup>316</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>317</sup> Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 169-174; English, 'Empire Day', pp. 269-270 & 272.

<sup>318</sup> Simon, *Education and the Labour Movement*, pp. 218-219.

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were 'being trained not only in anti-Christian & anti-social doctrines but also in revolutionary propaganda.'<sup>319</sup>

The 'anti-Christian' schools to which Sturdee referred were almost certainly Socialist Sunday Schools. Founded in the 1890s, these offered a socialist and non-religious alternative to the more traditional Sunday School.<sup>320</sup> Except Sturdee - or his source - had greatly exaggerated the influence of the movement. Jessica Gerrard has found that there were only 140 official Socialist Sunday Schools in 1920s Britain, which together educated just 6,120 pupils. Even accounting for the fact that her figures do not include unaffiliated schools, Gerrard concludes that the number of children in socialist Sunday education was 'modest at best', even though the interwar period was the movement's 'peak'.<sup>321</sup>

Sturdee was also fundamentally incorrect that these schools were 'anti-Christian'.<sup>322</sup> Socialist Sunday Schools may have been designed as a secular alternative to Christian schools, and they certainly contained some atheist teachers and pupils. But the founders of the movement had been Christian Socialists, and the schools encouraged children to internalise socialist principles using techniques inspired by Christian worship, including hymns and recital of the 'ten socialist precepts' (changed from the original 'commandments' so as to be more palatable to atheist members).<sup>323</sup> As a result Socialist Sunday Schools accommodated members both with Christian faith, and without it. Sturdee had wilfully misunderstood the nature of these schools. For him, anything secular was inherently 'anti-Christian', and worse, 'revolutionary'.<sup>324</sup>

Sturdee's paranoia, and presumably also his inaccurate figures, had been obtained from his exposure to popular anti-socialist propaganda. He collected newspaper clippings on the subject, and attended public lectures. He had been sufficiently impressed with a lecture by a 'Miss Adams'

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<sup>319</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

<sup>320</sup> Reid, 'Socialist Sunday Schools', pp. 20-24 & 35.

<sup>321</sup> Gerrard, '"Little Soldiers" for Socialism', p. 72.

<sup>322</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

<sup>323</sup> Gerrard, '"Little Soldiers" for Socialism', p. 87; Reid, 'Socialist Sunday Schools', p. 42; Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', *History Workshop Journal*, 4 (1977).

<sup>324</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

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on how Russian agents were instructing British converts 'to train & deprave the youth of this country' to reference it in one of his own talks.<sup>325</sup> Public misinformation about 'anti-Christian Sunday Schools' and their 'revolutionary propaganda' was rampant in this period.<sup>326</sup>

The 1924 Seditious and Blasphemous Teaching to Children Bill illustrates this extremely effectively, even though it never passed into law. The Bill was the result of British Empire Union lobbying. It proposed a ban on any youth organisation which promoted 'blasphemous' or 'revolutionary' principles. These principles were extremely hard to define, but in practice supporters of the Bill targeted the Socialist Sunday School movement. Their attack was blocked, however, when Labour politicians led a cross-party objection to the Bill on the basis that merely being 'secular' did not equate to being 'blasphemous' or 'revolutionary'. They pointed out that although communist Sunday Schools which taught more explicitly 'revolutionary' material existed, they were also extremely rare.<sup>327</sup> There was genuine debate to be had here, and Britons were divided. For a child to be a patriot and a good citizen, did they also have to be a Christian?

Sturdee's paranoia that secular education was inherently 'revolutionary' stemmed from the fact that he strongly associated secularism with communism, and particularly with the Bolshevik regime in Russia. His lectures on education and socialism were full of mentions of Russia. It was his opinion that the Russian Orthodox Church had been 'undermined' by the appointment of 'corrupt' Bishops prior to the Russian Revolution in 1917.<sup>328</sup> In this way, communist agents had ensured that 'when the climax came the church of one of the most believing, even superstitious people made no effort to save the State from anarchy.'<sup>329</sup> Here, Sturdee used the orientalisering

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<sup>325</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', circa 1923. For an example of the anti-socialist press cuttings that Sturdee collected, see: John Ward, 'Soviet Ban on Religion', *The Times*, 22 March, circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>326</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

<sup>327</sup> House of Lords, *Historic Hansard* (03 July 1924, vol. 58, cols. 168-171) [Online] <<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1924/jul/03/seditious-and-blasphemous-teaching-to>> [accessed 17 September 2019]; Gerrard, "'Little Soldiers" for Socialism', pp. 82-83.

<sup>328</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Young Men', circa 1923, SDEE 5/14/1, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre. There was actually some truth to this. See: Dimitry Pospelovsky, 'The Renovationist Movement in the Orthodox Church in the Light of Archival Documents', *Journal of Church and State*, 39 (1997).

<sup>329</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Young Men', circa 1923.

rhetoric of Russian Orthodoxy as 'superstitious' in contrast to rational Anglicanism. Regardless, his main point was that religion was 'the most conservative power of a people': a strong Church emphasised loyalty to the state, and thus prevented revolution.<sup>330</sup> By Sturdee's logic, any attempt to increase secular education in Britain, whether in mainstream schools or extra-curricular activities, must have therefore originated with Russian agents working to undermine the British Empire from within.

Only 'true education' could combat this threat.<sup>331</sup> 'Young people' must be brought up 'with the Knowledge of the great Empire that we have been blessed with by the Almighty', and respect for the 'responsibility that will fall to them when they grow up.'<sup>332</sup> To not provide this kind of education 'would amount to gross neglect & a breach of trust' to both '*our God & our children*'.<sup>333</sup> If traditional schooling could not be trusted, then other groups needed to step in.

The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal was the ideal vehicle. Its version of imperial history encouraged children to feel pride in the British 'Commonwealth of Nations' as a humanitarian mission. And in Admiral Nelson, 'the Empire's Hero', and his infamous dying words: 'Thank God I have done my Duty', it provided a model of Christian imperialist duty to follow.<sup>334</sup> The vast majority of Sturdee's anti-socialist 'citizenship' lectures were addressed to parents, but the *Victory* appeal could reach children directly. For example, the Navy League branch of Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, requested that schools encourage their pupils to give 'a copper contribution (say, one penny and upwards)' so as to 'enable every child... to have the opportunity of sharing in this special and unique appeal.'<sup>335</sup> Sturdee repeated a similar message to schoolchildren in Britain.<sup>336</sup> Tactics like this would, he hoped, stop the 'snowball' of secularism and anti-imperialism

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<sup>330</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>333</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923.

<sup>334</sup> Screen titles, 'The Immortal Story of H.M.S. Victory', circa 1923, SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM. On Nelson and 'duty' as a Christian imperialist exemplar, see: Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>335</sup> C. F. H. Pollock to 'the Head Teacher', specimen letter, 18 May 1923, SNR 7/3, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>336</sup> 'Saving H.M.S. Victory. Gift of £50,000. Anonymous Reader's Generosity', circa March 1923.

that he believed was running through British state schools in its tracks.<sup>337</sup> They might even encourage these young future voters to think carefully about which political parties were likely to support a 'strong' empire in the future, and which were not.

## 1.6 Conclusion

HMS *Victory* does not feature in the existing histories of British anti-socialism. But in Admiral Sturdee's head, the two were intimately linked. Like many others on the Right, he believed that all social and political unrest in the country could be linked to Russia, and a communist conspiracy to collapse the British Empire from within. Sturdee lived in a Britain in which political and social change were happening too fast for his comfort. As of 1918, almost all of Britain's working class could vote, or would be able to after they reached a certain age. Britain also had a significantly expanded state education system, and, to Sturdee's horror, this was one in which religious education was still not mandatory. These were conditions, he feared, under which a small number of left-wing agitators could begin a 'snowball' effect of industrial disputes and imperialist disloyalty around the country. The rise of Labour, popular internationalism, and the continued threat of naval fleet reductions were signs that this snowball was already rolling.

Sturdee's hope was that where formal education had failed, the educational propaganda of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal could begin to compensate. His plan was to remind Britons of the simple tenants of British imperialism: that Britain depended on imperial trade for food, that the navy protected this trade; and that white Britons should look upon their humanitarian imperialist project with pride – and also with a sense of religious duty. He and his colleagues manipulated the *Victory's* history to emphasise these themes within 'Save the *Victory*' propaganda, and so tell a narrative of empire which began with the English navy's defeat of foreign tyranny in the form of the Spanish Armada, and which looked to its harmonious future existence as a 'Commonwealth of Nations'.

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<sup>337</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Duties of a Citizen', 29 May 1923.

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These were popular themes. Imperialists from across the political spectrum held them in common. They might, as a result, encourage the unionised working class, Labour voters, and perhaps even the Labour cabinet, to feel 'some inspiration about our history', pride in Empire – and come to their senses about the advances of Russia.<sup>338</sup> But, as the following chapter demonstrates, we can only fully understand how it was that Sturdee and his colleagues hoped that the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal might defeat socialism if we also understand their racial ideology: specifically, that the hero-cult of Admiral Nelson could revitalise the 'Anglo-Saxon' race.

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<sup>338</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 2 August 1924.

## Chapter 2 Admiral Nelson, Race, and the Politics of Heroic Masculinity

In 1940, the naval historian, curator and teacher Geoffrey Callender wrote a preface for a new edition of his book *The Naval Side of British History* [Figure 3].<sup>339</sup> In it, he announced to his readers that the ‘delusive dogma’ of internationalist ‘collective security’, overseen by the League of Nations, had failed.<sup>340</sup> A new edition would prompt the British public to learn from their past mistakes, and so, once this current war ended, overcome the ‘hereditary British tendency to forget in an era of so-called peace the part played at all times by command of the sea.’<sup>341</sup> Just like his late friend Admiral Sturdee, whom he had worked with on the ‘Save the *Victory*’ appeal, Callender was a committed navalist, anti-socialist, and deeply sceptical of internationalism.

The problem, Callender believed, was that historical education had always focussed too much on hero-worship, and not enough on political or tactical facts. On the one hand, hero-worship had ‘instant and widespread... appeal’, and taught children ‘the finest and most characteristic achievements of the race’.<sup>342</sup> But there was also danger here. Without a properly detailed, and critical, historical education, white Britons might grow over-confident in their belief that they were a ‘chosen’ race.<sup>343</sup> Children were told that divine providence had selected Britons to rule their empire, and Callender feared that the resulting assumption of racial superiority would – and had – bred political complacency. Even if white Britons had a racially inherent capacity for just leadership and pious citizenship, these traits could lie dormant, overshadowed by

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<sup>339</sup> Callender had been Professor of History at Osborne, Dartmouth, and Greenwich Royal Naval Colleges, the latter during his tenure as Honorary Secretary of the SNR, and then, from 1934 the first Director of the National Maritime Museum. See: Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, pp. 62-63 & 215-216; Dickinson, *Wisdom and War*, p. 129.

<sup>340</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.* pp. vi-vii.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.* p. v. Peter Yeandle discusses the use of heroes as ‘moral biographies’ in reading books and textbooks. See: Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 130-135 & 151-153.

<sup>343</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

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alternative 'alien' ideas like socialism.<sup>344</sup> They only deserved their empire if they were prepared to strive to maintain it. And yet, the actual content of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal under Callender was, seemingly, everything which Callender had come to reject by 1940: a hagiographical celebration of Admiral Nelson, duty and sacrifice that lacked almost any reflection on the contemporary politics of empire, at least explicitly (implicitly, we know from Chapter One, was another matter).<sup>345</sup>



Figure 3 Walter Stoneman, 'Sir Geoffrey Arthur Romaine Callender'. Bromide print, March 1944, NPG x166323. Image © National Portrait Gallery, London.  
<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw121929/Sir-Geoffrey-Arthur-Romaine-Callender?> [Accessed 26 July 2019].

How then, do we explain this contradiction? This chapter argues that although Callender was worried that Nelson-worship could breed racial complacency, he also recognised its value to his cause. Nelson was an exemplar of heroic white masculinity. If British children could be

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<sup>344</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923. On race and British character, see: Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, p. 119 & 130.

<sup>345</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

encouraged to emulate Nelson, Callender theorised, then they might be inspired to re-awaken dormant 'Anglo-Saxon' racial virtues within themselves, and especially the virtue of duty to nation, and to empire. He hoped that Nelson-worship could inspire this new generation of British citizens to reject 'foreign' left wing political philosophies, and to accept what he saw as their pre-destined role in British society.

The ideological power of Nelson the 'Anglo-Saxon' hero also went further. Callender and his colleagues almost never promoted the 'Save the *Victory*' fund outside of Britain and the white Dominions, despite claiming that the appeal was empire-wide. This was at a time when the 'Britishness' of sailors of colour had come under great political scrutiny. British shipping firms were lobbying for new measures to keep British merchant sailors of colour employed under discriminatory 'lascar' articles. Currently, these sailors could access the same articles as white sailors provided they signed on in Britain itself.<sup>346</sup> The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal responded to the racial ideologies of the British Empire, and also reinforced them, in its own small way. Callender fully recognised the potential of hero-worship as racial propaganda, even if he did not want British children to be educated about the history of maritime empire by hero-worship alone.

## 2.1 Hero-worship and imperialist education

As Honorary Secretary of the SNR during the 1920s, Geoffrey Callender was the resident historical expert of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal. At the time of the appeal, Callender was head of History and English at Greenwich Royal Naval College, and had also taught at Osborne and Dartmouth.<sup>347</sup> He had spent most of his career attempting to turn boys and young men into the pride of the Royal Navy. He had also written several books on naval history, and at least one of them, *The Sea Kings of Britain*, had been for use by his students in class.<sup>348</sup> It would be natural therefore to

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<sup>346</sup> Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', pp. 64-68.

<sup>347</sup> Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, pp. 215-216; Dickinson, *Wisdom and War*, p. 4 & 129.

<sup>348</sup> Geoffrey Callender, *The Sea Kings of Britain Vol I: Hawkins to Blake*. 1920 edn (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), p. i.

See also Callender, *Naval Side*; Callender, *HMS Victory*.

assume that Callender's work on the educational side of the *Victory* appeal more or less replicated the tone of his books.

At first glance, however, this does not seem to have been the case. In 1940, Callender wrote a new prologue to his book *The Naval Side of British History*. He claimed that this book was an antidote to 'the tribute' offered to British naval heroes in most other textbooks.<sup>349</sup> Many of Callender's contemporaries in the education sector recognised that children had to be emotionally stimulated for them to internalise imperialist values. As such, instead of dry facts, most school reading books focussed on 'moral biographies' of imperialist heroes, including Nelson, with whom children could empathise.<sup>350</sup> These heroes, Callender acknowledged, represented 'the finest and most characteristic achievements of the [British] race'.<sup>351</sup> But, he warned, there was danger in this approach:

It is like the ritual in some impressive ceremony, which adorns, while it veils, the underlying mysteries. The game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe ; the last words of Sir Richard Grenville ; Blake's whip at the masthead ; the loss of the *Royal George* ; the death of Nelson in the cockpit of the *Victory* ; these are not forgotten in the chronicles, and they deserve enshrinement, because they stimulate the imagination like the gentle undercurrent of haunting music which throbs through the tenser passages of a great drama. But taken by themselves they cannot be said to put us in touch with the realities of naval war ; the compulsion exercised by fleets on cabinets and by cabinets on fleets ; the vulnerability of sea-borne commerce ; the dependence of an oceanic empire on ships, and the dependence of ships on an adequate base ; the cause and effects of battle at sea ; and the strangle grip of blockade. These things have played so vast a part in British history that to ignore them is to set up a false perspective, against which plain facts and upright figures appear no better than distorted images.<sup>352</sup>

Young men had, Callender complained, been subject to too much moral training, and not enough factual training. He called for a naval education in which children were encouraged to use history

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<sup>349</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. v.

<sup>350</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 130-135.

<sup>351</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. v.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.* pp. v-vi.

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to draw judgements on the effectiveness of the modern navy, rather than merely celebrate Nelson's sacrifice of his life on behalf of empire 'in the cockpit of the *Victory*'.<sup>353</sup>

The problem, as Callender saw it, was that too much emphasis on emulating heroes would encourage young men to 'grow smug-faced and self-satisfied, emphasizing the "chosen" quality of our breed, the "election" of our race'.<sup>354</sup> Hero-worship was designed to 'stimulate the imagination' of boys with stories of male imperialist stoicism, endurance, sacrifice, and Christian piety, among other heroic qualities.<sup>355</sup> These boys were told that these virtues were racially inherent to British men, that they had been given by God to enable the British to build their empire, and that they themselves had a Christian duty to maintain the work of their forefathers.<sup>356</sup> But Callender believed that these hero-centric stories also bred overconfidence and complacency, which resulted, in turn, in 'deadly peril to ourselves- the peril that we may come to overlook' the Royal Navy as 'the shield of our earthly realm's salvation'.<sup>357</sup> No matter the 'chosen' nature of the British race, it was a large and well-financed navy that defended Britain's imperial trade, and therefore its food supply.<sup>358</sup> Hero-worship only had so much use in the training of boys as good imperialist citizens.

Equally, hero-worship could not in itself provide boys with a political education: 'the compulsion exercised by fleets on cabinets and by cabinets on fleets'.<sup>359</sup> The first edition of the *Naval Side of British History* had been published in 1924, during Britain's first Labour-led government. Callender admitted, in fact, to having 'conceived & executed' the book at great speed 'SINCE the socialists came into office'.<sup>360</sup> Ramsay MacDonald, the new prime minister, was very publicly in favour of international disarmament as overseen by the League of Nations, and

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid. p. v.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid. p. vi.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid. p. v; Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, p. 119 & 123.

<sup>356</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, p. 119 & 133. Mangan, 'Grit of Our Forefathers', p. 120.

<sup>357</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid. p. v.

<sup>360</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 30 September 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Callender clearly feared that his government would cut spending on naval defence even further.<sup>361</sup> By 1940, Callender would maintain that the 'unabashed militarism and wanton aggression' of Hitler's unchecked territorial ambition was proof that the League of Nation's policy of 'collective security' had been 'positively provocative' to Britain's enemies.<sup>362</sup> British boys who were filled with racial overconfidence might be tempted by the idealistic messages of socialists and internationalists, and the British Empire would weaken itself from within.

When Callender wrote his criticism of 'distort[ing]' hero-worship in 1940, he was reflecting on British public attitudes to their navy, and to imperial defence, over the past twenty years.<sup>363</sup> Between 1919 and 1922, the Navy League had briefly adopted a controversial change in policy. They stopped campaigning against naval reductions, and channelled their energies into Nelson commemoration, and also public education.<sup>364</sup> Two of Callender's future close allies in the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, journalist Archibald Hurd and the future Commander-in-Chief of Portsmouth, Admiral Fremantle, had resigned from the Navy League's executive committee in protest.<sup>365</sup> Callender was a former Navy League member himself, and may well have been thinking of this episode when he wrote his comments.<sup>366</sup> Regardless, Callender was clearly aware that navalists did not have a monopoly on Nelson.<sup>367</sup>

Callender knew that Nelson was a universally popular national icon, and as such his popularity was no indicator of whether or not Britons would actually hold their governments

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<sup>361</sup> Kevin Morgan, *Ramsay Macdonald*. (London: Haus Publishing, 2006), p. 54.

<sup>362</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.* pp. v-vi.

<sup>364</sup> Redford, 'Collective Security', pp. 49-53.

<sup>365</sup> Hurd and Fremantle resigned from the Navy League executive committee in 1921; by 1922 they were publicly speaking on behalf of the 'Save the Victory appeal. See: Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923; Redford, 'Collective Security', p. 55.

<sup>366</sup> Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, p. 34.

<sup>367</sup> Peter Yeandle points out that Nelson commemoration was a key feature of 'enlightened patriotism', a doctrine adopted by educationalists to celebrate empire reflectively and absent jingoism. He notes though that hard line imperialists always remained unsatisfied with the amount of imperialist content in the school syllabus, despite this focus on imperial heroes. See: Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 5, 34-36, 131-132 & 150-151.

accountable to maintaining a 'strong' navy.<sup>368</sup> And neither could he rely on the fact that all Britons would interpret a 'strong' navy in the same way that he himself did, because the idea that the Navy was 'the shield of our earthly realm's salvation' had been an important part of British popular culture, and political debate since the 1890s, and earlier.<sup>369</sup> After all, most pro-disarmament internationalists still believed in the need for Britain to maintain a technologically strong, if perhaps reduced navy, as part of a policy of 'collective security' overseen by the League of Nations.<sup>370</sup>

By the time the *Naval Side* was first published, in 1924, Callender had been working on the *Victory* appeal for over two years.<sup>371</sup> It is very much a surprise, therefore, to find that 'Save the *Victory*' propaganda was completely silent on 'the compulsion exercised by... cabinets on fleets', or on naval spending, despite Callender's tight editorial control.<sup>372</sup> It made almost no explicit statements about naval reductions, the League of Nations, socialism, or the Labour party – apart from a lecture wherein Admiral Sturdee mentioned his conviction that the British Empire stood against 'Bolshevism' shortly after appealing for *Victory* funds; and another occasion when he proposed a toast at a Pattenmarker's Company dinner to the air force being 'under naval control', and thus not competing for its defence budget, and to 'the preservation of Nelson's flagship, the *Victory*'.<sup>373</sup> These isolated incidents read more as unofficial comments by Sturdee rather than as official 'Save the *Victory*' rhetoric.

What the *Victory* appeal creators did instead, was use the exact tactics which Callender would criticise so heavily sixteen years later. As described by the appeal, the ship was a 'shrine of manly virtues': 'an inspiration to the virtues of courage and duty and endurance'.<sup>374</sup> This was an

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<sup>368</sup> Redford, 'Collective Security', p. 67.

<sup>369</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi; Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 123-125.

<sup>370</sup> McCarthy, *League of Nations*, pp. 134-135. The idea that naval reductions remained compatible with a 'strong' navy was even briefly adopted by the Navy League: see Redford, 'Collective Security'.

<sup>371</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>372</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. v.

<sup>373</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'the British Empire', circa 1923; 'Future of the "Victory"', *The Times*, 22 November 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>374</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

appeal to 'rugged' naval heroism, which celebrated the ordinary British sailor as an exemplar of physical strength, adventurous spirit, respectability and self-discipline, and used him to represent the 'strength' of Britain's navy as a whole. It is no coincidence that 'rugged' naval heroism had first come into vogue during the 1890s and 1900s: a period of intense Anglo-German naval rivalry, and also of a series of defeats for the army in the Boer War, which had encouraged Britons to look to the navy as their primary defender.<sup>375</sup> The journalist and SNR member Archibald Hurd had played an important role in popularising it.<sup>376</sup> And Hurd held British 'national character' in such high esteem that he claimed on behalf of the *Victory* appeal that its 'virtues' of 'self-sacrifice, unity of purpose, and combination to a common end' had not only 'enabled the British Fleet under Nelson to win the ever-memorable victory in Trafalgar Bay', but had also been mainly responsible for the upbuilding of the Commonwealth of nations [sic.] as we know it to-day.'<sup>377</sup> If anything was a 'smug-faced' celebration of the divinely-given qualities of British manhood, then it was the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, surely.<sup>378</sup>

Since the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal was first and foremost a fundraising appeal, there was obviously a financial incentive for Callender and his colleagues to avoid any overtly-partisan political messages. And it is also possible, of course, that by 1940 Callender had come to regret his earlier use of hero-worship to train the young men of empire. The evidence points, however, to an alternative explanation. Callender wrote the *Naval Side* to encourage critical reflection on the politics of naval defence, but he designed the '*Victory*' appeal to encourage children to feel emotionally attached to Nelson, and to strive to admire his 'manly virtues', and also to emulate them, especially, we can presume, if they were boys.<sup>379</sup> We know that the appeal specifically targeted children: claiming to be just as concerned with reaching 'every boy and girl in the empire' as with the actual amounts raised.<sup>380</sup> Callender, like many right wing activists, believed

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<sup>375</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 13, 134-135 & 142-147.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.* p. 125.

<sup>377</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>378</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

<sup>379</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>380</sup> 'Saving H.M.S *Victory*. Gift of £50,000. Anonymous Reader's Generosity', circa March 1923.

that Bolshevik agents were actively attempting to undermine the moral character of British youth, with the ultimate goal of causing the British Empire to collapse from within.<sup>381</sup> Just as overconfidence in 'the "chosen" quality' of British men as a 'race' could undermine the British Empire, so too, could failing to nurture their manly qualities.<sup>382</sup> We shall see that anti-socialism, race, and masculinity all came together within Callender and his colleagues' work on the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal.

## 2.2 Admiral Nelson and the 'Anglo-Saxon' race

On the surface, the link between the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal and racialised anti-socialist panic is not particularly obvious. *Victory* propaganda, as we have seen, described Nelson as the epitome of the 'national character', and it's associated 'manly virtues'.<sup>383</sup> This may sound like a fairly open-ended statement, but in reality contemporary Britons had been trained to think of 'national character' in heavily racialised terms. The generations of schoolchildren who had been taught about the empire-building virtues of English men had also been told that these virtues were linked to their Anglo-Saxon descent.<sup>384</sup> Such thinking was not limited to Britain, either.

To help to save the VICTORY... is an act of homage and obligation on the part of the Anglo-Saxon people to the memory of the men who, long generations before Nelson, killed the menace of the Armada, who, through hardships inconceivable, opened up new worlds, whose worthy successors broke the fetters forged by Napoleon on the wrists of humanity, and who, beyond all in the terrible North Sea vigil of our own recent

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<sup>381</sup> Lawrence James argued that right wing politicians tended to believe that almost all civic unrest within the British Empire in this period was part of a single conspiracy bent on destroying it: usually a communist conspiracy. See: James, *Rise and Fall 1st Ed.*, p. 374. One of these conspiracy theorists was Callender's SNR colleague Admiral Doveton Sturdee, who believed that communist 'methods' for attacking the British Empire included 'subsidising a well known [sic.] Labour paper & sending instructions to train & deprave the youth of this country.' Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', circa 1923.

<sup>382</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

<sup>383</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>384</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 77-78 & 82.

day gave to mankind an exhibition of devotion to duty unsurpassed in patient heroism and saving us all from slavery worse than death.<sup>385</sup>

So wrote an American supporter, John Rathom, in a letter that SNR President Admiral Doveton Sturdee would quote from during at least one 'Save the *Victory*' speech. From Rathom's letter we can see that he believed that all of the best qualities of English rugged masculinity (endurance, stoicism, a commitment to duty) were to some extent inherited from their 'Anglo-Saxon' ancestors. He believed that Anglo-Saxon men had a natural affinity with the sea, and for exploration. He believed, too, that they had an in-built commitment to liberty and justice. For Rathom, all of these qualities explained, or justified, how the English had built their empire.<sup>386</sup> And most importantly, Rathom believed that his own Anglo-Saxon descent gave him a natural affinity with the *Victory*, even though he was American. The SNR agreed with him. The *Victory* 'enshrines the great sea traditions of the Anglo-Saxon races', wrote Archibald Hurd in a column written on their behalf.<sup>387</sup> The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal referred to 'national character' far more than they ever talked explicitly about race, but the two were nonetheless intimately connected in their minds.<sup>388</sup>

How, then, do we reconcile this with Geoffrey Callender's criticism of British 'smug[ness]' about 'the "chosen" quality of [their] breed'?<sup>389</sup> He feared that this attitude would encourage Britons to take their supposed superiority over other races for granted. But as interpreted by many imperialists, Anglo-Saxon virtues were transferable, at least to some extent. The '*Victory*' appeal dedicated itself to 'the memory' of 'Anglo-Saxon... men', while also encouraging Scottish supporters to consider themselves 'part owners of this great Imperial Naval memorial to the

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<sup>385</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First *Victory* dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>386</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 87-91, 119, 123 & 162.

<sup>387</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy', *Hull Daily Mail*, 9 February 1923, p. 6.

<sup>388</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The *Victory*"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>389</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

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seamen of our great and glorious past'.<sup>390</sup> 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues were distinctly English, and yet school children were also taught that the Scots, the Welsh- and, to a lesser extent, the Irish- had successfully adopted many of these traits under English stewardship. Those at the top of the racial hierarchy of the British Empire were meant to have more affinity with 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues than those at the bottom.<sup>391</sup>

It is worth exploring this complicated idea in more detail. 'Anglo-Saxon' character was often used as shorthand for a combined, but English-dominated 'British' race. In theory, *all* peoples of empire could undertake to become more 'Anglo-Saxon'. Britain was merely a caretaker who was 'showing other peoples, many peoples who have not yet learned what real political freedom is... the way', to quote the Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin.<sup>392</sup> This image of Britain as a political caretaker helped it to justify its empire, and especially its direct control over its colonies. The same idea also underpinned Britain's attitude towards its Dominions, which it believed itself to be actively stewarding towards political independence.<sup>393</sup> This was the 'Dominion Idea', in which the future of the British Empire lay in a network of independent but culturally unified nations. The idea was that cultural unity would naturally foster political ties.<sup>394</sup>

In practice, however, most of the colonies that Britain had deemed worthy of 'Dominion' status at this time were ruled by a sizable white population, many of whom were of British descent. The activists who called for Britain to grant its Dominions full political autonomy often did so because they believed that it would be a powerful sign of equality amongst all white

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<sup>390</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First Victory dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, untitled speech, for Glasgow, October 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archive Centre.

<sup>391</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 98-105.

<sup>392</sup> 'Fighting for Peace. Mr. Baldwin on His Task. The Importance of Education', 27 September, circa 1923.

<sup>393</sup> Darwin, 'Third British Empire', pp. 70-71.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 66 & 85-86. The years immediately after the Great War saw considerable debate between Britain and its Dominions over how much political autonomy the latter should have, and especially regarding foreign policy and defence. The Balfour Report of 1926 suggested that each Dominion should be considered fully autonomous, and the Statute of Westminster of 1931 granted each Dominion the legal right to legislative autonomy from Britain. In practice though, total autonomy suited Ireland and South Africa more than it did others, and how each Dominion implemented this change depended very much on internal politics. See: *ibid.* pp. 67-69.

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Britons around the empire, and that this would reaffirm 'British race sentiment'.<sup>395</sup> In effect then, Britain judged its colonies on their readiness for political autonomy based on whether or not they also judged them to have successfully adopted British 'national character' – and the white Dominions faced a much smaller burden of proof than the others. As a result, white imperialists used the concept of 'national character' to justify the racial hierarchy of the British Empire.

According to this ideology then, if these racialised 'national character' traits could be learnt, at least to some extent, then they could also be forgotten. Even if British men had a natural affinity with the 'rugged' masculinity exemplified by Nelson and the *Victory*, they still had to actively cultivate these qualities within themselves.

The British right felt they had good reason to be worried about whether or not white Britons were in touch with their inner 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues. They feared that socialism was on the rise in Britain, and believed that it was intrinsically alien to the British character. Shortly before the 1923 General Election, Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin had publicly warned left-wing activists that despite their fight for 'the progress of our country', they 'ha[d] only succeeded in befogging themselves and their fellow-countrymen... with the east wind of German Socialism and Russian Communism and French Syndicalism'.<sup>396</sup> Progress could only truly be achieved by 'relying on that common sense and political sense that has never failed our race, from which sufficient sustenance could be drawn to bring this country once more through all her troubles.'<sup>397</sup> SNR President Admiral Sturdee was so impressed by Baldwin's comments that he highlighted them in a newspaper cutting, and filed this in his personal archive for future reference.<sup>398</sup>

Imperialists had always suffered from anxieties about the physical and moral health of the British race. Anxiety around immigration, urban health, and international competition had fuelled

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid. pp. 66, 69-70 & 72.

<sup>396</sup> 'Fighting for Peace. Mr. Baldwin on His Task. The Importance of Education', 27 September, circa 1923.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

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this period's popular eugenics movement.<sup>399</sup> Conservatives like Baldwin and Sturdee projected their anti-socialist and anti-communist beliefs onto this general racial anxiety. For them, socialism was a national illness: a foreign body which was, to quote Sturdee, 'poisoning... Great Britain'.<sup>400</sup> He believed that Communist agents intended to attack the British Empire from within by targeting schoolchildren with their propaganda.<sup>401</sup> Many right-wing politicians believed the same thing.<sup>402</sup> But equally, Stanley Baldwin offered a solution. If British men could lose their innate 'common... and political sense' through left-wing 'befogging', then they could also regain it through 'sufficient sustenance'.<sup>403</sup> By this, he meant propaganda.

Callender agreed with Baldwin, and believed, furthermore, that the *Victory* was the perfect vehicle. As he wrote in this excerpt from an apparently unpublished poem, 'Saving the *Victory*':

O England, let thy view  
Be, like thy vision, clear!  
Thou land of oak and yew,  
Great-hearted & sincere,  
Thine ancient strength renew!  
To Nelson's word be true!  
Cling to his ship! Win through!  
His "Victory" revere!<sup>404</sup>

As described by Callender, the 'ancient strength' of the English required regeneration. Even if English people had naturally 'clear' political 'vision', their 'view' could, and had, become

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<sup>399</sup> Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), pp. 95-97, 101-108; Beaven, *Visions of Empire*, pp. 63 & 125-149.

<sup>400</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923.

<sup>401</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizens of Rotherham', circa 1923.

<sup>402</sup> James, *Rise and Fall 1st Ed.*, p. 374.

<sup>403</sup> 'Fighting for Peace. Mr. Baldwin on His Task. The Importance of Education', 27 September, circa 1923.

<sup>404</sup> Geoffrey Callender, manuscript, 'Saving the Victory', circa 1923, SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM.

temporarily obstructed.<sup>405</sup> Callender did not mention socialists or communists by name, but we know he shared Admiral Sturdee's distrust of the Labour party. Callender also did not claim that this 'clear' vision was racially inherent, but we know that he had approved the use of racialised language elsewhere in the *Victory* appeal.<sup>406</sup> Otherwise, Callender's poetry echoed Stanley Baldwin's rhetoric, except this time it was not general 'common... and political sense' but specifically revering 'Nelson's word' of national, imperialist, Christian duty, in association with the *Victory*, which would recall British children to their own innate moral strength. He believed that they would be significantly less vulnerable to socialist and communist persuasion as a result.<sup>407</sup> We shall see that the SNR actively revised Nelson and British 'national character' into a set of masculine virtues designed to instil the working class with respect for Britain's traditional social hierarchies. Callender would have considered Nelson-worship of this kind to be far removed from complacent reliance on the "chosen" quality of our breed'.<sup>408</sup>

### 2.3 Modest heroism and collective duty

Every society creates and revises heroes to suit their own values, and anxieties.<sup>409</sup> In theory, Callender and his 'Save the *Victory*' appeal colleagues could have used Nelson's history as a naval commander to emphasise any number of racialised 'national character' traits: for example courage, endurance, or decisiveness. But instead, their appeal focussed almost exclusively on the themes of 'duty' and 'sacrifice', and on Nelson's death much more than his life.

Archibald Hurd proclaimed 'Nelson's signal on the ever-famous morning "England expects that every man this day will do his duty"' to be 'the deathless message to our race'.<sup>410</sup> A press

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First *Victory* dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

<sup>407</sup> 'Fighting for Peace. Mr. Baldwin on His Task. The Importance of Education', 27 September, circa 1923; Geoffrey Callender, manuscript, 'Saving the *Victory*', circa 1923.

<sup>408</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

<sup>409</sup> Simon Wendt, 'Introduction: Studying Everyday Heroism in Western Societies', in *Extraordinary Ordinarity: Everyday Heroism in the United States, Germany, and Britain, 1800-2015*, ed. by Simon Wendt (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2016), pp. 7-24 (p. 10).

<sup>410</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

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release issued at the launch of the appeal in Sturdee's name described the *Victory* as the place where Nelson had 'proclaimed the deathless message of "Duty" and received his mortal wound.'<sup>411</sup> It invoked not just Nelson's famous signal, but also his much-quoted dying words, 'thank God I have done my duty'.<sup>412</sup> 'The country-men of Nelson', Sturdee's press release continued, 'have made this watchword "Duty" their invariable guide ever since the call first flew at the masthead of H.M.S. "Victory".<sup>413</sup> He was, 'quite sure', therefore, 'that I shall not appeal in vain'.<sup>414</sup> And Geoffrey Callender's unpublished poem followed suit:

Invoke Love's deepest thought –  
Lo! Duty is its flower –  
Safety our Nelson sought  
Safety for England's dower  
Hold fast to what he taught  
Through life with Duty fraught  
To what in death he bought-  
His country's life and power<sup>415</sup>

The sense of 'duty' that Callender and the SNR wanted to encourage here extended far beyond the 'duty' to donate to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal. More than any other 'Anglo-Saxon' character traits, 'duty' and 'sacrifice' - Nelson's death for the sake of 'his country's life and power' - reminded the SNR's audience that they, as future Britons, were now obligated to Nelson to maintain his work.<sup>416</sup> In fact 'duty' and 'sacrifice' carried particular resonance for interwar Britons. Most of them felt a sense of obligation to the dead and wounded of the Great War,

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<sup>411</sup> Press release, 'Save the Victory' Fund, undated, circa October 1922.

<sup>412</sup> William Beatty, *Authentic Narrative of the Death of Lord Nelson*. 2nd edn (T Davison, for T Cadell and W Davies 1808), p. 24 & 50.

<sup>413</sup> Press release, 'Save the Victory' Fund, undated, circa October 1922.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> Geoffrey Callender, manuscript, 'Saving the Victory', circa 1923.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

although they struggled to agree on how, exactly, this debt should be paid in practice.<sup>417</sup> We have seen, for example, that the SNR endorsed the connection made by John Rathom between the 'devotion to duty' of the men who participated in 'the terrible North Sea vigil of our own recent day', and the obligation to donate 'to help to save the VICTORY' as 'an act of homage' to them.<sup>418</sup>

As described by the 'Victory' appeal however, Nelson had not merely given his life for the sake of nation and empire alone. Rather, his sacrifice had been motivated by his sense of Christian duty. It was an act of religious martyrdom. And they delivered this message by quoting from Nelson's own words, and specifically his own prayer. 'To Him', Nelson had written the evening before Trafalgar, 'I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend'.<sup>419</sup> This was Nelson as a chivalrous Christian warrior, a defender of the weak, an upholder of justice, and a man whose higher moral purpose softened and justified his responsibility for acts of great violence. Such Christian warrior-heroes had come into vogue in the Victorian period as a way to cover the hypocrisy of the British Empire's claim to being a peaceful, humanitarian mission, despite its ongoing military aggression.<sup>420</sup> Nelson's piety, and his final prayer, had become well-established parts of his national myth during this period.<sup>421</sup> This Victorian taste for chivalrous Christian heroes had come back into fashion during the Great War, when the shock of total war led Britons to seek reassurance in old certainties, even as they adapted their heroes for these new circumstances.<sup>422</sup>

The cult of the boy hero Jack Cornwell is an excellent example of this. Cornwell had been fatally wounded at the Battle of Jutland in 1916, received a posthumous Victoria Cross, and then

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<sup>417</sup> Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance*. (Oxford & New York: Berg, 1998), pp. 157 & 160-163.

<sup>418</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First Victory dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923. Don Leggett notes this too in Leggett, 'Restoring Victory', p. 78.

<sup>419</sup> "'Save the Victory' Fund: Exhibition of the New Film', unknown newspaper, circa October 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>420</sup> Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850-2000*. (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), pp. 21-23.

<sup>421</sup> Holger Hoock, 'Nelson Entombed: The Military and Naval Pantheon in St Paul's Cathedral', in *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy*, ed. by David Cannadine (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 115-143 pp. 129-130).

<sup>422</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 163-164.

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enjoyed an exceptionally popular hero-cult during the later years of the Great War. Cornwell was a working class teenager, which made this kind of national commemoration highly unprecedented. He was also remarkably passive for a military hero. Instead of being a heroic conqueror, he was a pious martyr whose great act had been to remain at his gun post on board H.M.S. *Chester*, despite being mortally wounded and with very little protection from enemy fire.<sup>423</sup>

Endurance and stoicism had always been 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues, and an important feature of 'rugged' masculinity. But as Mary Conley points out, Cornwell's heroism was less about his physical strength and more about his moral and religious strength, and the latter was heavily emphasised by the British press, by imperialist organisations like the Boy Scouts and the Navy League, and by the Admiralty. These various parties used Cornwell to spread a message. The war would be won by dutiful heroes who fulfilled their allotted role, however humble; and who, assisted by their Christian faith, found the inner strength needed to persevere under the most terrible conditions. They were preparing the British public for a long campaign – especially after Jutland, with its very high number of British casualties, and ambiguous tactical outcome. They also needed Britons to adapt to mass conscription, and Conley also argues that this is one of the reasons why we find chivalrous qualities, traditionally the preserve of elite heroes only, being applied onto an ordinary sailor like Cornwell.<sup>424</sup>

In the right hands, the promotion of humble Christian heroes like Jack Cornwell could be used to further the anti-socialist cause. Research into the cults of 'everyday' civilian heroes has demonstrated that these were often actively promoted by the state (or by middle class organisations) to pacify the masses.<sup>425</sup> Jack Cornwell was not a civilian hero, but there is still

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid. pp. 160, 162, 165 & 169.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. pp. 164-177.

<sup>425</sup> Wendt, 'Studying Everyday Heroism', p. 13; Christiane Hadamitzky and Barbara Korte, 'Everyday Heroism for the Victorian Industrial Classes: The British Workman and the British Workwoman, 1855-1880', in *Extraordinary Ordinarity: Everyday Heroism in the United States, Germany, and Britain, 1800-2015*, ed. by Simon Wendt (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2016), pp. 53-77 pp. 65-66).

evidence that some of his promoters hoped that his example of pious duty, which valorised his passive wait for orders from his superiors under the most extreme conditions, would help to discourage industrial strikes. In 1917, for example, First Lord of the Admiralty Edward Carson had used his speech at the unveiling of a portrait of Cornwell to remind naval shipyard workers, who were then engaged in a high-profile dispute with the Admiralty around their pay and conditions, of their patriotic obligation to avoid strikes for the sake of the war effort.<sup>426</sup> The idea that strike action was unpatriotic behaviour from the working class was not unique to wartime either. Admiral Sturdee's 1920s lectures made good use of this theme.<sup>427</sup> And so Cornwell's cult is an example of the key role that hero-cults had to play in the British establishment's efforts to pacify the working class.

Naturally, Cornwell's own working class background was a key part of this message. It allowed him to be promoted as an exemplar of the heroic virtue of 'followership': the idea that ordinary people could fulfil their obligation to the British Empire by doing their duty at a local level, respecting the established social order, and not seeking to equal their social betters.<sup>428</sup> 'Followership' was highly compatible with Christian Conservatism, which held that all levels of society held mutual obligations to each other.<sup>429</sup> 'Some of us may become leaders,' devout Conservative Admiral Sturdee proclaimed during one of his anti-socialist lectures, 'but most of us will be followers' – and with good leaders, Britons would have no 'use... [for] the word Strike'.<sup>430</sup>

With this in mind, Sturdee and his allies set out to use Nelson's hero-cult, via their '*Victory*' appeal publicity, to promote Nelson as an exemplar of the 'spirit of leadership': a symbol of traditional social hierarchy, and of the mutual responsibilities between leaders and followers.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>427</sup> For example: Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>428</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 121-142.

<sup>429</sup> Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 167.

<sup>430</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924.

<sup>431</sup> Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archive Centre.

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This was relatively easy for them to do, because Nelson's contemporaries had made much of his respect for his subordinates, including working class sailors, when they praised his virtues as a leader.<sup>432</sup> The ordinary sailors of Nelson's navy also had a role to play in delivering this message. Archibald Hurd's 'Save the *Victory*' columns praised their 'unity of purpose', and the 'combination to a common end' they had shown at Trafalgar, and claimed that these qualities (along with 'self-sacrifice') were innately 'British' virtues.<sup>433</sup> As a point of comparison, when primary school reading books of this period talked about Trafalgar, they often highlighted the role of Nelson's sailors in much the same way as Hurd did, and did so consciously as an example of 'followership' in action.<sup>434</sup>

It was an example that the '*Victory*' appeal organisers feared was much needed in modern Britain. 'Honour and fame are sought/ Compared to Nelson's dower', Callender mourned in lines that he drafted, and then cut, from his 1923 poem.<sup>435</sup> By inference, he considered 'Nelson's dower' to be commitment to duty in all its forms, no matter how humble. Hurd, meanwhile proclaimed that Nelson's signal at Trafalgar, 'the deathless message to our race', should be 'inspiration' for workers of all kinds: a 'sermon' for 'all who speak the English language as they go about their daily task in school, in workshop, in factory, in office', and particularly necessary given 'these unrestful times'.<sup>436</sup> In this way (or so Hurd and Callender hoped) Trafalgar was an exemplar of the virtues of 'followership' that went far beyond the battlefield, and could inspire greater harmony between employer and employee.

These qualities of humility, duty, responsible leadership, and collective endeavour were the foundation of the 'common sense and political sense' that anti-socialist politicians like Stanley Baldwin believed 'ha[d] never failed our race'.<sup>437</sup> If this were true, then socialism, communism,

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<sup>432</sup> Czisnik, 'Nelson, Navy and National Identity', p. 188 & 192.

<sup>433</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>434</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, p. 132.

<sup>435</sup> Geoffrey Callender, manuscript, 'Saving the Victory', circa 1923.

<sup>436</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

<sup>437</sup> 'Fighting for Peace. Mr. Baldwin on His Task. The Importance of Education', 27 September, circa 1923.

and trade unionism were, by their nature, inherently incompatible with the true 'Anglo-Saxon' character.<sup>438</sup> As such, the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal reinterpreted 'Anglo-Saxon' masculinity to emphasise the moral values that appealed to them as right wing activists, and planned, through Nelson's example, to re-awaken these innately anti-socialist moral qualities within white British children. As such, their message was aimed firmly at the working class – and, as the next section will demonstrate, this was specifically the *white* working class.

## 2.4 'All sons and daughters of the Empire'

The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal stated clearly, and publicly, that it hoped to inspire greater patriotism amongst Britons.<sup>439</sup> It did not mention communism, socialism, or the idea that British 'national character' required reinforcement against these things. Equally ambiguous, at least from the actual wording of the propaganda, was the fact that the SNR really only wanted *some* British citizens to be inspired by the appeal, rather than *all*. As described by a 'Save the *Victory*' postcard:

Admiral of the Fleet

Sir F.C. DOVETON STURDEE, Bart. G.C.B, K.C.M.G., C.V.O, J.P., L.L.D.

urgently appeals to the Empire for funds to restore and preserve our greatest Naval treasure. The "Victory" holds an inspiration for all sons and daughters of the Empire; she is the living embodiment of the "spirit of leadership"; the mainspring of successful endeavour. She helped to create the Empire and saved England in her hour of need.

Do not fail her now<sup>440</sup>

The appeal nominally advertised itself, the *Victory*, and worship of Nelson's 'spirit of leadership' to 'all sons and daughters of the empire'.<sup>441</sup> It suggested that even though Nelson was a symbol of white, middle class, heroic masculinity, men and women of all backgrounds around

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> Annotated screen titles, 'The Immortal Story of H.M.S. *Victory*', circa 1923, SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>440</sup> Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

the empire could still treat him as a personal exemplar. This was a bold, inclusive statement in theory, but we already know that it was ambiguous in practice. 'We are not', Admiral Sturdee was wont to remind audiences on his 'citizenship' lecture tours, 'all born equal'. He believed that society had natural leaders and followers.<sup>442</sup> When we study where and how Callender and his colleagues advertised the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal in practice, it becomes clear that its message was, in truth, only actively aimed at white Britons.

As presented by the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, British 'national character' was indistinguishable from white 'Anglo-Saxon' heroic male virtues. Nelson was at the centre of all 'Save the *Victory*' propaganda, but the campaign also presented him as being one prominent face in a long line of heroic Englishmen. This line, it claimed, had begun with Elizabethan explorers like Francis Drake and ended with the present generation of naval servicemen. As such, the ship represented the history of 'our forefathers', who 'with iron perseverance' had 'seized strategic pieces on the ocean waters of the world.'<sup>443</sup> To support the *Victory's* restoration was 'an act of homage... to the memory of the[se] men', and their 'successors' who continued to defend British freedoms.<sup>444</sup> We have already seen that the ship was promoted as a monument to 'rugged' white masculinity.<sup>445</sup> This did not, however, mean that the appeal organisers presumed that only men would be able to find 'inspiration' in the ship.<sup>446</sup>

In fact, Callender and his colleagues made a conscious effort to explicitly advertise the *Victory* to 'all sons and daughters of the Empire', to 'the men and women of the country', or, less concisely, 'to the youth and young manhood & womanhood of the nation & the Empire as a whole'.<sup>447</sup> They argued that the ship should be preserved to inspire 'our children's children'.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Patriotism: The Need of Patriotism for the Empire', 28 October 1924. He also expressed this sentiment in: Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'Citizenship and Religion', St Paul's version, 1 October 1923, p. 4a.

<sup>443</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The Victory and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922.

<sup>444</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First Victory dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

<sup>445</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 13 & 142-147.

<sup>446</sup> Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.; 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923; Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The Victory and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922.

<sup>448</sup> Press release, 'Save the Victory' Fund, undated, circa October 1922.

This gender-neutral language is noticeable in an appeal concerned with giving lessons in masculinity. It is especially so for one produced at a time when most contemporary writers used 'he' as the default gender-neutral pronoun. These references to 'womanhood' and 'daughters' in 'Save the *Victory*' propaganda therefore represent a conscious attempt on the part of the SNR to advertise heroic masculinity amongst British women.<sup>449</sup>

This was not actually surprising, for several reasons. As of 1918, working class women had become potential voters. They were already potential trade union members. Both of these things meant that Callender and his colleagues had as much reason to encourage them to respect the 'spirit of leadership' as they did working class men.<sup>450</sup> Upper and middle class women, who were also new voters, formed a notable presence within imperialist societies at the time. This included societies with stereotypically 'masculinist' objectives, including groups who were concerned with maintaining the British Empire through military force, such as the Navy League.<sup>451</sup> There was also a long tradition of right wing propaganda aimed at white female audiences. Such propaganda made appeals to them as mothers, romantic partners, managers of the household budget, and – should invasion happen – potential victims.<sup>452</sup> Generations of British women had been trained to feel personally invested in the outcome of white male 'endeavour'.<sup>453</sup> And generations of white propagandists of all genders had become used to targeting women with this message.

This conscious nod to 'daughters' was, of course, also just a sensible fundraising tactic. The wider the *Victory* appeal's supporter base, the greater the potential income.<sup>454</sup> For this same reason, the *Victory* appeal fund was advertised as 'an Empire one', and in the British Dominions as

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<sup>449</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The Victory and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922; Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3.

<sup>450</sup> Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3.

<sup>451</sup> Eliza Riedi, 'Imperialist Women and Conservative Activism in Early-Twentieth-Century Britain: The Political World of Violet Milner', *Women's History Review*, 22 (2013), 936-939; Matthew Hendley, *Organized Patriotism and the Crucible of War: Popular Imperialism in Britain, 1914-1932*. (Montreal and Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), pp. 7-8. Hendley genders imperialist leagues as being 'masculinist' or 'feminized' in character depending on their activities more than their actual membership demographics, although he does loosely link the two.

<sup>452</sup> Riedi, 'Imperialist Women', p. 939; Hendley, 'Women and the Nation', p. 15 & 18.

<sup>453</sup> Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

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well as in Britain itself.<sup>455</sup> 'All sons and daughters of the empire' [emphasis added] should feel invested in 'preserv[ing] our greatest Naval treasure'.<sup>456</sup> This, too, made financial sense.

Despite what they claimed, however, Callender and his colleagues showed little interest in actively fundraising amongst 'all' imperial subjects: just amongst those of white British descent. The SNR launched a side-appeal in Canada, and also, with the Navy League's help, in New Zealand.<sup>457</sup> The only evidence that the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal actively campaigned outside of the Dominions is a donation of twenty one pounds and ten shillings, raised at a 'Navy Durbar', presumably in India, in February 1924, and another one-off donation of twenty rupees from October 1923.<sup>458</sup> The *Victory* appeal organisers seem to have ignored all other British colonies.<sup>459</sup> 'We mean', the appeal claimed, 'to try to send our message across the seas to the Dominions, and generally to the Empire'.<sup>460</sup> The Dominions were the focus, and the 'Empire' was an afterthought.

It is likely, of course, that the SNR partly targeted the Dominions for efficiency, believing themselves to have a more natural audience there. 'The *Victory* is the inheritance of the British people throughout the Empire', claimed Archibald Hurd.<sup>461</sup> These 'British people' were 'heirs of a common history, and defenders of common traditions' and it was these points of unity that bound the British Empire together, since it had no 'written constitution'.<sup>462</sup> As such, 'Nelson's flagship gathers up all the sentiments on which the British Commonwealth exists to-day, and, if it can be preserved, a further step will have been taken in promoting those ideals for which the British Empire stands.'<sup>463</sup> This was the 'Dominion idea': that colonies who could successfully adopt

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<sup>455</sup> Hawke's Bay Navy League, specimen letter, 'an Appeal to the Schoolchildren of Hawke's Bay from the Navy League', 18 May 1923, SNR 7/3, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>456</sup> Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3.

<sup>457</sup> Hawke's Bay Navy League, specimen letter, 'an Appeal to the Schoolchildren of Hawke's Bay from the Navy League', 18 May 1923; A. E. Carlyle to Geoffrey Callender, 31 August 1923, SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>458</sup> 'Save the *Victory*' Fund account book, 1922-1925, SNR 4/101, SNR Records, NMM p. 8 & 13.

<sup>459</sup> However, given that the 'Save the *Victory*' fund account book only recorded the origin of donations very occasionally, it is not possible to be totally certain of this point

<sup>460</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>461</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The *Victory*"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

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British culture, institutions, and 'sentiments' would be granted Dominion status and nominal independence from Britain.<sup>464</sup> By this logic, of all the residents of empire, it was those in the Dominions who were more likely to have a pre-existing affinity for British history and heritage.

People of colour who had been born within the British Empire could, of course, theoretically also lay a claim to this 'common history'.<sup>465</sup> But in practice, the colonies that had been granted Dominion status were those that already had large white populations. And there is further evidence that race, not nationality, was the deciding factor here, because Callender and his colleagues designed 'Save the *Victory*' publicity material to cater specifically to an American audience. 'Blood', this American 'Save the *Victory*' propaganda announced, 'is thicker than water'.<sup>466</sup> We have seen that this message found a receptive audience in the American supporter John Rathom, and must presume that he was not alone.<sup>467</sup> And so even though the 'Save the *Victory*' organisers talked about reaching 'all sons and daughters of the empire' with the appeal, they actually prioritised a group who they referred to as 'the English-speaking race', or 'our British race'.<sup>468</sup> They meant people of white British descent, irrespective of actual nationality.

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<sup>464</sup> Darwin, 'Third British Empire', pp. 85-86.

<sup>465</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

A note on the term 'people of colour' and its variants. I am using this term in line with its modern usage: to refer collectively to different groups of people who were marked out as racially 'other' than white by the British imperial system, and subject to political oppression as a result. Although anachronistic, it avoids the racist implications of terms contemporary to the period.

<sup>466</sup> Society for Nautical Research, manuscript, 'Nelson Restores Harmony to America', undated, circa 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>467</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First Victory dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

<sup>468</sup> Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3; Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; L. S. Amery to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 12 February 1923, SNR 7/3, SNR Records, NMM.

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When the *Victory* appeal promoted the idea that the ship symbolised the 'common history' of white Britons (and white Americans), it made an implicit statement about who could claim Trafalgar as their heritage.<sup>469</sup> We know for a fact, however, that white Britons were not the only people who served in the *Victory* at Trafalgar. The ship's crew list names sailors from Curaçao, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Malta, Brazil, America and, much more vaguely, the 'West Indies', and 'Africa'. It also lists sailors from other European nations, including France.<sup>470</sup> The target audience of the *Victory* appeal was not determined by the actual demographics of Nelson's crew.

This was not by accident. It is reasonable to presume that Geoffrey Callender was familiar with this crew list. He could certainly answer family history enquiries about the *Victory*'s Trafalgar crew with great confidence.<sup>471</sup> Even if this were not the case, he would almost certainly have been familiar with Daniel Maclise's painting 'The Death of Nelson', displayed to the public as a hanging painting in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, and which was also a mural in the House of Lords **[Figure 4]**. Maclise's painting features two black sailors in the background as Nelson falls, fatally wounded, to the deck **[Figure 5]**. It should have been obvious to Callender that Trafalgar had been neither an exclusively white, nor an exclusively British victory. And yet not only did the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal fail to actively fundraise outside of the white Dominions, it also failed to acknowledge the men of colour who had been present at Trafalgar in any way.

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<sup>469</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>470</sup> John D. Clarke, *The Men of HMS Victory at Trafalgar*. (Uckfield: Naval & Military Press, 2002), pp. 27-50.

<sup>471</sup> Geoffrey Callender to S.A. Moss, 27 November 1928, SNR 7/16, SNR Records, NMM.



Figure 4 Daniel Maclise, *The Death of Nelson*, circa 1859-1864, WAG 2116. Image courtesy of National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery.

One black sailor can be seen on the far left, wearing red. The other sailor is in the centre, just behind the fallen Admiral Nelson.



Figure 5 Detail of Daniel Maclise, *The Death of Nelson*, circa 1859-1864, WAG 2116. Image courtesy of National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery.

Instead, Admiral Sturdee's 'Save the *Victory*' lecture tours delivered a narrative of empire rooted in white conquest: in 'we the English' and 'our great-expansion'.<sup>472</sup> It began with Elizabethan the 'sea adventurers' who were 'full of' rugged heroic qualities such as 'enterprise dash and great-daring'.<sup>473</sup> It continued by describing 'the contemporary history of the nation' as a list of how 'our forefathers... seized strategic pieces' of land to further their maritime and imperial power.<sup>474</sup> It concluded in white sacrifice: not just Nelson's, but also 'the terrible North Sea vigil' of the recent Great War, both of which were celebrated as models of behaviour for the white 'Anglo-Saxon people' to follow.<sup>475</sup> In so doing, this 'Save the *Victory*' narrative completely glossed over the fact that black sailors had also served in the Royal Navy, both at Trafalgar, and in the

<sup>472</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The Victory and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First Victory dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

Great War.<sup>476</sup> For all that whiteness was not technically a prerequisite of 'Britishness', the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal heavily implied otherwise.

They were not alone in interwar Britain in doing so. We shall see that British merchant shipping firms had a vested interest in this message, and that the *Victory's* restoration was financially dependent on profits from this industry. The *Victory's* right wing restorers designed their fundraising appeal to reinforce British identity, and this was a response to Britain's imperial racial hierarchy just as much as it was to the rise of British socialism.

## 2.5 Memorials, race, and the British shipping industry

If Callender and his colleagues ever discussed the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal's implicit suggestion that 'British' meant 'white', then there is no record of it. It is entirely possible that this was unconscious bias, rather than a conscious decision, and that they did not even realise. This does not, however, mean that this message was apolitical – quite the opposite, in fact. It had been triggered by contemporary debates over race, citizenship, and labour conditions within the British merchant shipping industry.<sup>477</sup>

When Callender and his colleagues erased sailors of colour from how the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal commemorated Trafalgar, they did not do so in a vacuum. Black servicemen rarely appear on contemporary memorials to the dead of the Great War in Britain.<sup>478</sup> An example is the 'British Seaman's Memorial' at Tower Hill in London, which commemorates sailors killed on British merchant ships in the Atlantic by name. Large numbers of West African sailors served in these ships, but unlike their white crewmates, the vast majority of their names are absent. Behind-the-scenes manoeuvring within the Imperial War Graves Commission decided to commemorate these

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<sup>476</sup> Ray Costello, *Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), pp. 143-145.

<sup>477</sup> Tabili reminds us that racism is not the result of a 'natural' human intolerance of difference. Rather, markers and categories of racial difference are created as a result of political structures. See: Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', pp. 55-56 & 61-63.

<sup>478</sup> John Siblon, 'Negotiating Hierarchy and Memory: African and Caribbean Troops from Former British Colonies in London's Imperial Spaces', *The London Journal*, 41 (2016).

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black sailors collectively and anonymously on the generic monument to 'Native Ratings' in Bombay instead, which was not even on the right continent.<sup>479</sup> After the war, demobilised black servicemen were deported out of Britain as quickly as possible, even though they had a legal right to live and work there. By contrast, the British government made a point of including Dominion and sometimes also Indian troops in memorial ceremonies and monuments in Britain, even when getting representatives there on time presented them with a significant logistical challenge. John Sibbon uses these examples to show that black servicemen were deliberately erased from war memorials in Britain, and that this was a decision that at least some British officials made consciously.<sup>480</sup> British war memorials in the 1920s promoted the idea that British imperial war service had been almost exclusively white, even though the opposite was true.<sup>481</sup>

Sibbon argues that this was part of a wider process in which white communities around the empire propped up their own supremacy by systematically othering and excluding black people.<sup>482</sup> Black Africans and West Indians were firmly at the bottom of the imperial racial hierarchy. During the Great War British politicians knew that they needed to deploy black colonial troops, but were also terrified about what black servicemen killing white enemy soldiers would mean for their own future control of their empire. With the war over, they sought a fast return to the status quo.<sup>483</sup> Sibbon argues, as well, that Indian servicemen were not subject to the same treatment because this imperial racial hierarchy ranked them in a 'liminal' position, well above black Africans and West Indians, as a 'loyal' subject race.<sup>484</sup> Great War commemoration therefore reflected this imperial racial hierarchy, and also helped to maintain it. It encouraged white Britons to consciously identify as 'white', and reinforced solidarity between white settler communities around the empire.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Ibid. pp. 308-309.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid. pp. 303-306.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid. pp. 309-310.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid. pp. 300-301.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid. pp. 301-302 & 306.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid. pp. 304-305.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid. p. 301 & 309. Sibbon's comments here build on the work of Bill Schwarz and Catherine Hall, who have both highlighted that Britons adopted a collective 'white' racial identity through a relationship with

There are obvious parallels to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal here. Like these war memorials, the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal was a memorial to 'national character' and to white naval service.<sup>486</sup> It presumed that a 'British' audience meant a white audience, and therefore targeted Britain and the white Dominions almost exclusively. It made a token overture to India, but did not seriously commit to fundraising there. And just as British war memorials actively erased black servicemen, there is no evidence that the *Victory* appeal ever attempted to fundraise amongst African or West Indian colonies. It is worth pointing out that the appeal was created by at least one person who was an active participant in this Great War memorial culture: one of Admiral Sturdee's duties as an 'Admiral of the Fleet' was to unveil war memorials.<sup>487</sup> Whether or not they were conscious of doing so, Sturdee, Callender, and their colleagues had swallowed, and replicated, the contemporary trend of using memorials to promote white servicemen, and white sacrifice, as the imperial 'norm'.<sup>488</sup>

In fact, to do so was to the direct financial benefit of Callender and Sturdee's social circle in general, and to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal in particular. We know that the appeal promoted the idea that the default British naval sailor was 'Anglo-Saxon' in origin.<sup>489</sup> Likewise it praised 'the merchant seamen who vindicated... the sea traditions of the race' with their service 'in the last conflict.'<sup>490</sup> This was a period in which who, exactly, could claim to be a 'British' merchant sailor was incredibly politicised. Sailors of colour who signed on at ports around the British Empire, and especially in South Asia, were hired by default under discriminatory 'Lascar' or 'Asiatic' articles.<sup>491</sup> If, however, they could disembark at a port in Britain itself, they could then sign on to a different

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empire, and as the result of imperial power dynamics. See: Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume I: The White Man's World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 10; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*. (Oxford: Polity, 2002), pp. 7-8; Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 209 & 212.

<sup>486</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>487</sup> Admiral Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender, 5 April 1923 SNR 7/3, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>488</sup> Siblon, 'Negotiating Hierarchy and Memory', pp. 309-310.

<sup>489</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First Victory dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

<sup>490</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

<sup>491</sup> Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', p. 64.

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ship under the same articles as white British or European sailors, provided that they could prove that they were British subjects.<sup>492</sup> Laura Tabili has shown that it was in the financial interest of the shipping industry to make it as difficult as possible for sailors of colour to prove their 'Britishness'.<sup>493</sup> She is highly critical of histories which write about racism as though it is an inevitable outcome of perceived racial difference. This racist practice was not inevitable: it was created and upheld by the British government for their own benefit.<sup>494</sup>

It worked like this. Shipping firms made enormous savings by employing men on 'Lascar' articles rather than 'British' articles, because these allowed them to provide significantly poorer living and working conditions, and pay approximately one third to one fifth of the wage.<sup>495</sup> Employers benefited, as well, from their ability to threaten white sailors with replacement by men on 'Lascar' contracts should they try to push for better conditions for themselves.<sup>496</sup> The profits spread out far beyond the shipping company owners and into the pockets of their investors, the British political elite.<sup>497</sup> As a result, this was a period in which British politicians conceived a series of legislative changes which put up significant barriers to British sailors of colour obtaining equal employment under 'British' articles, even though technically they had every legal right to do so.<sup>498</sup> The percentage of British merchant sailors employed under 'Lascar' articles rose steadily from 18.5% in 1901 to 26% in 1938, which Tabili argues is a result of industry and political efforts to close this loophole in the system.<sup>499</sup>

The piece of legislation with the most impact for our period was the 'Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order' (CASO), issued by the Home Office in 1926. This stipulated that all sailors of colour who could not present a passport or equivalent document must register as an

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid. pp. 66 & 70-71.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid. pp. 63 & 67-68.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid. pp. 54-57.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid. pp. 64-68; Balachandran, *Globalizing Labour?*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>496</sup> Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', p. 67.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid. pp. 63 & 67-68.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid. pp. 63 & 66-67.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid. p. 67.

'Alien' seaman in Britain, without the ability to seek employment under British articles.<sup>500</sup> The Home Office knew that this Special Order would effectively turn numerous British citizens into undocumented migrants.<sup>501</sup> In practice, very few sailors, including white sailors, owned a passport, but unlike sailors who were visibly people of colour, white (or white-passing) sailors were not required to prove their legal status.<sup>502</sup> This created, Tabili argues, a situation wherein the right to live and work in Britain was linked to British citizenship; and where citizenship became primarily defined not by birth, service, documentation, or other such custom, but by perceived racial difference.<sup>503</sup> Unless they could prove otherwise, white sailors were 'British', and sailors of colour were 'Alien'. This is a perfect example of how the myth that the default British citizen was 'white' had real impact, both amongst those who profited, and those who were exploited.

It is no coincidence that we find the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal celebrating 'the glory of Nelson and British Seamen who served their country at Trafalgar Oct. 21, 1805'; presuming that doing so was only relevant amongst white communities; and ignoring the presence of the many sailors in Nelson's fleet at Trafalgar who were either not white, not British, or both.<sup>504</sup>

The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal raised £93,748 in total. £65,000 of this came from a single donor, James Caird.<sup>505</sup> Caird had made his fortune as director of the Scottish Shire Line, which operated liners between Britain, New Zealand, and Australia, and had several investments in other shipping firms.<sup>506</sup> He also canvassed amongst his contacts in 'the shipping fraternity' for further donations.<sup>507</sup> 'Sir Kenneth Anderson of the Oriéant' Steam Navigation Company, he promised Admiral Sturdee, 'was sending round the Hat & hoped to get good support.'<sup>508</sup> Caird's

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<sup>500</sup> Ibid. p. 58.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid. pp. 83-84.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid. p. 76.

<sup>503</sup> Ibid. pp. 70 & 75-76.

<sup>504</sup> Annotated screen titles, 'The Immortal Story of H.M.S. *Victory*', circa 1923.

<sup>505</sup> 'Save the *Victory*' Fund account book, 1922-1925, p. 39.

<sup>506</sup> Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 217.

<sup>507</sup> James Caird to Admiral Sturdee 18 March 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

firm was one of the many which maximised profits by employing sailors under 'Lascar' articles.<sup>509</sup> Anderson's proudly advertised their ships as being 'manned by white crews only'.<sup>510</sup> As a result, the restoration of the *Victory* was indirectly funded by the shipping industry's attempts to deny the 'Britishness' of sailors of colour.

The 'Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order' passed into law in 1925, just one year after the close of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal.<sup>511</sup> It is highly likely then that shipping firms, their owners, and their investors were lobbying for the former at the same time as they were donating to the latter. This did not mean that Caird and his colleagues ever openly insisted that the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal prop up their racist business practices. Caird, who asked to be credited as 'A Wellwisher of the Navy', had been inspired to donate after reading an urgent appeal from the SNR in *The Times*.<sup>512</sup> He found kindred spirits in Sturdee and Callender, and developed a close personal relationship with both.<sup>513</sup> But Caird's affinity with the project, and with these men, was not limited to his navalist politics. Like them, he made a connection between preserving the *Victory* and propping up white supremacy. To restore the ship was 'not an easy task', he commiserated with Admiral Sturdee.<sup>514</sup> But 'when it is successfully completed you will have left a "Monument" for our Race'.<sup>515</sup>

Caird was Scottish. We can presume that when he talked to the English Admiral Sturdee about 'our Race', he imagined a 'British' race which encompassed Celts and the Anglo-Saxons equally. He believed that their 'whiteness' unified them, and marked them out as innately

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<sup>509</sup> 'Crew Saved from Blazing Ship. Glasgow Steamer Abandoned in Indian Ocean', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 29 November 1926, p. 5.

<sup>510</sup> 'Latest News. From Private Correspondence', *Scotsman*, 9 January 1911, p. 7.

<sup>511</sup> Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', p. 58; Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 11.

<sup>512</sup> James Caird to L S Amery 27 February 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre

<sup>513</sup> Once Caird had made his offer of financial support, he immediately wrote to invite Sturdee for lunch, and thereafter the two maintained a regular and candid correspondence. See: James Caird to Admiral Sturdee 3 March 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre. Further letters followed on 10 and 18 March, and remained regular in the following months. See: James Caird to Admiral Sturdee 10 March 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre; James Caird to Admiral Sturdee 18 March 1923. For Caird and Callender's twenty-one year-long friendship, see: Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, pp. 54-55 & 121-123.

<sup>514</sup> James Caird to Admiral Sturdee 24 April 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*

superior to people of other heritage.<sup>516</sup> And so Caird's explicit use of the term 'race' made clear what was only hinted at or suggested elsewhere in the *Victory* appeal: that the desire to promote *Victory* as a monument to British sacrifice was intimately tied to ideas about whiteness (and to white superiority) in the minds of those leading the campaign. And also through him, we can see how generic comments about the ship as a 'memorial national character' were rooted, sometimes unconsciously and sometimes not, in maintaining the economic and political structures that reinforced white supremacy within the British Empire.<sup>517</sup>

## 2.6 Conclusion

In 1940, Geoffrey Callender commented that Britons needed to be better educated, via 'plain facts and upright figures', about Britain's naval defence.<sup>518</sup> In the 1920s, his work on the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal had been notably lacking in this: instead being completely preoccupied with hero-worship, and particularly with Nelson-worship. This was not an oversight, merely a different priority. Children (and adults) were to be inspired by Nelson's example to re-awaken the 'ancient strength' of the English.<sup>519</sup> Callender and his colleagues designed the *Victory* appeal to offer a lesson in heroic masculinity, and hoped that by doing so, they might rejuvenate the 'Anglo-Saxon' race against 'alien' influences.

As such, Callender and his colleagues used Nelson-worship to promote what they claimed were characteristically 'British' masculine virtues: principally duty and self-sacrifice, but also courage, humility, and responsible leadership. These were the antithesis of 'foreign' socialist ideologies, something which Callender and several fellow Conservatives feared would severely weaken the moral health of the British race. The rise of the Left suggested to him that this had already begun. He believed that 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues were racially inherent to British men, but he

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<sup>516</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 101-105.

<sup>517</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>518</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

<sup>519</sup> Geoffrey Callender, manuscript, 'Saving the Victory', circa 1923.

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also feared that they were currently lying dormant. It was not enough for Britons to merely pay lip service to 'the "chosen" quality of our breed'.<sup>520</sup> Individual British men – and, to a lesser extent, women - had to consciously cultivate these virtues within themselves. It is no surprise that Callender's ideas about British 'character' strongly influenced his interactions with 'Save the *Victory*' supporters, as the following chapter will show.

Contemporary racial ideology was instrumental to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal. It played a fundamental role in Callender and Sturdee's plans to combat the rise of popular socialism, and of communism. These men may have been less conscious, however, of the extent to which their work reinforced the racial hierarchy of the British Empire itself at the same time. They rarely actively promoted the appeal outside the white Dominions, despite claiming to want to reach 'all sons and daughters of empire'.<sup>521</sup> In so doing, they encouraged white British citizens within the empire to embrace their shared 'Anglo-Saxon' racial identity, and with it, a shared conviction in their own moral superiority over the colonised peoples of their empire.

White Britons needed more than just collective identity to remain in control of their empire, however. It required an economic system bent in their favour. British shipping firms, and their powerful investors, profited from creating a system wherein all merchant sailors of colour were presumed to be 'alien', rather than British, unless they could prove otherwise. Funds for the *Victory's* restoration came from these profits. And so when the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal erased the presence of black sailors in the ship at Trafalgar, and promoted the project amongst predominantly white audiences, it responded to the racial hierarchy of the British Empire, reinforced it, and, ultimately, profited from it.

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<sup>520</sup> Callender, *Naval Side*, p. vi.

<sup>521</sup> Postcard, "'HMS "Victory" in Harbour, October 1921, Flying Signal', circa 1922-3.



## Chapter 3 Rational Sentiment and Humble Patriotism

Interwar Britons prided themselves on their ability to control their emotions. They told themselves that Britons were ‘rational’, and that foreigners were ‘sentimental’. British men who were white, and English, considered themselves to be the most ‘rational’ of all, and this presumption underpinned the racial hierarchy of the British Empire.<sup>522</sup> But even a brief glance at the SNR’s *Victory* archive reveals how *emotional* many of their correspondents were about the ship and its restoration, irrespective of whether or not they had donated to the ‘Save the *Victory*’ appeal. More than this, it shows that the SNR actively encouraged them. We know, from the opening chapters of this thesis, that the SNR wanted the ship to serve as a ‘stimulus to patriotism’, and that they needed to provoke a strong emotional reaction from the public to bring this about.<sup>523</sup> How, then, can we reconcile supposed British rationality with *Victory* supporters’ sentimentality?

Thomas Dixon’s research on crying in British culture provides us with an important starting point. Dixon finds that for Britons in this period, ‘rationality’ meant control over how one expressed one’s emotions, rather than the absence of any feeling.<sup>524</sup> They permitted, or even valued, emotional outbursts in certain contexts.<sup>525</sup> Women were expected to be more emotional than men, even as they were encouraged more and more to prove their rationality by cultivating a ‘stiff upper lip’.<sup>526</sup> And yet amongst the SNR’s *Victory* correspondents it was generally the men, not the women, who wrote the most overtly sentimental letters.

This chapter argues that white British women faced a much greater burden of proof of their ‘rationality’ than white British men, and that this fed into how they expressed their support for

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<sup>522</sup> Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 194, 206-208 & 222-223.

<sup>523</sup> ‘Saving H.M.S Victory. Gift of £50,000. Anonymous Reader’s Generosity’, circa March 1923.

<sup>524</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, p. 212.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 208-212.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 220-228.

the *Victory's* restoration. Male supporters openly discussed their longing for Nelson, often at length, and their passion for, variously, the *Victory*, the Royal Navy, and the British Empire. Adult women did not. The same gendered dynamic was present when supporters explained their motivations for supporting the project. Women had to work much harder than men to convince the restorers that they were 'humble' patriots.<sup>527</sup> Still, not everyone conformed to this 'humble' and 'rational' patriotism. One such person was Beatrice Suckling, a spiritualist medium and distant descendent of Nelson. And through Suckling, we can begin to sketch out the limits of what the SNR's Geoffrey Callender considered to be appropriately 'rational' and 'humble' behaviour.

### **3.1 'Kiss me, Hardy': gender, emotions, and exploring public response to the *Victory's* restoration.**

'I am very sorry Manchester has done so little', W. C. Bacon of the Manchester Ship Canal Company apologised to Admiral Doveton Sturdee in 1924. Bacon had been co-ordinating 'Save the *Victory*' fundraising efforts in Manchester, but now he had to confess to having been 'quite unable to work up any enthusiasm' within the city.<sup>528</sup> He was not alone in his frustration, either. AE Carlyle, Honorary Organiser of the *Victory* appeal, was perpetually 'a little disappointed' at the slow rate of public donations to the fund.<sup>529</sup> By 1928, SNR member Harold Wyllie would state publicly and unambiguously that the 'appeal for money to the whole Empire... was not a success'.<sup>530</sup> Without the shipping magnate James Caird and the £65,000 he had donated to the fund, Wyllie was sure that 'it would not have been possible to reconstruct the ship.'<sup>531</sup> How, then, should we measure public response to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal?

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<sup>527</sup> W. S. Crawford to Geoffrey Callender 7 June 1927, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>528</sup> W. C. Bacon to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 24 September 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>529</sup> A. E. Carlyle to Geoffrey Callender, 29 May 1923, SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM. For another example of Carlyle's disappointment with the appeal's progress, see: A. E. Carlyle to Geoffrey Callender, 31 August 1923.

<sup>530</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Col. Wyllie and Nelson's Ship. Reconstruction Work', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 3 February 1928, p. 13.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*; 'Save the *Victory*' Fund account book, 1922-1925, p. 39.

According to 'Save the *Victory*' publicity, the appeal had 'two objects'.<sup>532</sup> The first was 'to save the ship for all time', and this they achieved, albeit only with Caird's help.<sup>533</sup> The second was 'to invoke patriotism', and it is this that is much harder to quantify.<sup>534</sup> As Bacon, Carlyle, and other *Victory* appeal campaigners knew, low donation rates did not necessarily indicate, in themselves, that the public were indifferent to the message. Manchester, for example, 'ha[d] suffered very greatly from the depression in the cotton trade'.<sup>535</sup> Meanwhile two other prominent local appeals for 'the Hospital Fund last year', and 'the Lifeboat Appeal coming in the Spring', had 'no doubt really took all the spare money people felt inclined to give.'<sup>536</sup> Bacon also felt that his work had been impeded by his own failure to attract 'a prominent man to act as Honorary Secretary', as well as lack of support from the Lord Mayor, 'who is of the Labour persuasion'.<sup>537</sup> The British public had a myriad of reasons to *not* donate to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, and these had nothing to do with how they actually felt about Nelson, the Royal Navy, or the British Empire. This did not mean that they did not respond in other ways. And 'Save the *Victory*' propaganda must have had some kind of impact on public consciousness, however subtle, because the ship continues to be celebrated by modern writers, and visitors, as a 'national icon'.<sup>538</sup>

It might have been tempting to use 'Save the *Victory*' donations, or lack of them, to respond to the wider historiographical debate around 'popular imperialism', namely as a measure of public support for the appeal's imperialist, navalist, and anti-socialist doctrines.<sup>539</sup> It is clear though that donation rates cannot be used as an accurate measure to quantify what the British public actually felt about the ship, the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, or the appeal organisers' various

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<sup>532</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First *Victory* dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>535</sup> W. C. Bacon to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 24 September 1924.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>538</sup> Lavery, *Nelson's Victory*, p. 6.

<sup>539</sup> Bernard Porter and John Mackenzie have debated, over several volumes, the extent to which ordinary Britons were enthusiastic imperialists (Mackenzie) or merely habitual ones (Porter). In practice, of course, this is very difficult to quantify. For recent examples of both arguments, see: Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*; MacKenzie, 'Ramshackle or Rampaging?'

political causes. And equally, to focus on donation rates would be to ignore the very large number of people who indicated their support for the project in other ways, or after October 1924, once the fundraising appeal had closed.<sup>540</sup> As such, it is far more useful to consider public response to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal through its individual supporters. Their surviving correspondence with *Victory* restorers, and particularly with SNR Honorary Secretary Geoffrey Callender, provides a window into the complicated range of personal and political motivations, and the gendered expectations, that influenced public response to the ship's restoration.

Take, for example, the Anglo-Australian antiquarian C.R. Wylie. Wylie's letters to Geoffrey Callender make for a valuable historical source on several levels. They are, firstly, an example of how one Anglo-Australian projected his own strongly pro-British political identity onto his historical interest in the *Victory*. Secondly, and perhaps most valuably here, the letters reveal a certain degree of contemporary discomfort around Nelson as a 'sentimental' hero, and specifically surrounding Nelson's famous dying words, 'Kiss me, Hardy'.<sup>541</sup> We shall see that modern British (and, it seems, Australian) men were meant to reject 'sentimentality', in favour of 'rational' control of emotions, and that this left Wylie and his peers with a dilemma.<sup>542</sup> How should they reconcile the ideal 'rational' modern man with their own worship of Nelson, an overtly sentimental hero? As such, Wylie's letters provide a valuable starting point to begin to explore the role that emotions and 'rationality' had to play in constructing modern British gendered identities, and the impact of these ideas on public response to the *Victory's* restoration.

In 1927, C. R. Wylie wrote to Portsmouth Dockyard requesting information on the *Victory's* restoration for an 'article to appear on Trafalgar Day next, probably either in the Sydney Morning Herald or the Sydney Mail'.<sup>543</sup> Wylie had, he explained, published several such articles to 'make

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<sup>540</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 11.

<sup>541</sup> C. R. Wylie to Geoffrey Callender, 1 October 1927, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM; J. G. Bullocke, 'Kiss Me, Hardy', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 11 (1925), 216.

<sup>542</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp. 194, 206-208 & 222-223.

<sup>543</sup> C. R. Wylie to the Admiral Superintendent of Portsmouth Dockyard circa May 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM.

the people realise how proud they ought to be of the mother country'.<sup>544</sup> He was of the opinion that 'a very large number' of Australians believed that 'the beginning of all history worth thinking about' was '1901, when Australia became self-governing'.<sup>545</sup> This was, of course, entirely his own, subjective, opinion.<sup>546</sup> But through these comments, Wylie joined the SNR in tapping into a popular strand of imperialism which promoted British heritage as symbolic of 'the golden link of tradition which helps to bind the Empire together'.<sup>547</sup> The emotional ties fostered by this shared heritage had become all the more important in light of Dominion independence, which was fast-approaching.<sup>548</sup> Wylie hoped that his article on the *Victory* could encourage Australian enthusiasm for the heritage that they held in common with Britain, and that this might be an effective antidote to Australian nationalism.

C. R. Wylie was clearly proud of his own historical-mindedness, his knowledge of Britain and Australia's shared heritage, and believed that this made him better informed than most Australians. But Wylie's letters also hint at a slight lack of confidence. He was, he told Callender, 'extremely interested in Nautical Research' but believed himself absent opportunities to 'do much original work here' (apparently Australia's 'nautical' history only began after its European colonisation).<sup>549</sup> Wylie was self-conscious about his status as an amateur historian – and, we can infer, his physical distance from 'original' sources. Geoffrey Callender, meanwhile, was a celebrated 'authority on Britain's naval history'.<sup>550</sup> Wylie longed for Callender's endorsement.

Wylie's chosen topic for this quest is revealing – not about his grasp of historical sources, but about what the topic itself reveals about his and his contemporaries' understanding of

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<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> It is true, however, that English-dominated imperialist leagues tended to struggle to gain members in Australia – unlike Scottish leagues. See: John Griffiths, 'The Branch Life of Empire: Imperial Loyalty Leagues in Antipodean Cities – comparisons and Contrasts with the British Model', *Britain and the World*, 7 (2014), 74-76.

<sup>547</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>548</sup> Darwin, 'Third British Empire', pp. 71-72; Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>549</sup> C. R. Wylie to Geoffrey Callender, 1 October 1927.

<sup>550</sup> 'Restoring the "Victory". Special Ropes from Devonport', *Western Morning News and Mercury*, 12 July 1928, p. 3.

gender, nationality, and emotions, and how they projected these things onto their interpretation of the past. As explained to Callender, Wylie had drafted a response to 'a letter about Nelson' recently published 'in a popular magazine' in Australia.<sup>551</sup> As summarised by Wylie, the letter-writer insisted that history had recorded at least some of Nelson's dying words incorrectly. Nelson, they claimed, had not called out 'Kiss me, Hardy' to his friend and Captain Thomas Masterman Hardy. Rather, he had merely lamented 'Kismet Hardy' - 'kismet' being Turkish for 'fate'.<sup>552</sup> Famously, of course, eyewitnesses had recorded otherwise.<sup>553</sup> As Wylie summarised:

The writer of the letter said that he had found by chance that Nelson's father was in the habit of using the word "kismet", and that Nelson picked up the word too, as a child; using it for instance when as a boy of 12 he hurt his knee. "This" he continues "seems to let in new light on the traditionary [sic.] circumstances surrounding his death... Nelson probably said, in a faint voice, "Kismet, Hardy"! whereupon [sic.] the sentimental Hardy (suffering from gun-deafness) made the obvious, but picturesque mistake which since has become history all over the world."<sup>554</sup>

Wylie himself disagreed. 'Kiss me, Hardy', had been recorded in separate accounts by both 'D'. Scott the Chaplain' and 'Beatty' the surgeon, both of whom had been 'with Nelson all the time till his death'.<sup>555</sup> 'It seems impossible', Wylie told Callender, that both of these sources 'could be in error.'<sup>556</sup> Still, he hoped Callender would 'be kind enough to give... [his] opinion'.<sup>557</sup>

This was not a new debate. The exact origins of the 'Kismet' myth are not clear, but it had certainly surfaced in British newspapers the year before, and in the pages of the SNR's own journal, the *Mariner's Mirror*, the year before that.<sup>558</sup> And each time it appeared, so did the

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<sup>551</sup> C. R. Wylie to Geoffrey Callender, 1 October 1927.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Beatty, *Authentic Narrative of the Death of Lord Nelson*, p. 48.

<sup>554</sup> C. R. Wylie to Geoffrey Callender, 1 October 1927.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> In October 1926, for example, the *Portsmouth Evening News* quoted briefly from a pro-Kismet letter that they claimed had been published in the Daily Express. The topic filled an impressive amount of column space over the next few days, with analysis from the paper and from its readers, all of which rubbished 'Kismet', sometimes in great detail. Unfortunately the original Daily Express letter is no longer traceable. 'By the Way. Thought for the Day', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 08 October 1926, p. 8; "'Kiss Me, Hardy!'" Nelson's Last Words Confirmed', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 09 October 1926, p. 5; 'Letters to the Editor.

counter arguments. J. G. Bullocke, for example, was of the opinion that 'Kismet, Hardy' was 'improbable on etymological grounds', and wrote to the *Mariner's Mirror* to tell them so.<sup>559</sup> Besides, he continued, the original story 'need[ed] no alteration'.<sup>560</sup> Nelson was 'sentimental' and 'on his death bed', and to 'regard' his 'wish to kiss a man who was one of his dearest friends... as in any way lacking in manliness is to give it a significance it does not deserve.'<sup>561</sup> Bullocke implied that the only reason why people put any stock in 'Kismet Hardy' was because they were uncomfortable with 'Kiss me, Hardy'. He was right. This was not a debate that needed re-opening, and yet people kept doing so. And when Bullocke and Wylie chose to engage with it, they advertised their own scholarly ability to not let surprise or discomfort at Nelson's 'sentimental[ity]' come before historical evidence.<sup>562</sup>

Why, then, did people keep implying that 'Kiss me, Hardy' was 'lacking in manliness'?<sup>563</sup> The problem was that it was overtly 'sentimental', and that this was not how true British men were meant to behave.<sup>564</sup> 'A sentimental French-man might have said "Kiss me"', but a "stern, true sailor such as Nelson' would never have done so.<sup>565</sup> This was the pro-Kismet argument as paraphrased by one of its critics in a letter to the *Devon and Exeter Gazette*, but it seems to have been accurate. 'Nelson', G. W. Younger insisted in the *Mariner's Mirror*, 'had a marked hatred of Frenchmen'.<sup>566</sup> He argued that this made it unlikely that Nelson had requested a kiss, an 'essentially French form of salute, even in his dying moments'.<sup>567</sup> Even G. W. Bullocke conceded that 'all naval officers... would prefer' 'Kismet' over 'Kiss me' 'on purely conventional grounds',

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Nelson's Last Words. The "Kiss Me, Hardy!" Tradition', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 11 October 1926, p. 3; 'Letters to the Editor. Nelson's Last Words', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 12 October 1926, p. 5.

A letter by G.W. Younger provoked a similar debate in the *Mariner's Mirror* in 1925. See: G. W. Younger, "'Kiss Me, Hardy'", *The Mariner's Mirror*, 11 (1925); R. P. E. E. Drax, 'Kiss Me, Hardy', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 11 (1925); Bullocke, 'Kiss Me, Hardy'; G. W. Younger, 'Kiss Me, Hardy', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 11 (1925).

<sup>559</sup> Bullocke, 'Kiss Me, Hardy', p. 216.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>564</sup> C. R. Wylie to Geoffrey Callender, 1 October 1927.

<sup>565</sup> 'London Letter. What Did Nelson Say', *Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 13 December 1922, p. 6.

<sup>566</sup> Younger, 'Kiss Me, Hardy first letter'.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*

even as he disagreed that this was enough reason to give 'Kismet' some validity.<sup>568</sup> All of these men seemed to agree that naval officers who were also 'true' men, and 'true' Britons, were meant to be 'stern', not 'sentimental'.<sup>569</sup>

'Kiss me, Hardy' also had obviously homoerotic overtones, and during the recent war the British army had enforced a minimum custodial sentence of two years for any soldier convicted of 'gross indecency with another male person'.<sup>570</sup> Also during the Great War, the right wing press had done their best to stir up public paranoia about both queer people *and* pacifists, often conflating the two with each other, and with empathy for Germany.<sup>571</sup> In this context clear divisions had to be made between what was acceptable (heterosexual) 'manly' intimacy between men, and what was not. It *was* acceptable for a dying soldier to request a kiss from a friend, but only because death and war were exceptional circumstances.<sup>572</sup> This same tension between celebrated and stigmatised male kisses in the British imagination is obvious in the letters denying the 'kismet' myth, including Wylie's.

To expand on this: even writers who insisted that 'Kiss me, Hardy' was correct still felt the need to comment on the fact that Nelson's request often came as a surprise to modern Britons. 'We were a far more emotional people a hundred odd years ago than we are to-day', the *Devon and Exeter Gazette* writer explained, and the fact that Nelson 'had the tender, responsive heart of a woman', was one of many reasons why he had been 'adored by his men and countrymen.'<sup>573</sup> Modern British men, by contrast, had been trained to idolise the 'stiff upper lip': to control (although not totally suppress) emotion at moments of crisis.<sup>574</sup> As such, pro 'Kiss me' writers

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<sup>568</sup> Bullocke, 'Kiss Me, Hardy', p. 216. Bullocke wrote this in response to Younger, 'Kiss Me, Hardy first letter', p. 97.

<sup>569</sup> 'London Letter. What Did Nelson Say'.

<sup>570</sup> Manual of Military Law (London: HMSO, 1894), p. 136. Quoted in Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture*. (London: The Bodley Head, 1990), p. 224.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 223-234.

<sup>572</sup> Santanu Das, "'Kiss Me, Hardy": Intimacy, Gender, and Gesture in First World War Trench Literature', *Modernism/Modernity*, 9 (2002), 56-60. Das explores the celebration of male intimacy, and also the tension surrounding it, within the literature of the Great War. He notes, p. 57, that Nelson and Hardy were a famous precedent for the dying kiss, which was a popular trope in this literature.

<sup>573</sup> 'London Letter. What Did Nelson Say'.

<sup>574</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp. 200-205 & 212.

believed it important to remind their readers that conventional behaviour had changed over time, and what might seem to be an overly feminine or 'French' trait now was seen as the pinnacle of British masculinity then.<sup>575</sup> Modern 'convention[s]', Bullock reminded *Mariner's Mirror* readers, 'cannot be allowed to influence' a good historian in their assessment of the evidence.<sup>576</sup> They had not, as it happened, influenced Geoffrey Callender, potentially a 'queer' figure himself, who had recounted the 'Kiss me, Hardy, scene' in his edition of Southey's *Life of Nelson* without comment.<sup>577</sup>

At any rate, C. R. Wylie and his fellow amateur historians who insisted on periodically engaging with the 'Kismet' myth did so because it allowed them to promote their own superiority as historical researchers. But in so doing they also reassured *themselves* that the context meant that Nelson's desire for physical reassurance from Hardy was heroic and 'picturesque', as opposed to feminine, or queer.<sup>578</sup> And thus in C.R. Wylie we have an example of how one man could appropriate the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal to reinforce not just his political and professional identities, but also to work through the contradictions within how he felt 'true' British men were meant to express emotion.<sup>579</sup>

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<sup>575</sup> 'London Letter. What Did Nelson Say'.

<sup>576</sup> Bullocke, 'Kiss Me, Hardy'.

<sup>577</sup> Southey, *The Life of Nelson*, p. 315.

Previous researchers have hinted at Callender's possible queerness by commenting pointedly on his 'bachelor' status, and on his dismissive attitude towards the women who made romantic overtures to him. However they do not make this point explicit, presumably due to a lack of solid evidence. See: Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 216; Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, pp. 80-81.

Callender's significant emotional relationships with men included the architect H.S. Rogers, whom he lived with when he relocated the National Maritime Museum directorate to Oxford during the Second World War, and James Caird, who after funding the *Victory's* restoration became Callender's close friend, as well as a major financier for his work in the National Maritime Museum in the 1930s and 1940s. See: *ibid.* pp. 55, 102 & 121-123.

'Queering' history is a methodology that avoids projecting modern ideas about sexuality onto the past. One important strand of queer studies involves the study of intimacy and desire between people of the same gender, irrespective of whether or not (as in Callender's case) we have 'proof' that this desire was romantic and/ or sexual. Examples include: Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. (London: The Women's Press, 1985); Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>578</sup> C. R. Wylie to Geoffrey Callender, 1 October 1927.

<sup>579</sup> 'London Letter. What Did Nelson Say'.

### 3.2 Love, sentimentality, and rational patriotism

Patriotism is rooted in love, or so Benedict Anderson argues.<sup>580</sup> When *Victory* supporters labelled themselves as ‘patriots’, then, they expressed their feelings of love, and specifically, of love for their nation. And yet it is also clear that this same group of people also felt uncomfortable with some overt expressions of love. For Captain Hardy to kiss Admiral Nelson, his dying commander and friend, he must be ‘sentimental’.<sup>581</sup> The implication was that sentimentality may have been a forgivable trait, but it was still not a particularly desirable one. It had to be explained away: Georgian Britons had been ‘a far more emotional people’.<sup>582</sup> Modern men were expected to be both rational and stoical: a change which Thomas Dixon argues coincided with the rise of imperialist militarism in Britain from the 1870s onwards.<sup>583</sup> If British men were the masters of their own emotions, then this justified their rule over colonised peoples, who they could claim were emotionally unstable in turn.<sup>584</sup> One of the important elements of the modern British ideology of the ‘stiff upper lip’ was that strong emotion should only be expressed in particular circumstances, and usually this meant in private.<sup>585</sup>

Dixon argues, however, that the very purpose of the ‘stiff upper lip’, as celebrated in British culture, was to create a ‘phenomenon of people weeping over others not weeping.’<sup>586</sup> In other words, the texts and images that promoted the ‘stiff upper lip’ to Britons actually did so to encourage weeping as a form of emotional catharsis. So it was not that nineteenth-century Britons actually were ‘a far more emotional people’ than their interwar counterparts.<sup>587</sup> Instead, it was that interwar Britons *told* themselves that this was the case because it reinforced their sense of being modern. It allowed them to distance themselves from the ‘decadent’ sentimentality of

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<sup>580</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London and New York: Verso, 2006), pp. 141-150.

<sup>581</sup> C. R. Wylie to Geoffrey Callender, 1 October 1927.

<sup>582</sup> ‘London Letter. What Did Nelson Say’.

<sup>583</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp. 200-202, 179 & 181.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.* p. 194.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 209-212.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.* p. 211.

<sup>587</sup> ‘London Letter. What Did Nelson Say’.

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the old Victorian aesthetes, men like Oscar Wilde, who had supposedly allowed their lives and decisions to be ruled, self-indulgently, by emotion. By contrast, as modern imperialist men and women, they were driven by rationality, patriotism, and, crucially, a commitment to taking action rather than wallowing in feeling.<sup>588</sup>

As today, then, the term 'sentimental' contained a value judgement. It described a heartfelt emotional gesture, but also one which some might feel was slightly too candid for the situation at hand. Hardy and Nelson's kiss was 'sentimental', and this was uncomfortable for some *Victory* supporters.<sup>589</sup> Dixon notes that patriotic gestures are sentimental in their own right, but argues that early twentieth century men nonetheless saw patriotism as the rational antidote to 'sentimentality'.<sup>590</sup> This is a valuable reflection, but Dixon's work is ultimately concerned with British attitudes towards crying (and not crying), rather than towards 'sentimentality' or 'patriotism'. Letters written by *Victory* supporters therefore offer excellent material for examining more broadly what interwar Britons imagined the boundaries between 'rational' and 'sentimental' emotion to be.

It is clear that the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal wholeheartedly endorsed public displays of emotion from its visitors. In August 1923, Admiral Sturdee wrote a letter to *The Times* describing one visitor to the ship who had 'dropped upon his knees and in loud, impassioned tones' expressed 'thanksgiving... that these sacred planks endured for the admiration of those who honoured the names of England and Nelson'.<sup>591</sup> This man, Sturdee noted, had drawn 'a considerable crowd' of fellow visitors, who had bowed their heads respectfully as they listened.<sup>592</sup> Local papers reprinted Sturdee's letter, and sometimes added their own praise of the 'touching...

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<sup>588</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp. 200-202, 212-214 & 217-218.

<sup>589</sup> C. R. Wylie to Geoffrey Callender, 1 October 1927.

<sup>590</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, p. 214.

<sup>591</sup> Admiral Sturdee, 'Saving The Victory. To the Editor of The Times', *The Times*, 29 August 1923, p. 8.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*

incident'.<sup>593</sup> Sturdee's letter painted an incredibly sentimental scene: a man so overcome with emotion that he had attracted an audience of strangers.

It may not have been an entirely true story, of course. But the accuracy of Sturdee's account is less important than how, and why, he chose to publicise it. Sturdee's description painted this expressive visitor as exceptional, the most worthy of all people present. But he was also an anomaly. As told by Sturdee, the other visitors were inspired by this man's 'impassioned tones' and ritualised movements, but they did not copy him.<sup>594</sup> Instead, they listened respectfully.

The *Times* pronounced the story 'touching'.<sup>595</sup> Sturdee himself hoped that it might encourage 'some patriotic friends' to 'contribute' to the *Victory* appeal.<sup>596</sup> That said, he also implied that even though this 'impassioned' man's behaviour was admirable, it was actually linked to his unique circumstances: his 'great-grandfather [had] served in the ship at Trafalgar'.<sup>597</sup> His actions had therefore been a gesture of filial piety, something which men like Sturdee believed was owed by all British men to their ancestors who had built the British Empire.<sup>598</sup> Still, if Sturdee intended his readers to model their behaviour on anyone in this story, it was not the impassioned visitor, but his moved yet respectfully reserved audience. He did not actually want every single visitor to fall to their knees in supplication every time they reached the quarter deck

There are other examples. When the 'girls' of Daisy Bank School, a council school in Coseley, Staffordshire sent the *Victory* a bouquet on Trafalgar Day 1926, they asked for this to be 'place[d]... somewhere as a token of our love for Lord Nelson.'<sup>599</sup> Just like the 'impassioned' visitor

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<sup>593</sup> 'Victory's Pilgrims. Touching Quarter-Deck Incident. 15,000 Visitors', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 29 August 1923, p. 2; 'Victory's Pilgrims. Touching Quarter-Deck Incident. 15,000 Visitors', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 31 August 1923, p. 16.

<sup>594</sup> Sturdee, 'Saving the Victory. To the Editor of the Times'.

<sup>595</sup> 'Victory's Pilgrims. Touching Quarter-Deck Incident. 15,000 Visitors'; 'Victory's Pilgrims. Touching Quarter-Deck Incident. 15,000 Visitors'.

<sup>596</sup> Sturdee, 'Saving the Victory. To the Editor of the Times'.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>598</sup> On the supposed obligation that British boys owed to their male ancestors for building the British Empire, see: Mangan, 'Grit of Our Forefathers', p. 120.

<sup>599</sup> 'Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar', *Naval and Military Record*, 21 October 1926, SNR 7/10, SNR Records, NMM; 'At Portsmouth. Nelson's Signal Not Flown on H.M.S. Victory', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 22 October 1926, p. 8.

of August 1923, these school girls were reported on in papers around England because their behaviour was admirable, but also unusual.<sup>600</sup> Many of the adult men who were involved in the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal referred to their work as a 'labour of love', but none of them would ever claim to 'love' Nelson himself.<sup>601</sup> Neither did any of the adult women.

'We all love the stories we hear of Lord Nelson', Dora Paddock wrote on the Daisy Bank pupils' behalf, 'and I am sure he is our favourite hero.'<sup>602</sup> Like other children at council-run schools, the Daisy Bank pupils would have learnt to read from 'moral biographies' about imperialist heroes like Nelson. These books presented Nelson as a model of stoicism, courage, personal honour and inspired command. Not only this, they presented his victory at Trafalgar as being the result of collective endeavour, and a sign that Nelson's subordinates had shared his best qualities. Good imperialist citizens, these children learnt, respected the chain of leadership.<sup>603</sup> This early training seems to have been formative for the Daisy Bank pupils, and for others.

In 1929, Callender received a letter from John Rogers, who detailed his fantasy of being a 'humble & faithful servant of Nelson', and his regret that his lack of a 'robust physique' had prevented him from joining the Royal Navy.<sup>604</sup> Rogers claimed to have 'no claim to education at all', so we can presume that he had left state education at the earliest possible age.<sup>605</sup> Still, like the Daisy Bank girls, the lessons he had learnt there continued to influence how he related to Nelson, and to the *Victory*. Rogers fantasised about being on board the *Victory*, but not as an officer, or even as an ordinary sailor. Instead he longed to be Nelson's 'servant': to be, like Captain

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<sup>600</sup> 'Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar', 21 October 1926; 'H.M.S. *Victory*', *Western Morning News*, 22 October 1926, SNR 7/10, SNR Records, NMM; 'At Portsmouth. Nelson's Signal Not Flown on H.M.S. *Victory*'; 'Nelson's Signal Not Flown. On H.M.S. *Victory*. Trafalgar Day Anniversary', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 21 October 1926, p. 7.

<sup>601</sup> A. E. Carlyle to Geoffrey Callender 10 March 1926, SNR 7/8, SNR Records, NMM; Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 27 May 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>602</sup> 'At Portsmouth. Nelson's Signal Not Flown on H.M.S. *Victory*'.

<sup>603</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 127-132.

<sup>604</sup> John Rogers to Geoffrey Callender, 4 November 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*

Hardy, in close physical proximity to Nelson, but unlike Hardy, to be Nelson's social inferior.<sup>606</sup>

Just as he had been taught, he imagined Nelson as the leader, and himself as a dutiful follower.<sup>607</sup>

We can see from this that although sentimental feelings about Nelson were common amongst *Victory* supporters, individuals expressed them in vastly different ways. Unlike Rogers, the Daisy Bank girls did not have the option of fantasising about being Nelson's 'servant' at sea. They could not join the Royal Navy, and the Women's Royal Naval Service had been disbanded at the end of the Great War.<sup>608</sup> And so they turned instead to a much older cultural trope: that of the sailor's faithful lover, waiting on shore for his safe return.<sup>609</sup> They may also have been aware of the popular trope in contemporary cinema and fiction of 'Nelson the lover'.<sup>610</sup> At any rate, their flowers were explicitly 'a token of... love.'<sup>611</sup> And their accompanying letter made clear that the token was sent 'from the Girls of Standard V' only, even though there would have also been boys in this class.<sup>612</sup> Working class boys (and men) could openly long to be Nelson's 'servant', but they could not express their 'love' for him any more directly than that. It is already possible to see that how Britons expressed their sentimental feelings about Nelson and the *Victory* was heavily influenced by gender, and by class.

We might presume that if young girls could be praised around Britain for sending Nelson a love token, then some adult women would have made equally romantic gestures. But by contrast to the Daisy Bank schoolgirls, (and the many adult men who talked about their 'labour[s] of love') adult women seem to have carefully avoided all talk of love in relation to the *Victory*.<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

<sup>607</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 127-132.

<sup>608</sup> Ursula Stuart Mason, *Britannia's Daughters: The Story of the Wrns.* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2011), pp. 32-33.

<sup>609</sup> 'Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar', 21 October 1926; 'H.M.S. Victory', 22 October 1926.

<sup>610</sup> Williams, 'Nelson and Women'; Kate Williams, 'Emma Hamilton in Fiction and Film', in *Emma Hamilton: Seduction and Celebrity*, ed. by Quintin Colville and Kate Williams (London: Thames & Hudson / Royal Museums Greenwich, 2016), pp. 246-271; MacKenzie, 'Nelson the Hero and Horatio the Lover'.

<sup>611</sup> 'Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar', 21 October 1926; 'At Portsmouth. Nelson's Signal Not Flown on H.M.S. Victory'.

<sup>612</sup> 'At Portsmouth. Nelson's Signal Not Flown on H.M.S. Victory'. For evidence of Daisy Bank School's male pupils, see: 'The Central School', *Rochdale Observer*, 27 June 1914, p. 9.

<sup>613</sup> A. E. Carlyle to Geoffrey Callender 10 March 1926; Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 27 May 1924.

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Take, for example, the prolific imperialist activist Violet Milner. In 1924, her assistant Clara Smith forwarded a generous donation of two guineas to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, and mentioned that Milner would be 'proud and happy' if she might be sent a commemorative medal in return.<sup>614</sup> Amy Drury, General Secretary of the Royal Navy Friendly Union of Sailor's Wives, hoped that her union's collected donations would 'be valued' by the SNR, but made no comments about her personal feelings of any kind.<sup>615</sup> This was despite her clear enthusiasm: she had taken the initiative to paint and sell 'post-cards' of 'views of people's own houses!' to bring in 'odd sums' for the *Victory* appeal.<sup>616</sup> Beatrice Suckling, a direct descendant of Nelson's uncle William Suckling, considered Nelson 'the greatest warrior the world produced', but even she made no claim to 'love' him: claiming instead that she merely took 'a keen interest in the *Victory*'.<sup>617</sup> This does not mean that no adult woman had ever claimed to 'love' Nelson, or his ship, but it does seem to have been unusual, at least in the context of the *Victory* appeal.

Adult women had good reasons to be more taciturn than the girls of the Daisy Bank School. Thomas Dixon argues that early twentieth century Britons gendered 'sentimentality' as being inherently female, in contrast to stoicism, which was inherently male, and also inherently white.<sup>618</sup> Remember that a dying Nelson's sentimental request for a kiss from Hardy was read as a sign that he 'had the tender, responsive heart of a woman'.<sup>619</sup> Female 'tender[ness]' was not necessarily a bad thing, but it did mean that they were trusted less than men as voters, and as politicians. White men could be relied upon to control their emotions, and make to make rational decisions in spite of them. White women were more suspect – although undoubtedly still trusted more than people of colour of any gender. And therefore the newly enfranchised white women of the interwar period consciously distanced themselves from the 'sentimental' Victorian woman,

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<sup>614</sup> Clara Smith to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 7 May 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM; Riedi, 'Imperialist Women'.

<sup>615</sup> Amy Drury to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 25 August 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>616</sup> Amy Drury to Archibald Spens, 23 April 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>617</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 30 June 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM; Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 25 June 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>618</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp. 194, 202 & 212.

<sup>619</sup> 'London Letter. What Did Nelson Say'.

claiming that unlike her, they were modern, professional, and rational.<sup>620</sup> William Reddy argues that individuals who successfully conform to the dominant 'emotional style' of their community are rewarded with increased social and political power.<sup>621</sup> For interwar women, this 'emotional style' was 'rationality', and they received real political and personal agency by performing it successfully.

We can presume that Milner and Drury, who were both political women, had been influenced by these expectations, as had the other women who avoided mention of 'love' in the context of the *Victory*. This was absolutely to their advantage if, like Drury, they wanted to partner with the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal committee, which was comprised of sixty three men, and just two women.<sup>622</sup> 'Love for Lord Nelson' was a pleasant novelty in girls, but if adult women wanted to be taken seriously by the *Victory's* restorers then they needed to avoid such overtly romantic gestures.<sup>623</sup>

As such, the most overtly sentimental responses to the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, and the ship's subsequent restoration, came from men, not women. Sturdee's 'impassioned' visitor was one example.<sup>624</sup> So was John Rogers with his fantasy of being a 'servant of Nelson'.<sup>625</sup> Another was Frederick Proctor, an elderly Portsmouth resident who, in 1924, offered his painting, "'Nelson's Fatal Wound"... as an absolutely free gift' to the 'Save the *Victory*' Fund.<sup>626</sup>

Proctor's painting featured Nelson as 'the central figure... just wounded, kneeling partly helpless on the *Victory's* deck'.<sup>627</sup> He hoped it would be 'exhibited... in the new *Victory* Museum', and gifted the copyright to the 'Save the *Victory*' fund to allow 'the proceeds' from the sale of

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<sup>620</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp. 222-228.

<sup>621</sup> William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 118-128.

<sup>622</sup> Archibald Spens to Geoffrey Callender, 26 January 1923 SNR 7/3, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>623</sup> 'At Portsmouth. Nelson's Signal Not Flown on H.M.S. *Victory*'.

<sup>624</sup> Sturdee, 'Saving the *Victory*. To the Editor of the Times'.

<sup>625</sup> John Rogers to Geoffrey Callender, 4 November 1929.

<sup>626</sup> Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 24 June 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>627</sup> Arthur Lamsley to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 14 May 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

prints to 'be entirely devoted to the restoration of the *Victory*'.<sup>628</sup> In this sense Proctor was not particularly unusual, just one of the many women and men who donated objects for display on the *Victory*, or in the neighbouring dockyard museum.

Proctor, however, was much more florid in his offer than most potential donors. He went on at length about his desire to support the work of Sturdee's 'patriotic Committee'.<sup>629</sup> He explained that he wanted to 'ensure' that his painting would 'always [be] owned by the Navy'.<sup>630</sup> He told Sturdee, in great detail, about his 'old Portsmouth family' who had 'liv[ed] here since about 1690', and their various naval connections.<sup>631</sup> He was inordinately proud of his painting, which he decribed as a 'six months "labour of love"'.<sup>632</sup> And at Proctor's request his friend, the journalist Arthur Lamsley, wrote to tell Sturdee that the painting was 'the finest representation of Nelson in his last monents [sic.] ever painted' – a very bold claim, considering that Arthur William Devis' 'Death of Nelson' was the *Victory's* star object.<sup>633</sup> Proctor was, Sturdee complained to Callender, an 'enthusiast, and 'unusually persistent'.<sup>634</sup>

The problem was not really Proctor's sentimental enthusiasm, however.<sup>635</sup> Just like the 'impassioned' visitor whom Sturdee had used to launch a fresh appeal for funds through *The Times*, Proctor had channelled his sentiment into an admirable, active form of patriotism.<sup>636</sup> He believed that 'hero worship c[ould] be assisted by Art' [sic.], and had painted 'Nelson's Fatal Wound' in the hope that it might inspire others 'to be loyal & true to the fatherland.'<sup>637</sup> These were all sentiments that Sturdee and Callender agreed with. The real problem, then, was that

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<sup>628</sup> Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 1 June 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>629</sup> Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 24 June 1924.

<sup>630</sup> Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 1 June 1924.

<sup>631</sup> Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 27 May 1924.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>633</sup> Arthur Lamsley to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 14 May 1924. A version of Devis' 'Death of Nelson' was on permanent display on board the *Victory*. See: The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*. (Portsmouth: Gieves Ltd, 1930), pp. 18-20. Press reports about the Daisy Bank schoolgirls' flowers noted that these were displayed alongside this painting: 'At Portsmouth. Nelson's Signal Not Flown on H.M.S. *Victory*'.

<sup>634</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 4 June 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>636</sup> Sturdee, 'Saving the *Victory*. To the Editor of the *Times*'.

<sup>637</sup> Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 27 May 1924.

Proctor had over-estimated his own artistic ability. 'Not worth copying for sale of prints', Sturdee judged, and joked with Callender about finding 'a dark corner' within the museum to display it.<sup>638</sup>

Crucially though, Sturdee *did* accept 'Nelson's Fatal Wound' for display. His reasoning was that Proctor was '70 & a resident of Portsmouth' and it 'would give offence if we turned it down'.<sup>639</sup> Proctor was to be politely indulged in his sentimental gesture, even if Callender and Sturdee had no intention of displaying the painting prominently. He was elderly, and his sentimental behaviour had been appropriately channelled into a manly, patriotic gesture.<sup>640</sup> His 'rationality' was not up for debate. British women, on the other hand, had to be more careful.<sup>641</sup> And just as Britons of all genders had to be 'rational' patriots, even while displaying great sentiment, they also had to be 'humble' patriots, even though almost all of them expected some kind of return for their service.

### 3.3 Philanthropy, volunteerism, and 'humble' patriotism

The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal set out to encourage patriotic sentiments amongst Britons, and particularly their sense of national and imperialist pride. Archibald Hurd, journalist and SNR member, described the history of the ship as 'a proud page in this country's sea history'.<sup>642</sup> After the appeal had closed, C.R. Wylie still wanted to write about the *Victory's* history, and restoration, so that Australians might feel 'proud... of the mother country.'<sup>643</sup> Pride in empire was important to these men, because they believed it had encouraged each generation of Britons to feel invested in maintaining it. It would, Hurd explained, allow Britons to 'hand this Empire down to the next generation'.<sup>644</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 4 June 1924; Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 16 June 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>639</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 4 June 1924.

<sup>640</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, p. 214.

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 222-229.

<sup>642</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>643</sup> C. R. Wylie to the Admiral Superintendent of Portsmouth Dockyard circa May 1927.

<sup>644</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

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It was not enough to merely feel proud, however. Pride in the *Victory* should be an 'incentive to self-sacrifice', or so King George V had reportedly announced.<sup>645</sup> 'Self-sacrifice' had been a prominent theme within the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal. Archibald Hurd had praised the 'self-sacrifice' demonstrated at Trafalgar as one of several virtues which had enabled 'the expansion of England'.<sup>646</sup> A press release announcing the launch of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal in October 1922 explicitly linked Nelson's 'mortal wound', and his 'watchword' of 'Duty', with the suggestion that modern Britons now had a duty to support the appeal.<sup>647</sup> Donating was meant to be an act of selfless, patriotic, duty. But in reality, interwar philanthropists and volunteers were rarely motivated purely by altruism, and this is just as true today as it was then.<sup>648</sup> To what extent, then, did 'Save the *Victory*' supporters have to pretend that their patriotism - or patriotic philanthropy – was totally selfless?

In the winter of 1923-1924, Mrs J.E. Gear offered to donate a looking glass decorated with Nelson's coat of arms to the *Victory*. She explained that the glass had belonged to her 'late father', and that he had believed that it had once been used by Nelson on-board. Gear was certain that if her father had still been alive, he would 'have been proud to restore the glass'.<sup>649</sup> Certainly the rest of her family were.<sup>650</sup> And by making these comments, Gear strongly implied that her family's pride would be increased by making this sacrifice for the public good.

Gear's belief that her father would have wanted to restore the glass was almost certainly not her only motivation, however. She 'regret[ed]' the fact that he was 'denied the knowledge that the glass may be restored', since he had 'died last March', 1923.<sup>651</sup> But the reality was that if Gear's father had ever considered donating his mirror to the *Victory*, he would have most likely

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<sup>645</sup> 'Preservation of H.M.S. Victory. An Endowment Fund', unknown newspaper, circa 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>646</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>647</sup> Press release, 'Save the Victory' Fund, undated, circa October 1922.

<sup>648</sup> Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939*. (Berkeley, UNITED STATES: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 31-32 & 44. Cohen names a range of motivations for interwar philanthropists, ranging from personal grief to political advantage.

<sup>649</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 27 July circa 1923, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.; J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 26 February 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>651</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 26 February 1924.

had ample opportunity to tell his children this. The ship had been a well-known tourist attraction for some decades, and before the restoration had housed a substantial museum collection.<sup>652</sup> His death had also occurred more than a year after the *Victory's* permanent move into dry dock in Portsmouth, and five months after the launch of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal.<sup>653</sup> But instead the idea to donate the mirror was entirely that of Gear and her siblings.<sup>654</sup> We can speculate as to why: by their own admission, the mirror was both 'a tall one' and in 'a very dilapidated condition'.<sup>655</sup> It is quite likely, therefore, that Gear and her siblings were not just 'proud' to restore the mirror, but also relieved to have found a way to rid themselves of one of their father's treasured but inconvenient possessions without the guilt of throwing it out.<sup>656</sup>

If J. E. Gear did indeed offer to donate the mirror for her own convenience as much as for pride in supporting the restoration project, she decided not to admit to this. She was not alone in doing so. When Mrs Cox, a working class resident of Portsmouth, pitched her idea that the *Victory* needed 'a little Room[sic.] or space' for visitors to have 'a cup of tea', and that she 'could readily arrange to supply this' facility on their behalf, she framed her petition as being for the benefit of her husband, 'an ex Naval Man', who had 'done 26 years in the service but has been out of work for the last four years'.<sup>657</sup> Her proposed tearoom 'would improve his income, as now he only has his pension'.<sup>658</sup> Crucially, Mrs Cox did not mention the fact that this enterprise must have also significantly improved her *own* income, and, further, given her an income independent to that of her husband's. This was, of course, partly to avoid being too shocking: wives were not, of course, meant to be the family breadwinners. But more than this, Mrs Cox had clearly calculated that her

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<sup>652</sup> 'By the Way', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 14 May 1923, p. 4; Lavery, *Nelson's Victory*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>653</sup> The *Victory* moved into dry dock on 12 January 1922. The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal officially launched on 21 October 1922, the 117<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. See: 'Probably the Last Voyage of Nelson's Old Flag-Ship', *Illustrated London News*, 21 January 1922, p. 28; 'Save "the Victory." An Appeal to the Public', *Devon and Exeter Gazette*, 21 October 1922, p. 2.

<sup>654</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 26 February 1924.

<sup>655</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 27 July circa 1923; George Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 18 April 1925, SNR 7/7, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>656</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 27 July circa 1923; J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 26 February 1924.

<sup>657</sup> Mrs Cox to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 14 October 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*

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husband's unemployment after twenty six years of naval service would hold greater moral weight with the SNR than her own unemployment – and that his 'good références' [sic.] regarding this service were more important than the business merits of her scheme.<sup>659</sup>

In writing this letter, Mrs Cox appealed to the then much talked about idea that the nation owed ex-servicemen a debt for their wartime sacrifices. All around Britain, in fact, ex-servicemen (and their advocates) were invoking this rhetoric to aid their appeals for government support.<sup>660</sup> The British government had carefully avoided taking responsibility for assisting the thousands of unemployed demobilised men back into work, as well as for their rehabilitation from physical and mental trauma. Private philanthropists and charitable organisations stepped into the gap, apparently eager to pay off this debt on the nation's behalf.<sup>661</sup> Deborah Cohen has termed this interwar dynamic the 'symbolic politics of gratitude'.<sup>662</sup> Patriotism was transactional. If you dedicated yourself to the nation, then you could expect something back from the nation in return.

Did this mean that all patriotic gestures required some form of reward? Most Britons seemed to agree that military service was owed some form of recompense, even as they disagreed about what form this should take, and who was responsible.<sup>663</sup> Thousands of individual philanthropists and volunteers were active in 'patriotic' causes in the 1920s as a result.<sup>664</sup> But it is also likely that many of these volunteers also believed themselves to be owed something, however small, in return for this work. Certainly, the volunteers behind the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal were not always entirely selfless in their dedication to the cause.

In 1926, George Hope, the SNR Chairman and new head of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, approached Colonial Secretary Leo Amery regarding A E Carlyle, who had recently retired as the *Victory* appeal's Honorary Organiser. It was Hope's opinion that since Carlyle had worked on the

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid.

<sup>660</sup> Cohen, *War Come Home*, pp. 41-44; Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference', p. 88.

<sup>661</sup> Cohen, *War Come Home*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid. pp. 41-44.

<sup>664</sup> Ibid. pp. 16-18.

appeal 'in an untirely [sic.] unpaid capacity', 'it would be difficult to overestimate the indebtedness, not so much of our Society, but of the Empire at large, for so patriotic a labour so faithfully discharged'.<sup>665</sup> He reminded Amery that Carlyle had given his time and expertise for free, and that his successful fundraising had allowed 'the Admiralty... [to] delegate[e] the work of saving Nelson's flagship' in its entirety to public subscription.<sup>666</sup> Carlyle had not risked his life for the sake of the *Victory*, but Hope still used language very similar to that which Mrs Cox had used about her husband.<sup>667</sup> 'Patriotic... labour' resulted in public 'indebtedness'.<sup>668</sup> Acts of charitable endeavour were owed some form of public recognition.<sup>669</sup> In this case, Hope wanted Amery, who had supported the launch of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, to put Carlyle's name forward to the Prime Minister for the next Honours List.<sup>670</sup>

George Hope was not, however, being entirely honest when he claimed to wholeheartedly believe that the 'indebted' Empire owed A E Carlyle an honour in thanks for his volunteer work.<sup>671</sup> The only member of the *Victory* appeal who truly believed this was A E Carlyle himself. Carlyle had first made the suggestion that he 'would much like an Honour' to Hope's predecessor Admiral Sturdee in 1924.<sup>672</sup> Sturdee felt obligated to support Carlyle's claim, but only because he believed that doing so 'clear[ed] the situation' between the SNR and Carlyle's employers, WS Crawford Ltd., who had lent them staff, resources, and office space without charge.<sup>673</sup> Sturdee had died before he had been able to formally make Carlyle's case to the government, and so Hope had inherited the task.<sup>674</sup> And so Hope and Sturdee's sense of obligation overruled their private

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<sup>665</sup> George Hope to Leo Amery, 15 March 1926, SNR 7/8, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>666</sup> Ibid.

<sup>667</sup> Mrs Cox to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 14 October 1924.

<sup>668</sup> George Hope to Leo Amery, 15 March 1926.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid.

<sup>670</sup> For Amery's support of the *Victory* appeal as First Lord of the Admiralty, see: L. S. Amery to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 12 February 1923.

<sup>671</sup> George Hope to Leo Amery, 15 March 1926.

<sup>672</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 6 January 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid.

<sup>674</sup> George Hope to Leo Amery, 15 March 1926.

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scepticism about whether or not Carlyle's volunteer work was actually enough to merit this kind of reward, generous though he may have been.

Carlyle himself, however, had been thinking for some time about how to best support his own case. He had been careful to present himself to 'Save the *Victory*' audiences as a private volunteer, *not* as a PR professional. 'PLEASE DO NOT MENTION THE NAME OF MY FIRM', Carlyle emblazoned in capital letters and red ink on one set of speech notes which he had prepared for Sturdee in 1923.<sup>675</sup> Instead, Sturdee was to emphasise 'the great enthusiasm of *Mr Carlyle* the Honorary Organiser' [emphasis original], who had 'made it possible to launch and carry the Fund to such a successful point as it has reached today'.<sup>676</sup> Mention of WS Crawford, Ltd. might lead supporters to presume that Carlyle was being paid for his work, rather than that it was an act of patriotic service. Carlyle knew that in order to get his reward, he had to paint himself as the modest volunteer, motivated only by altruistic patriotism. In doing so, he was just like Mrs Cox, who had pitched her proposed tearoom as being for her ex-naval husband's financial relief, rather than for her own.<sup>677</sup>

Carlyle was unusual, however, because in private he was extremely candid about the fact that he expected to be paid back for his patriotic volunteer work in some way. He was appointed as a Commander of the British Empire in 1927, but almost turned this down, before deciding that this would be 'churlish', as he freely admitted to Callender.<sup>678</sup> He had actually wanted a knighthood.<sup>679</sup> Other men associated with the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal worked much harder to emphasise their modesty. Its principle donor James Caird insisted on being credited anonymously as 'A Wellwisher of the Navy': 'not being a public man and disliking publicity', as he later explained to Sturdee.<sup>680</sup> Caird's identity was only publicly revealed when he was made a Baronet

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<sup>675</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First Victory dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>677</sup> Mrs Cox to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 14 October 1924.

<sup>678</sup> A. E. Carlyle to Geoffrey Callender, 26 May 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM; Ronald Waterhouse to A E Carlyle 24 May 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>679</sup> W. S. Crawford to Geoffrey Callender 10 June 1927, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>680</sup> James Caird to L S Amery 27 February 1923; James Caird to Admiral Sturdee 3 March 1923.

in 1928.<sup>681</sup> Carlyle's employer W S Crawford insisted to Callender that his own 'K.B.E.' had been 'a quite unexpected honour', which he had 'never asked a soul for.'<sup>682</sup> No doubt Crawford's knighthood, awarded 'for work on the Empire Marketing Board' in the same year as Carlyle's C.B.E., had not helped the latter's disappointment.<sup>683</sup> 'I would rather', Crawford claimed, that 'A.E. Carlyle had it but the fates were otherwise'.<sup>684</sup>

This may all have been false humility, of course. Regardless, unlike Carlyle, both Crawford and Caird actively denied that they wanted some kind of personal reward for their work, even in private correspondence. 'Honours are empty', W.S. Crawford moralised in reflection on Carlyle's disappointment. 'Don't seek them', but 'if they come be humble.'<sup>685</sup>

When Britons sought rewards for their patriotic sacrifices, they were more likely to be successful if others judged the reward to be in proportion to the nature of their service. They also had to be practical – the *Victory* could not open a tea room just because the proprietor was married to an ex-sailor, and the government could not give every volunteer a knighthood. As A E Carlyle found, it was always advisable to appear 'humble', and to downplay your true aspirations, even as you made the case for your own advancement.

Of course, the rules for 'humble' behaviour were different depending on gender and class. Admiral Sturdee took A E Carlyle's open desire for a knighthood seriously, and supported it even though it was inconvenient, but effectively dismissed Mrs Cox's comparatively modest appeal on behalf of her husband, and apparently without much thought.<sup>686</sup> Sturdee had done something very similar when he had accepted Frederick Proctor's bad painting for the *Victory* collection.

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<sup>681</sup> 'Secret Revealed by Honours List. Man Who Gave £100,000 to the Nation', *Daily Chronicle*, 2 January 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>682</sup> W. S. Crawford to Geoffrey Callender 10 June 1927.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

<sup>684</sup> Ibid.

<sup>685</sup> W. S. Crawford to Geoffrey Callender 7 June 1927.

<sup>686</sup> 'Actn', Sturdee wrote on Mrs Cox's letter. 'I told her... she must apply to C in C'. Had he wanted to support her tearoom, he could have forwarded her letter on to the Commander in Chief of Portsmouth Dockyard himself. Mrs Cox to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 14 October 1924.

Inconvenient women were subject to much more scrutiny than inconvenient men as to their humility and rationality, as we shall see.

### 3.4 The boundaries of rational patriotism: the case of Beatrice Suckling

Many 'Save the *Victory*' supporters expressed strong feelings about why they had chosen to become involved in the project. They were openly sentimental (adult men especially), and they were proud. But they also almost always framed this sentiment as being related to some greater patriotic purpose. They were 'rational': people who felt emotion deeply but who were not controlled by it. They were also 'humble': if they wanted something in return for their patriotism, then it was in proportion to the service which they had given. Individuals performed their rational, patriotic patriotism in a variety of ways. There were still, however, boundaries to 'rational' and 'humble' patriotism, and these can be explored through the case of Beatrice Mary Suckling, a rare *Victory* supporter who clearly broke them.

In June 1929, Beatrice Suckling wrote to Geoffrey Callender to accuse him, the SNR, and the nation as a whole of 'base ingratitude'.<sup>687</sup> She had read a rumour in the Daily Express that the Admiralty had transferred ownership of the *Victory* 'to a syndicate of Shipbrokers'.<sup>688</sup> And she was angry as well about a separate rumour, namely that an 'American' had been allowed to 'purchase' furniture which had been displayed on loan in Nelson's dining cabin.<sup>689</sup> These were serious accusations, but Callender did not consider them to have any credibility. He reassured Suckling that 'there [wa]s no truth at all in the[se] rumours', and encouraged her, in an ambiguously patronising fashion, to not 'be cast down'.<sup>690</sup> In so doing, Callender dismissed Suckling, her concerns, and her anger.

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<sup>687</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 30 June 1929.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid.

<sup>689</sup> Ibid.

<sup>690</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Beatrice Suckling, 3 July 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM.

He was wrong to have done so. Admittedly, the first rumour was totally false. But the second had some truth to it. A year later, the furniture's actual owner, Lawrence Feuerheerd, *would* begin to make arrangements to sell his furniture in America, where he hoped it would fetch a significantly higher price than in Britain.<sup>691</sup> This was just as Suckling had predicted. And Callender should have paid more attention to her regardless, because the rumour about Feuerheerd had received significant press attention.<sup>692</sup> It was the latest example of a long-standing popular campaign in Britain that British heritage should be protected from American buyers who sought to export it out of the country.<sup>693</sup> Callender himself had been active in this campaign in the past.<sup>694</sup> What was it about Suckling's letter that had stopped Callender from taking her seriously?

Perhaps the problem was that Suckling's criticisms were personal? She had threatened that 'the person who allowed the American to purchase the sideboard & table', would come to 'rue the day', and, implied, by contacting Callender, that she considered him to be 'the person' in question.<sup>695</sup> But Callender had also shown signs in the past of being willing to listen to personal criticisms when he believed them to be made with good intentions. By way of example, in 1922, Gregory Robinson, a founder member of the SNR, had written to Sturdee and Callender to accuse them of 'false patriotism and little charity'.<sup>696</sup> Robinson argued that it was unacceptable that their proposed 'Save the *Victory*' fund would compete with charitable initiatives for disabled and unemployed sailors. 'The fighting services are being skinned', he reminded them, 'and many naval people are likely to see more of hardships than of any other sort of ship'.<sup>697</sup> Sturdee and Callender

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<sup>691</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Rear Admiral Chetwode, 19 May 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>692</sup> For example: 'Victory Relics to Remain in England', *Birmingham Post*, 1 July 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM; 'Nelson's Furniture. Big Offers from the United States', *Observer*, 24 March 1929, SNR 7/19, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>693</sup> Melanie Hall, 'Plunder or Preservation? Negotiating an Anglo-American Heritage in the Later Nineteenth Century in the Old World and the New: Shakespeare's Birthplace, Niagra Falls, and Carlyle's House', in *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, C.1800-1940.*, ed. by Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (Oxford and New York: The British Academy / Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 241-265 pp. 241-242, 249-252 & 262).

<sup>694</sup> Specifically, he had been involved with fundraising to keep the large collection of ship models from the training ship *Mercury*, owned by Beatrice and Charles Fry, in Britain. See: Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 60; Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, p. 130.

<sup>695</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 30 June 1929.

<sup>696</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*

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might have disagreed with Robinson, but they also treated his concerns as legitimate. In future, they were careful to advertise that 'the money subscribed' for the restoration 'would go to the relief of unemployment', with 'two-thirds... spent on labour' through their employment of dockyard shipwrights.<sup>698</sup>

Callender and Sturdee were sensible to listen to Robinson. Interwar Britain was filled with popular rhetoric about what the nation owed to the dead, disabled, and unemployed of the Great War, and they did not want the *Victory's* restoration to seem counter-productive to this.<sup>699</sup> In addition to this, Callender was much more likely to read criticism as friendly and constructive when it came from a respected colleague like Robinson, rather than a stranger like Suckling. But the primary difference between the two cases was that Callender simply did not believe Suckling, and therefore considered her complaints to have no legitimacy.

If Callender was to take Beatrice Suckling seriously, then he had to believe that she was both 'rational', and a 'humble' patriot. Unfortunately for Suckling, she had placed her rationality into doubt as soon as she had mentioned in her very first letter to Callender that she had the gift of 'second sight', the ability to communicate with the spirit world.<sup>700</sup> Spiritualism was, admittedly, currently enjoying a popular resurgence as a result of the Great War.<sup>701</sup> But it was also a movement that had a complicated relationship with British society's expectation that its citizens should be 'rational'. Spiritualist practice was associated with 'feminine' emotional fervour and flights of imagination, rather than with 'masculine' emotional control and scientific empiricism.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> "'Save the Victory' Fund: Exhibition of the New Film', circa October 1923. For a similar example, see: A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First Victory dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

<sup>699</sup> Britain at this time was full of political rhetoric about the debt that the nation owed to the dead of the Great War, and this rhetoric was used by all sides of the political spectrum. See: King, *Memorials of the Great War*, pp. 155-164. For this same rhetoric applied to disabled and unemployed ex-servicemen, see: Cohen, *War Come Home*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>700</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 25 June 1928.

<sup>701</sup> Patricia Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 365.

<sup>702</sup> Although Bret Carroll argues that male spiritualists tended to emphasise the rational and empirical elements of spiritualist practice in order to compensate. See: Bret E. Carroll, "'A Higher Power to Feel': Spiritualism, Grief, and Victorian Manhood', *Men and Masculinities*, 3 (2000), 3-6.

Spiritualists were vulnerable to accusations of fraud.<sup>703</sup> Any judgement that Callender made about whether or not he should take Suckling's fears about the Nelson furniture seriously must have been coloured, unconsciously or not, by his attitude towards her spiritual beliefs.

Unsurprisingly, the evidence suggests that Callender does not seem to have placed much stock in Suckling's spiritualist claims. In her first letter, Suckling had asked Callender to distribute five medals of St Christopher between his colleagues, including one 'on the Victory in a place where it will not be moved.'<sup>704</sup> St Christopher was a Catholic saint, and so Suckling may have been part of a group of people who combined spiritualist and Catholic practices.<sup>705</sup> Suckling explained that her medal needed to be placed on board because 'this is the year of awakening', presumably a spiritual awakening.<sup>706</sup> She strongly associated Nelson with her spiritual beliefs, claiming that like her, he had 'possess[ed]' the family's 'second sight'.<sup>707</sup> So had 'Nelson's mother', Catherine Suckling.<sup>708</sup> Such comments were unlikely to win her much support from Callender, who had edited a recent edition of Southey's *Life of Nelson* without making any mention of Nelson's having any kind of mediumship abilities.<sup>709</sup> Suffice to say that all five medals remain in their envelope in the SNR archive.<sup>710</sup>

If Callender was already sceptical of Suckling's rationality, the actual wording and tone of her subsequent complaint must have reaffirmed his initial judgement. Suckling was blunt and did not try to hide her anger. She accused Callender and his associates of 'base ingratitude'; Americans of being universally 'ungodly'; and made vague and threatening allusions to how the

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<sup>703</sup> Jonathan D. Riddle, 'All Catholics Are Spiritualists: The Boundary Work of Mary Gove Nichols and Thomas Low Nichols', *Church History*, 87 (2018), 474-475.

<sup>704</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 25 June 1928.

<sup>705</sup> Riddle, 'Boundary Work'.

<sup>706</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 25 June 1928.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid. Suckling did not say this outright, but she may have believed that Nelson was her spirit guide.

Published Spiritualist authors tended to name their spirit guides as being either deceased public figures, or their own relatives, and Nelson was both of these to Suckling. See: Carroll, 'A Higher Power to Feel', p. 6.

<sup>708</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 25 June 1928.

<sup>709</sup> Southey, *The Life of Nelson*.

<sup>710</sup> Five St. Christopher medals, Enclosed in letter, Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 25 June 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

person responsible would come to 'rue the day'.<sup>711</sup> She also made a number of tangential complaints about Britons 'copying ungodly American ideas & habits', including films presenting Emma Hamilton as a romantic heroine, and also motor cars (whose drivers 'tear about slaughtering one another on the roads').<sup>712</sup> She framed this 'base ingratitude' as a personal slight against 'my family', and their 'sacrifices', by which she referred to not just Nelson's sacrifice 'of his entire life on behalf of his Country & fellow-countrymen', but also 'to 'the efforts of his mother's Brothers', Maurice and William Suckling (the latter of whom was Beatrice Suckling's 'Great G Grand Father').<sup>713</sup> In reality, the Suckling brothers were minor characters in the national Nelson myth.<sup>714</sup> Suckling also claimed to be the 'the nearest descendant of Nelson as far as what runs in my veins', which was patently false.<sup>715</sup> She was hardly being a 'humble' patriot here. It is hard to imagine Sturdee praising the 'impassioned' man who honoured his sailor ancestor on the deck of the *Victory* if that man had then tried to claim that the nation should worship his ancestor directly alongside Nelson himself.<sup>716</sup>

Callender's reply seems measured and guarded by contrast. He 'consol[ed]' Suckling but insisted that there was 'no truth' in the rumours that she'd heard.<sup>717</sup> He was polite but not apologetic. He provided facts to counteract Suckling's accusations and did not admit to his (presumable) frustration at having received such an accusatory letter. When compared to Callender's response, Suckling's letter reads as undiplomatic, far more emotional, and therefore

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<sup>711</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 30 June 1929.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid.

<sup>713</sup> As 'Comptroller of the Navy' and 'Comptroller of the Customs', respectively, these men had supported Nelson in his career. Ibid.

<sup>714</sup> For example, the 'Save the Victory' appeal's launch press release which foregrounds Nelson's 'mortal wound' in the pursuit of 'duty' makes no mention of either Maurice or William Suckling in reference to Nelson's sacrifice: Press release, 'Save the Victory' Fund, undated, circa October 1922. Callender's own edition of Robert Southey's *Life of Nelson* contains no references to William Suckling, Beatrice's direct descendant, and only a small number to Maurice Suckling: Southey, *The Life of Nelson*, pp. 1-2 & 14.

<sup>715</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 25 June 1928. Nelson had surviving direct descendants in the Nelson-Ward, family, who were descended from his daughter, Horatia, and further closer descendants through his siblings' children. For the SNR's familiarity with these families, see: Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 8 June 1928, SNR 7/16, SNR Records, NMM; Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender 12 June 1928, SNR 7/16, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>716</sup> Sturdee, 'Saving the Victory. To the Editor of the Times'.

<sup>717</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Beatrice Suckling, 3 July 1929.

irrational. This is despite the fact that we know that she was actually right about Laurence Feuerheerd's plan to sell his furniture in America, and that Callender was wrong. She was, of course, at a disadvantage. As a woman, and as a spiritualist, Suckling's anger was far more open to being read as a sign of her inability to control her emotions, rather than as a justified and rational response to the situation at hand.<sup>718</sup>

Of course, the fact that Suckling reacted in this way also shows that not all Britons conformed to 'rational' or 'humble' patriotism. Historians of emotion tend to argue that there are groups in any community who express emotion in a different way to the norm. For William Reddy these are people who have failed to conform to the 'emotional regime' but have sought relief in 'emotional refuges': small communities wherein transgressive forms of emotional expression are allowed.<sup>719</sup> For Barbara Rosenwein they are simply part of a complex and overlapping network of 'emotional communities', some of which are larger and with more influence than others.<sup>720</sup> Most 'Save the *Victory*' supporters were happily sentimental, talking about their pride, and their love. Some were angry – but again, usually 'humble'; with it: speaking on behalf of a greater cause. Beatrice Suckling was an anomaly within the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal – but not necessarily a lone voice within Britain as a whole. Most Britons seem to have conformed to being 'rational' and 'humble' patriots, but this did not mean that all of them did.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Beatrice Suckling was not, to Callender's eyes, a very successful patriot. Patriots were meant to be both humble and rational. Suckling, on the other hand, was angry. She made unsubstantiated accusations against Callender and his colleagues. She took public irreverence about Nelson as a personal slight against her and her family. She believed that she could communicate with spirits.

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<sup>718</sup> As Dixon notes, women in this period were presumed to have far less ability to control their emotions than men. Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp. 222-228.

<sup>719</sup> Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, pp. 118-128.

<sup>720</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 24-25.

### Chapter 3

Patriots had a right to be angry, and to hold the nation to account, if it failed to properly reimburse them for sacrifices they had made on its behalf. They were expected, in general, to feel emotion deeply; but at the same time to not let that emotion cloud their judgement. This was a difficult balancing act, and one that Beatrice Suckling apparently could not perform well.

The odds had not been in her favour. Amongst 'Save the *Victory*' supporters, it was the men, not the women, who tended to get away with openly seeking some kind of personal reward in return for their support. It was also the men who predominantly wrote highly sentimental letters in which they detailed their passionate feelings towards Nelson and the *Victory*, sometimes at great length. Men openly longed for intimacy with Nelson –to be his servant, to 'labour' within the *Victory* cause as an act 'of love'.<sup>721</sup> This was despite the fact that in kissing his dying friend, 'sentimental' Captain Hardy had caused even the most historically-aware supporters a certain amount of discomfort. Indulging oneself in 'sentiment' was a feminine trait – while 'real' men were patriotic and rational. And therefore a white middle class man like Frederick Proctor had the luxury of presuming that Admiral Sturdee would assume that his gift of 'Nelson's Fatal Wound', painted with much more sentiment than skill, was no comment on either his masculinity, or on his ability to control his emotions. By contrast, his female counterparts tended to be much more reserved – with the exception, of course, of Beatrice Suckling. And just as women were placed under more scrutiny for their humility, and their rationality, they were also placed under greater scrutiny for their ethical behaviour as collectors – as we shall shortly see.

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<sup>721</sup> A. E. Carlyle to Geoffrey Callender 10 March 1926; Fred Proctor to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 27 May 1924.



## Chapter 4 A 'Tiresome' Woman in 'Commerce': Ethical Collecting and Authenticating Relics

In July 1928, the Society for Nautical Research announced that the restoration of H.M.S. *Victory* was 'virtually complete'.<sup>722</sup> Callender and his fellow restorers still wanted the British public's help, however. They were still actively hunting for whatever survived of the furniture, fittings, and personal objects that had been on board the ship 'on the eve of the great battle'.<sup>723</sup> 'The ward-room urn, with sub-divisions for brewing black tea and green, has been restored', Geoffrey Callender explained in his 1929 edition of *The Story of HMS Victory*, 'but as yet there is no ward-room sideboard on which to set it; nor ward-room dining-table either. None of [Captain] Hardy's effects have as yet been unearthed ; and Nelson's own state-room cries aloud for equipment.'<sup>724</sup> It was not all bad news, however. 'Happily some of the admiral's most precious pieces have been promised, including the bureau at which he wrote the codicil to his last will, his last letters home, and the famous prayer before battle.'<sup>725</sup>

These objects were not just set dressing. They were relics of Nelson, and of Trafalgar. They provided a tangible link between the present, and an untouchable but apparently glorious past. As such, they provided modern Britons with a focus for their nostalgia about Trafalgar, Nelson, and Britain's rise as a maritime and then imperial power.<sup>726</sup> As such, Callender believed that these objects could add to the ship's power to promote the various causes and behaviours identified in

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<sup>722</sup> 'The Restored Victory', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 20 July 1928, p. 15.

<sup>723</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 15.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>725</sup> *Ibid.* Callender's comments here were circulated in the press, for example: 'The King & Nelson's Furniture. Beginning Made of an Important Task', *Western Morning News and Mercury*, 28 March 1929, SNR 7/19, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>726</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 135; Stuart Semmel, 'Reading the Tangible Past: British Tourism, Collecting, and Memory after Waterloo', *Representations*, 69 (2000), 10; David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country - Revisited*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 389-395.

this thesis' opening chapters, including 'humble' patriotism, anti-socialist sentiment, and the supremacy of the 'Anglo-Saxon races'.<sup>727</sup>

Unfortunately for Callender, only a small number of people who offered objects to the *Victory* could prove beyond all doubt that they were genuine Trafalgar relics. Over 120 years had passed since the Battle of Trafalgar, and almost no relic owner could provide a fully-documented account of how, exactly, their object had travelled from the *Victory* in 1805 into their possession in the 1920s. Callender had been trained in 'scientific' historical practice, and believed in the importance of verifying historical theories with empirical evidence.<sup>728</sup> But in this case he was forced to be flexible.

Objects acquire meaning through how they are used and displayed.<sup>729</sup> The 'authenticity' of relics is always subjective, and somewhat open to negotiation. So when Callender displayed objects on board the *Victory* as though they were authentic relics, then they effectively became this, no matter the gaps in the record. And in practice, relic owners could negotiate with him over what significance he should attach to these documentary gaps.

How, then, did Callender choose which objects to endorse as relics, and which to reject? Empirical evidence was just one factor: he also placed the intentions and apparent sincerity of the owners themselves under just as much scrutiny. Relic owners had to convince Callender that they were ethical 'antiquarians' who collected relics in the spirit of scholarly enquiry, as opposed to 'mercantilists' who collected solely for financial profit.<sup>730</sup> Callender preferred owners to donate their relics, but he was prepared to buy them if he felt that the asking price was justified:

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<sup>727</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

<sup>728</sup> Bonnie G. Smith, 'Gender and the Practices of Scientific History: The Seminar and Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century', *The American Historical Review*, 100 (1995), 1150.

<sup>729</sup> Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects', *World Archaeology*, 31 (1999), 174-176; Jody Joy, 'Reinvigorating Object Biography: Reproducing the Drama of Object Lives', *World Archaeology*, 41 (2009), 544.

<sup>730</sup> Kristin Mahoney, 'Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Collecting in 'the Connoisseur: An Illustrated Magazine for Collectors', 1901-1914', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 45 (2012).

proportionate to the gaps in the evidence, and appropriate to the owner's personal circumstances.

In practice, however, Callender's judgement of who was, or was not justified in making a profit from their relics was heavily gendered. The 'tiresome woman; in commerce', a slander he used specifically against the lace connoisseur Emily Nevill Jackson, but might just as well have applied to several others, was the measure against which Callender judged relic owners, and often unfairly.<sup>731</sup> As a result, Callender's judgement of the intent, ethics, and gendered behaviour of relic collectors heavily influenced which objects have been enshrined as national Trafalgar relics, and which have not.

#### **4.1 Authenticating prestige: relics, heirlooms and memory**

A relic is not simply an old object. Instead, it is an object which people consciously think of as representing 'pastness', of belonging to a lost era.<sup>732</sup> Relics are considered 'irreproducible', either because of their extreme age, or because they are uniquely associated with significant historical events.<sup>733</sup> Most objects have a finite life-span, but the special status of relics means that people expect them to be preserved for generations in the future.<sup>734</sup> Ultimately, they are preserved because they are believed to provide a tangible link to the past.<sup>735</sup>

As a result, individuals can enhance their social status, and power, by owning relics.<sup>736</sup> In 1928 Mr Eyre-Matcham informed the SNR that his neighbour, 'the present Earl Nelson', 'was rather sore at not having been approached in any way as regards the restoration of the *Victory* or [his] relics at Trafalgar House.'<sup>737</sup> Mr Eyre-Matcham and Earl Nelson were each descended from one of Nelsons' sisters, namely Catherine Matcham and Susannah Bolton. Both owned significant

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<sup>731</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930.

<sup>732</sup> Lowenthal, *Foreign Country*, pp. 383-384; Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 135.

<sup>733</sup> Lowenthal, *Foreign Country*, p. 384.

<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.* p. 386.

<sup>735</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 135; Semmel, 'Tangible Past', p. 10; Lowenthal, *Foreign Country*, pp. 389-395.

<sup>736</sup> Gosden and Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects', p. 170.

<sup>737</sup> Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 8 June 1928.

collections of Nelson relics. These two men believed that their blood link to Nelson meant that they held special status in public commemoration of him. Their relics were tangible proof of this status. Susan Stewart argues that family heirlooms such as these provide a 'calendar', or 'genealogy', that highlight family history in the context of greater historical events. They are 'a statement of membership... in the prestige generated by the event.'<sup>738</sup> Earl Nelson believed his family prestige to be such that the SNR should court him for his endorsement of the restoration. And he also expected that this transaction would be symbolised by the transfer of relics.

He would be disappointed. The SNR had presumed that if any of Nelson's descendants had actually wanted 'to come forward with such things', then they would have simply responded to the SNR's 'public appeal' alongside ordinary collectors.<sup>739</sup> In the SNR's mind the fact that they were the people undertaking the restoration of the *Victory* - Nelson's largest and, as the site of his death and apotheosis, arguably most important relic - meant that all relic owners, regardless of relation to Nelson, should approach them, and not the other way around.<sup>740</sup> The SNR similarly rebuffed the attempts of various Nelson relatives, including Eyre-Matcham, to secure themselves an invite to a forthcoming visit to the ship by King George V.<sup>741</sup>

Who had the greater moral authority: the SNR with their physical custodianship of the *Victory*, or Eyre-Matcham, Earl Nelson, and their family relics? It was a complicated balance. Even SNR Chairman George Hope conceded that Nelson's relatives might rightfully expect a position of honour in a "'Nelson" show', but the king's visit was to be 'purely Restoration', a celebration of the end of the work.<sup>742</sup> He believed that Nelson's relatives had no right to share in the glory of the restorers. We can see that the SNR were engaged in a power struggle with relic owners. But they

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<sup>738</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>739</sup> Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 8 June 1928.

<sup>740</sup> Bertrand Taithe, 'Remembering Victory - Commemorating Defeat? The Franco-British Trafalgar Centenary in 1905', in *History, Commemoration and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar 1805-2005*, ed. by Holger Hock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), (p. 61).

<sup>741</sup> Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 8 June 1928; Admiral Hope to Geoffrey Callender, 24 July 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>742</sup> Admiral Hope to Geoffrey Callender, 24 July 1928.

also needed to negotiate with them. From where else would they 'reassembl[e]... [the] *Victory* gear' and obtain a supply of relics?<sup>743</sup>

Ordinary people who believed that they owned a Nelson or *Victory* relic were undoubtedly at the bottom of this power struggle. This was especially true when relics had been acquired by families with no actual link to Nelson. An example is Mrs J.E. Gear, who offered to donate a mirror decorated with Nelson's coat of arms to the *Victory*. Her grandfather had bought it at a 'sale of an Admiral's effects'.<sup>744</sup> And her late father had been 'convinced', she explained, that the mirror had been 'removed from Nelson's cabin on the *Victory* when she was cleared for action' at Trafalgar.<sup>745</sup> Gear's brother, George Kerley, likewise wrote to tell Callender that he had 'frequently heard my father... allude to it as Nelson's mirror from the "*Victory*."' <sup>746</sup> Gear and Kerley chose their words carefully. Their father had believed that the mirror was a genuine Nelson relic, but they did not feel able to promise Callender that this was definitely the case.

Gear and Kerley's correspondence with Callender about the mirror therefore shows the power of the myths that families build up around objects, but also the discomfort that they might cause.<sup>747</sup> Gear and Kerley wanted to believe their father. But they did not feel able to, because they knew that they had no proof that the story was true. In theory, individuals can 'name', or interpret, an object to be anything that they like, albeit within a set of conventions.<sup>748</sup> Gear and her brother could have choose from several options. They could see the mirror as an antique looking glass, or an old mirror, or rubbish to be thrown away, or a genuine Nelson relic. Their father had chosen the latter. Equally, how we 'name' objects tends to be heavily influenced by community consensus. Culturally-powerful individuals like curators have more ability than most to

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<sup>743</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922; Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 15; 'The King & Nelson's Furniture. Beginning Made of an Important Task', 28 March 1929.

<sup>744</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 27 July circa 1923.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid.

<sup>746</sup> George Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 18 April 1925.

<sup>747</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 137.

<sup>748</sup> Edwina Taborsky, 'The Discursive Object', in *Objects of Knowledge*, ed. by Susan M. Pearce (London ; Atlantic Highlands: Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 50-77 pp. 57 & 66-67).

influence this consensus.<sup>749</sup> So before Gear and Kerley could comfortably take pride in their family heirloom, they needed Callender to *also* believe that the mirror was a Nelson relic, and to verify their father's story as fact.

This was not Gear and Kerley's only reason for wanting Callender's validation. Regardless of whether or not their mirror had ever been owned by Nelson, they definitely considered it to be a relic of their deceased father.<sup>750</sup> Gear felt it important to explain how 'very proud of the [looking] glass' her father had been, 'believ[ing] that it belonged to his great hero'.<sup>751</sup> This triggered her memory of him as 'a very patriotic man indeed, intensely proud of Lord Nelson's achievements'.<sup>752</sup> The mirror currently allowed Gear and Kerley to commemorate their father privately, but, with Callender's help, they could turn it into a public memorial. 'Should a commemorative tablet be affixed,' George Kerley requested of Callender, 'I should like him to be named as the donor'.<sup>753</sup> When Callender accepted the mirror into the *Victory* collection, he endorsed Gear and Kerley's memory of their father as a patriot worthy of commemorating.

As humans, we collect personal 'souvenirs': objects which seem to us to mark notable events in our own lives, and provide us with an external record of our private memories. We build a narrative around these objects, and it is this narrative that gives such objects their status as 'relics'.<sup>754</sup> The mirror was possibly a relic of Nelson, definitely a relic of Gear and Kerley's father, and also a private relic of their childhoods. Kerley remembered his father talking about the mirror as a relic of Nelson 'from my earliest childhood until I left home some thirty years ago'.<sup>755</sup> Gear recalled 'my father pointing out' Nelson's coat of Arms on the mirror and 'explaining the meaning'

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<sup>749</sup> Ibid. p. 66; Susan M. Pearce, 'Objects as Meaning; or Narrating the Past', in *Objects of Knowledge*, ed. by Susan M. Pearce (London ; Atlantic Highlands: Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 125-140 pp. 137-138).

<sup>750</sup> Relics can be a link between private memory and collective memory, and this is an example of this in action. See: Andrew Jones, *Memory and Material Culture: Tracing the Past in Prehistoric Europe*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 46.

<sup>751</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 26 February 1924.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> George Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 18 April 1925.

<sup>754</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 136-139.

<sup>755</sup> George Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 18 April 1925.

to her 'when [she was] a child'.<sup>756</sup> Whether or not the mirror was a genuine Nelson relic had nothing to do with their childhoods, but both siblings still chose to connect the two in their letters to Callender. As adults, childhood relics invoke nostalgia, and usually encourage us to look back on our childhoods as a lost but golden time.<sup>757</sup> Gear and Kerley's father's recent death would have only heightened their desire to memorialise this period in their lives.

As children, Gear and Kerley had viewed the mirror as an authentic relic because their father had repeatedly displayed and 'explained' the mirror to them as this from their 'earliest childhood[s]'.<sup>758</sup> They had believed it to be a relic because their father had *treated* it as though it was.<sup>759</sup> As adults, however, they had come to doubt this childhood certainty. Individuals apply new experiences and perspectives to relics over time, and the meaning that they attach to them therefore naturally changes.<sup>760</sup> Or, as Kerley admitted to Callender, he was unable to prove 'the authenticity of this [mirror], as a relic of England's greatest admiral', because as an adult he felt a need to corroborate his father's claims with additional evidence.<sup>761</sup> If Callender proclaimed the mirror to be authentic, then he validated not just the relic itself, but also Gear and Kerley's childhood memory of their father as a trusted and rational teacher. If he refused the donation, then they would be forced to reassess this memory of their father's character. We are already beginning to see just how much power curators like Geoffrey Callender could hold over relic owners.

## 4.2 Ethical collecting, commerce, and gender

One of the many things that Gear and Kerley wanted from Geoffrey Callender was to win his approval for their own behaviour as relic owners. 'In my opinion', Kerley made a point of telling

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<sup>756</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 26 February 1924.

<sup>757</sup> Gary Cross, 'Nostalgic Collections', *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 20 (2016), 101.

<sup>758</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 26 February 1924; George Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 18 April 1925.

<sup>759</sup> Objects acquire the status of relics when they are used or displayed as such. See: Gosden and Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects', pp. 174-176; Joy, 'Reinvigorating Object Biography', p. 544.

<sup>760</sup> Pearce, 'Objects as Meaning', pp. 135-136.

<sup>761</sup> George Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 18 April 1925.

Callender, 'the mirror should never have been removed' from 'its proper place, viz. the cabin' on the *Victory*.<sup>762</sup> Gear similarly stressed that her father 'would have been proud to restore the glass to its original place', and that her siblings likewise wanted 'to help restore the flagship to the condition when she went into action'.<sup>763</sup> Both were signalling to Callender that they understood that the objects which had been on board the *Victory* during Trafalgar were integral to its power as a monument. All relics bear tangible witness to the past, but the *Victory* itself was the ultimate relic of Nelson, as the site of his greatest victory, and personal martyrdom.<sup>764</sup> If removing relics weakened the *Victory's* ability to provide this tangible witness, then restoring them improved it.<sup>765</sup> The siblings made very sure that Callender appreciated that they believed that their personal pleasure in owning the mirror came second to the needs of the nation.

It was, of course, relatively easy for Gear and Kerley to claim moral superiority in this scenario. They were offering to donate their mirror free of charge. If it was truly a genuine Nelson relic, then this would have been at considerable financial loss to themselves. They were making a personal sacrifice in accordance with the 'most earnest wish' of 'the intensely patriotic spirit of [their] father.'<sup>766</sup>

It was harder for the families who offered to *sell* their relics to the *Victory* to claim a similar 'patriotic spirit'.<sup>767</sup> 'I can see', SNR member Admiral Ballard commented about the Eyre-Matchams, 'that it is costing the family something of an effort to part with any of these things'.<sup>768</sup> Ballard had approached the Eyre-Matchams about selling their relics to the *Victory*, but without Callender and Hope's knowledge or approval, and now he had to justify his actions.<sup>769</sup> It was

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<sup>762</sup> Ibid.

<sup>763</sup> J. E. Gear to 'Sir', 27 July circa 1923.

<sup>764</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 139-140; Semmel, 'Tangible Past', pp. 10-13; Taithe, 'Franco-British Trafalgar Centenary', p. 61.

<sup>765</sup> Stuart Semmel notes two opposing trends in nineteenth century battlefield relic collecting: the idea that relics should be preserved in situ vs the idea that relics should be removed, collected, and possibly re-fashioned into different objects. We can see the legacy of this debate here. Semmel, 'Tangible Past', p. 29.

<sup>766</sup> George Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 18 April 1925.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid.

<sup>768</sup> Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 8 June 1928.

<sup>769</sup> Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender 12 June 1928; Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 15 June 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

important for Ballard to emphasise the Eyre-Matchams' sense of loss, because this allowed him to claim that the family was 'actuated much more by a sense of public spirit than by any consideration of gain', despite the fact that they expected payment.<sup>770</sup> Kristin Mahoney has found that collectors in this period were very careful to promote themselves as scholarly 'antiquarians' engaged in the pursuit of academic knowledge. Their aim was to protect themselves from being accused of being 'mercantilists': people who supposedly collected art and antiques purely for self-indulgence, financial profit, and to show off their own superior aesthetic taste.<sup>771</sup> In downplaying the Eyre-Matcham family's 'consideration of gain', Admiral Ballard attempted to protect them from similar accusations.<sup>772</sup>

In practice, however, even so-called 'antiquarian' collectors were quite likely to sell at least some of their objects occasionally, and for profit. They identified as being 'connoisseurs' of art and antiques, a label which alluded to their commercial as well as scholarly expertise, namely their familiarity with the art market. They promoted this combined commercial and scholarly expertise in antiques journals such as *The Connoisseur*, in which the same contributor might publish scholarly articles and advertise objects for sale within a few pages of each other.<sup>773</sup> One such connoisseur, R. Lionel Foster, helped Callender to identify, assess, and sometimes buy antiques for the *Victory*.<sup>774</sup>

Meaghan Clarke argues that the female collectors who contributed to these journals faced a greater burden of proof of their ethical and scholarly 'connoisseurship' than their male contemporaries.<sup>775</sup> Compared to their male counterparts, these women had less opportunity to

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<sup>770</sup> Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 8 June 1928.

<sup>771</sup> Mahoney, 'Politics of Collecting', pp. 175-176 & 180. She borrows these terms from Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 153.

<sup>772</sup> Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 8 June 1928.

<sup>773</sup> Mahoney, 'Politics of Collecting', pp. 179-183.

<sup>774</sup> R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender, 13 May 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM; R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender 3 July 1927, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM; R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender, 12 February 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>775</sup> Meaghan Clarke, 'The Art Press at the Fin De Siècle: Women, Collecting, and Connoisseurship', *Visual Resources*, 31 (2015).

become affiliated with academic institutions, and in so doing prove their scholarly credentials.<sup>776</sup> Instead, these women were totally reliant on writing, and networking, to convince others of their scholarly ability, and specialist knowledge.<sup>777</sup> Reputation was everything, and it did not always proceed them. And in Geoffrey Callender, we have an example of the barriers which female connoisseurs were up against in practice.

Callender's interactions with Emily Gatliff Nevill Jackson, who published in *The Connoisseur* under the name 'Mrs Frederick Nevill Jackson', are a good place to begin.<sup>778</sup> Nevill Jackson wrote to Geoffrey Callender several times in 1928 about her 'Nelson Relics'.<sup>779</sup> She claimed that she wanted them 'to go where they should be, in the care of the Nation', and wanted Callender's advice about 'which of the several Nelson Collections' she should offer them to.<sup>780</sup> Which, she asked him, would be better: '(A) the Greenwich Museum', namely the Royal Naval Museum, also under Callender's charge; '(B) the 'Victory' at Portsmouth', or '(C) the [H.M.S] Nelson battleship', as per a recent Navy League appeal?<sup>781</sup> By asking this question, Nevill Jackson attempted to present herself as a patriotic, antiquarian collector: someone who had amassed these objects for public benefit rather than for her own, and who therefore wanted them sent to where they would have the greatest impact. During the heightened nationalism of the Great War period, it became common for connoisseurs to claim to be engaged in a patriotic enterprise to preserve national heritage, and Nevill Jackson seems to have been influenced by this.<sup>782</sup>

Unlike Mr Eyre-Matcham and his 'public spirit[ed]' offer to sell his relics, Emily Nevill Jackson carefully avoided discussing financial details in her early approaches to the SNR.<sup>783</sup> She

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<sup>776</sup> Ibid. p. 15. For how male connoisseurs used academic affiliations to legitimise their collecting, see Mahoney, 'Politics of Collecting', p. 181.

<sup>777</sup> Clarke, 'Art Press', pp. 18-21.

<sup>778</sup> Ibid.

<sup>779</sup> E. N. Jackson to Geoffrey Callender, 14 January 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM; E. N. Jackson to Geoffrey Callender, 28 October 1928, SNR 7/16, SNR Records, NMM; E. N. Jackson to Geoffrey Callender 3 August 1928, SNR 7/16, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>780</sup> E. N. Jackson to Geoffrey Callender, 14 January 1928.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.; 'Nelson Relics. Appeal for Loans or Gifts to H.M.S. Nelson', *Daily Mail*, 27 December 1927, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM; Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>782</sup> Mahoney, 'Politics of Collecting', pp. 191-192.

<sup>783</sup> Admiral Ballard to Geoffrey Callender, 8 June 1928.

pre-emptively reassured Callender that she knew that the SNR had 'no funds ... for the purchase of such treasures'.<sup>784</sup> Instead, she claimed to be contacting them in the hope that they could 'interest some one [sic.] sufficiently' to buy and 'present' these objects 'to the ship' for free.<sup>785</sup> This scheme was theoretically acceptable: the SNR would themselves encourage other prospective sellers to court 'patriotic millionaires' for this very purpose (although Callender privately believed such millionaires to be 'extremely rare beings').<sup>786</sup> And so Nevill Jackson cleverly framed her offer in broadly conventional, and acceptable terms. She claimed to be attempting to give a patriotic philanthropist an opportunity, and so doing downplayed the obvious fact that at least one of her goals was to make a profit.

Geoffrey Callender, however, refused to comply with Nevill Jackson's attempt to divert attention away from the profit she hoped to make for her 'Nelson Relics'.<sup>787</sup> She was, he complained to Admiral Hope, 'a tiresome woman; in commerce, but pretending to be "a gentlewoman interested in saving things for the Nation"'.<sup>788</sup> Yet contrary to Callender's mock-quoting, Nevill Jackson was actually a specialist on antique lace. A small part of her collection had been accessioned into what was then the South Kensington Museum, and is now the V&A.<sup>789</sup> It is true that Nevill Jackson collected in order to make a profit, but it is also true that her collecting facilitated her scholarly research and professional work as a writer. She had claimed to want to place her Nelson relics in 'the care of the Nation' in order to present herself as both an ethical collector, and an ethical dealer.<sup>790</sup> In so doing, she invoked the language of the patriotic philanthropist: the expected occupation of upper class women in this period.<sup>791</sup> It was presumably this that had made Callender believe that Nevill Jackson had attempted to pass

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<sup>784</sup> E. N. Jackson to Geoffrey Callender, 14 January 1928.

<sup>785</sup> Ibid.

<sup>786</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Major E. W. H. Fyers, 24 April 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM; Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, 26 April 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>787</sup> E. N. Jackson to Geoffrey Callender, 14 January 1928.

<sup>788</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930.

<sup>789</sup> Clarke, 'Art Press', pp. 17-18 & 27, note 12. For an example of Nevill Jackson's published writing see Mrs. F. Nevill Jackson, 'The Small Collector', *Connoisseur: An Illustrated Magazine for Collectors*, 26 (1910).

<sup>790</sup> E. N. Jackson to Geoffrey Callender, 14 January 1928.

<sup>791</sup> Riedi, 'Imperialist Women', p. 934.

herself off as a 'gentlewoman', although in reality she had never made any such claim.<sup>792</sup>

Gentlewomen-philanthropists, needless to say, should not be 'in commerce'.

This is not the only example of Callender's bias against female connoisseurs. In 1929 he refused Mrs Benfield-Harbottle's offer to sell him a razor that had supposedly belonged to Nelson.<sup>793</sup> By Callender's estimation, Benfield-Harbottle was 'a commission agent... in touch with dealers and presenting their wares to the notice of her fashionable friends'.<sup>794</sup> This was 'in spite of her somewhat high-sounding name'.<sup>795</sup> And so he once again accused a female relic-seller of deliberately lying about her intentions, her commercial profession, and her social class, and without any real evidence to suggest that she had actually done so. This period stereotyped women as enthusiastic consumers, and so female collectors often faced the presumption that they were motivated more by aesthetic pleasure than by scholarly knowledge.<sup>796</sup> We can see this in Callender's comments about Benfield-Harbottle's 'fashionable friends', who he imagined were frivolously interested in just the acquisition of relics and antiques, and not in their custodianship.<sup>797</sup>

By contrast, Callender avoided making personal remarks about male dealers and auction house agents, even at his most frustrated. 'At the moment', Callender complained after an exchange with Fred N. D. Robertson, of Robertson Ltd., 'people seem to think that anything connected with Nelson will bring them a fortune.'<sup>798</sup> Robertson had offered to sell Callender 'a most interesting relic' which he claimed was 'the Order of the Bath taken from the coat of Lord Nelson after his death at Trafalgar', but, as Callender pointed out, the real Order was on display 'in the Painted Hall' at Greenwich.<sup>799</sup> Callender was exasperated with the sheer volume of

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<sup>792</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930.

<sup>793</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Mrs Benfield-Harbottle, 1 March 1929, SNR 7/19, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>794</sup> Geoffrey Callender to B. Jewell, 25 February 1929, SNR 7/19, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>796</sup> Clarke, 'Art Press', p. 18.

<sup>797</sup> Geoffrey Callender to B. Jewell, 25 February 1929.

<sup>798</sup> Geoffrey Callender to D. F. Evans, 12 July 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>799</sup> Fred N. D. Robertson to Geoffrey Callender, 13 May 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM; Geoffrey Callender to Fred N. D. Robertson, 9 July 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM.

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opportunistic relic sellers like Robertson, but still refrained from accusing Robertson of deliberately lying, even though Robertson's 'relic' was patently false. Emily Nevill Jackson and Mrs Benfield-Harbottle had not been so lucky, despite all three making very similar offers.

Callender found people who tried to sell him unsolicited 'relics' frustrating. But we can also infer that he did not object to men like Robertson being 'in commerce' in and of themselves. He relied, we know, on the commercial expertise of R. Lionel Foster to assess and acquire antiques for the *Victory*, including those offered by Emily Nevill Jackson.<sup>800</sup> And he also trusted that men with commercial expertise could also have scholarly expertise – unlike Benfield-Harbottle and her 'fashionable friends'.<sup>801</sup> Callender held such a high opinion of Foster's scholarly knowledge, in fact, that he invited him to advise the *Victory* Technical Committee on features of the ship's restoration.<sup>802</sup> In Callender's mind, a man could be 'in commerce' and still be the SNR's equal as a patriotic, antiquarian scholar. A woman could not.

The case of Lawrence Feuerheerd proves this beyond all doubt. Feuerheerd was the owner of a 'Dining-Table, Sideboard, and Wine-cooler' which had supposedly been used by Nelson on board the *Victory*.<sup>803</sup> Rather than gifting these objects outright, Feuerheerd had 'deposited [them] on loan' for permanent display 'in their old position' in Nelson's dining cabin.<sup>804</sup> By April 1929, he was actively hunting for a private buyer 'who would purchase the suite' from him 'with the object of presenting it to the ship'.<sup>805</sup> He was even willing, he told Callender, to 'cut one third of the price' for 'the Society' to buy the furniture themselves.<sup>806</sup> The former was exactly the deal that

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<sup>800</sup> E. N. Jackson to Geoffrey Callender, 14 January 1928; R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender, 13 May 1927; R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender 3 July 1927.

<sup>801</sup> Geoffrey Callender to B. Jewell, 25 February 1929.

<sup>802</sup> R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender, 27 October 1926, SNR 7/10, SNR Records, NMM; R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender 10 January 1927, SNR 7/9, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>803</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 15.

<sup>804</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>805</sup> Lawrence Feuerheerd to Geoffrey Callender, 22 April 1929, 1998/6 Box 10 Folder Details of 'Relics, Ship + R.N. Museum', H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>806</sup> Lawrence Feuerheerd to Geoffrey Callender 3 May 1929, 1998/6 Box 10 Folder Details of 'Relics, Ship + R.N. Museum', H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

Emily Nevill Jackson had hoped to broker. But this time, Callender offered assistance, and advised Feuerheerd on 'various ways of raising the money'.<sup>807</sup>

Callender, of course, wanted to do all he could to keep his star objects on display. But he also respected Feuerheerd's position that his furniture was a 'realisable asset', and one which he was obligated to sell for the sake of his 'family interests'.<sup>808</sup> In early twentieth century Britain, men were meant to be wage earners, and women were meant to be financial dependents. Unprecedented numbers of women had entered traditionally male industries during the Great War, and now certain sections of society were going out of their way to reinforce the old status quo.<sup>809</sup> 'I do not think', Callender reassured Feuerheerd, 'that anybody could possibl[y] blame you if you proceeded with the projected sale without further delay'.<sup>810</sup> It might take the SNR some time to consider Feuerheerd's offer to reduce the cost, and given this, Callender considered it perfectly reasonable for Feuerheerd to go ahead with his plan to sell at public auction, where anyone might buy the furniture.<sup>811</sup> He needed to sell, and he was not obliged to wait. Emily Nevill Jackson had been unable to provide a similarly gender-appropriate excuse.

In July, the Daily Express reported that Feuerheerd 'had sold the furniture to an unnamed American'.<sup>812</sup> This was not actually true, but still, the rumour hit a nerve. A distant descendent of Nelson, Beatrice Suckling, was so outraged that she wrote to Callender to express her horror.<sup>813</sup> Britons stereotyped American collectors as 'the worst sort of new money': people who spent exorbitant sums on antiques purely for their own self-gratification.<sup>814</sup> Ethical British collectors were meant to do all they could to prevent British relics from being removed from their country

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<sup>807</sup> Geoffrey Callender to B. Jewell, 25 February 1929.

<sup>808</sup> Lawrence Feuerheerd to Geoffrey Callender, 22 April 1929.

<sup>809</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 99-101.

<sup>810</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, 7 May 1929, 1998/6 Box 10 Folder Details of 'Relics, Ship + R.N. Museum', H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>812</sup> 'Victory Relics to Remain in England', 1 July 1929; 'Nelson Relics for America. Furniture from the Victory. A U.S. Protest', *Daily Express*, 29 June 1929, SNR 7/19, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>813</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 30 June 1929.

<sup>814</sup> Mahoney, 'Politics of Collecting', pp. 189-190.

by mercantilist Americans.<sup>815</sup> Feuerheerd of course, denied these rumours: he was 'devoted... to selling [the furniture] in this country, with a view, if possible, of it remaining on the *Victory*.'<sup>816</sup> He insisted that he was choosing a buyer carefully, and ethically. And Callender believed him. He 'declares,' Callender confidently reassured Beatrice Suckling, that 'whatever may happen' the furniture would 'not be sold in America'.<sup>817</sup>

Callender's support for Feuerheerd's claims occurred despite mounting evidence to the contrary. In early 1929, he realised that Feuerheerd had advertised the furniture for sale in *The Times*.<sup>818</sup> It was still on display on-board the *Victory*, and naval regulations banned commercial activities on board ships.<sup>819</sup> Callender conceded that Feuerheerd had 'acted wrongly', but insisted that this had been 'without intention of malice'.<sup>820</sup> In early May he gave Feuerheerd his blessing to sell the furniture at auction.<sup>821</sup> Feuerheerd continued to enjoy Callender's support, in fact, until Callender was presented with direct evidence that Feuerheerd had turned down an offer from an anonymous purchaser who offered 'a reasonable price'; that Feuerheerd was negotiating with a second potential purchaser in the hopes of selling for an 'exorbitant' minimum of £50000 ('half the cost of restoring the *Victory*' itself); and furthermore had spent '£2000 in America on publicity in the hope of doing a really good scoop'.<sup>822</sup>

Where Feuerheerd had gone too far was in charging an 'exorbitant' price for his relics, although the fact that he had been willing to sell to an American in order to achieve this had not helped.<sup>823</sup> Token sums were acceptable: Callender and Sturdee had been pleased with the Duke of Brontë's offer to sell Nelson's commission certificates for '500£' 'to try & keep them in England',

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<sup>815</sup> Ibid. pp. 190-191.

<sup>816</sup> 'Victory Relics to Remain in England', 1 July 1929.

<sup>817</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Beatrice Suckling, 3 July 1929.

<sup>818</sup> Geoffrey Callender to B. Jewell, 25 February 1929.

<sup>819</sup> Draft Letter, Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, circa May 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>820</sup> Geoffrey Callender to B. Jewell, 25 February 1929.

<sup>821</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, 7 May 1929.

<sup>822</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Rear Admiral Chetwode, 19 May 1930.

<sup>823</sup> Ibid.

even though he might get 'anything up to 1000£ if open to Americans'.<sup>824</sup> Callender also seems to have willingly engaged with Mrs Finney's offer of an 'interesting family relic', a 'Nelson' candlestick, which illness was forcing her to sell.<sup>825</sup> But not even Feuerheerd's paternal duty to provide for his family could justify the £50000 that Callender was told was his goal.

As such, a furious Callender quickly re-evaluated Feuerheerd's actions as 'an attempt to exploit the *Victory*'.<sup>826</sup> Callender had doubts about the provenance of the furniture, and believed that Feuerheerd would try use its display on board the ship 'to prove' to potential buyers 'that it really is Nelson's furniture', and thus drive up the price.<sup>827</sup> He also believed that a shrine to Nelson, nation and empire should not be sullied, 'exploit[ed]', with money-making schemes.<sup>828</sup> As a result, Feuerheerd moved in Callender's estimation from being a 'public spirited', if misguided, ethical collector, to being 'in commerce' alongside Emily Nevill Jackson.<sup>829</sup>

The point is that Callender continued to believe Feuerheerd's claim to be an ethical and patriotic relic owner, despite openly describing his relics as a 'realisable asset', until it was proven that Feuerheerd hoped to make far more than a token profit.<sup>830</sup> Two years earlier, Callender had presumed that Emily Nevill Jackson had been motivated purely by 'commerce', even though she was also an established scholar.<sup>831</sup> It would be wrong to say that Callender refused to believe the academic credentials of any woman, and in fact his future collections team at the National Maritime Museum would include two women, Irene Salway and Caireen Fawcett-Thompson.<sup>832</sup> But misogyny is rarely consistent, and Callender's has been commented on in the past.<sup>833</sup> And it mattered because when Callender considered whether or not to buy relics for his national

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<sup>824</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 19 October 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>825</sup> R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender, 31 October 1927, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>826</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Rear Admiral Chetwode, 19 May 1930.

<sup>827</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>828</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>829</sup> O. Murray to Lawrence Feuerheerd, 30 October 1928, SNR 7/14, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>830</sup> Lawrence Feuerheerd to Geoffrey Callender, 22 April 1929.

<sup>831</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930.

<sup>832</sup> Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>833</sup> Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 183.

collections, he based his decision on his assessment of the seller's behaviour just as much as on his assessment of the relic itself.

### 4.3 Relic provenance and performative authenticity

As a curatorial 'namer', Geoffrey Callender had the power to dictate the conditions under which it was acceptable for collectors to treat their relics as commercial assets.<sup>834</sup> He obviously preferred relics to be donated, but was still happy to engage with relic sellers when he believed that they operated under ethical conditions: namely that they only sold reluctantly, out of genuine need, and only claimed a token fee. Callender did not have the final decision over whether objects were accepted for the *Victory*: this was done by an SNR committee. Still, as the man responsible for presenting these offers to the committee, he had significant influence over the outcome.<sup>835</sup> Collectors who persuaded Callender of their ethical intent were more likely to win his support. And on occasion, Callender's personal opinion of the collector's character strongly influenced which objects were enshrined as national 'relics', and which were not.

When faced with a 'relic' of ambiguous provenance, Callender was more likely to endorse its 'authenticity' if he also believed that its owner was sincere, and ethical. Lawrence Feuerheerd and his *Victory* dining cabin furniture are once again a good example. In 1929, Callender privately warned Feuerheerd that the Council of the SNR believed 'that there was no evidence before them to prove that the furniture was authentic', and that should it come to a public sale, they would take 'no action which could be quoted as certifying any claim to authenticity.'<sup>836</sup> The problem was 'the earlier part of the furniture pedigree'.<sup>837</sup> Feuerheerd had hypothesised that the furniture had been sold in Portugal 'between the conclusion of the battle of Trafalgar and the return of H.M.S. *Victory* to England' in order to explain how his family, who were Portuguese in origin, had

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<sup>834</sup> Taborsky, 'The Discursive Object', pp. 65-67; Pearce, 'Objects as Meaning', pp. 136-139.

<sup>835</sup> Geoffrey Callender to the Misses Girdlestone, 27 November 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>836</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd 25 April 1929, 1998/6 Box 10 Folder Details of 'Relics, Ship + R.N. Museum', H.M.S. *Victory* Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>837</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930.

eventually come to acquire it.<sup>838</sup> Publicly, however, Callender had always endorsed the furniture as being 'the Admiral's': Nelson's without question.<sup>839</sup> He only threatened to 'notify the Press' that Feuerheerd's furniture was not actually 'Victory Furniture' in 1930, after he had begun to question Feuerheerd's ethical intent.<sup>840</sup>

Callender was therefore prepared to endorse a relic with some degree of doubt as to its provenance as 'authentic' in some circumstances, but not in others. His reservations about the origins of the furniture did not actually stop him and the SNR Council from sharing a 'sincere hope that somebody will buy the furniture and once more restore it to the ship'.<sup>841</sup> He continued to work to this goal, even with Feuerheerd's hope of an 'exorbitant' selling price revealed.<sup>842</sup> Christie's auction house, Callender suggested, might be able to offer Feuerheerd an independent valuation to use as 'an equitable basis for negotiations'.<sup>843</sup> And this proved to be a successful tactic, because in June 1930, Joseph Jacobs, an independent donor, bought the furniture from Christie's at a much reduced price, and then returned it to the *Victory* for display.<sup>844</sup> By 2005 National Maritime Museum curator Rina Prentice would include Feuerheerd's furniture in her catalogue of authenticated Nelson relics, albeit with the caveat that they were only 'possibly' sold out of the *Victory* in Portugal by Nelson's steward.<sup>845</sup> The known facts about the furniture's provenance had not changed, but with Feuerheerd's deception removed, and a fair price obtained, Callender once again decided that any uncertainty as to their 'authenticity' was actually at an acceptable level. The public were none the wiser.

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<sup>838</sup> Draft Letter, Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, circa May 1930; Commander H.M. Daniel, 'Nelson Relics. Victory Furniture to Be Sold', *Daily Mail*, 16 May 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>839</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 15; 'The King & Nelson's Furniture. Beginning Made of an Important Task', 28 March 1929.

<sup>840</sup> Draft Letter, Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, circa May 1930.

<sup>841</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd 2 May 1929, 1998/6 Box 10 Folder Details of 'Relics, Ship + R.N. Museum', H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>842</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Rear Admiral Chetwode, 19 May 1930.

<sup>843</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, 26 April 1930.

<sup>844</sup> Rina Prentice, *The Authentic Nelson*. (London: National Maritime Museum, 2005), p. 157. Christie's suggested a reserve price of 'about £1500 to £2000', far below the £50,000 hoped for by Feuerheerd. See: W. G. Perrin to Geoffrey Callender, 25 April 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>845</sup> Prentice, *The Authentic Nelson*, p. 157.

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In fact, Callender would have had to assess a similar degree of uncertainty for almost every relic he was asked to authenticate. Feuerheerd's furniture was only a notable example because of Callender's accusations of 'fraudulent action', and the steps he took to have the furniture removed from the ship.<sup>846</sup> To this day, almost no Nelson relic has a fully-documented record of its provenance. Not even relics owned by Nelson's descendants are exempt, because these families have also purchased relics to add to their collections, and sometimes also commissioned copies of original relics as additional mementoes.<sup>847</sup> And on top of all this, a considerable number of fake Nelson-associated relics were also in circulation in the interwar period.<sup>848</sup>

As such, Callender would have been used to encountering relics with what he termed 'defective' provenance.<sup>849</sup> But he did not consider this to be something that necessarily prevented relics from joining the *Victory* collection, provided that the asking price appropriately reflected his uncertainty. He had been more than happy to accept J.E. Gear's mirror for free, for example, despite no evidence at all that this had actually belonged to Nelson.<sup>850</sup> 'Authenticity' was therefore performative: not solely decided by documented fact, but instead dictated by whether Callender chose to endorse the relics or not.

How did this 'performative' authenticity work? Visitors to the *Victory* had been trained to presume that the objects displayed on board were genuine relics, without question, unless they were explicitly told otherwise. This training had come from several fronts. Traditionally, visitors expect museums to speak with authority.<sup>851</sup> 1920s visitors were particularly used to encountering museum displays which presented information to them as unchallenged 'fact', without reference to debates or ambiguities.<sup>852</sup> And on top of this the SNR had advertised that the restoration would

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<sup>846</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930; Draft Letter, Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, circa May 1930.

<sup>847</sup> Prentice, *The Authentic Nelson*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>848</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 86-89.

<sup>849</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Rear Admiral Chetwode, 19 May 1930.

<sup>850</sup> George Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 12 June 1927, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>851</sup> Shelley R. Butler, *Contested Representations: Revisiting into the Heart of Africa*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 26-28.

<sup>852</sup> Ghislaine Lawrence, 'Object Lessons in the Museum Medium', in *Objects of Knowledge*, ed. by Susan M. Pearce (London ; Atlantic Highlands: Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 103-124 pp. 110-111).

transform the *Victory* into 'the most realistic memorial' possible.<sup>853</sup> This was why Feuerheerd could 'exploit the *Victory*' by attempting to use his furniture's display on the ship to drive up what buyers were willing to pay.<sup>854</sup> If the ship was authentic, then logically, its contents must be also.

The other factor was that objects which were displayed on the *Victory* appeared to have the SNR's scholarly endorsement. Feuerheerd had reportedly put 'much stress upon' Callender's reference to the 'Nelson furniture' in *The Story of HMS Victory* in an attempt to persuade auctioneers to price the set as relics, not as mere antiques.<sup>855</sup> And this meant that when Callender accepted Nelson 'relics' for display, he endorsed them as authentic, irrespective of whether or not he meant to, or of gaps in the evidence. We shall see that Callender's power to do this rested in his status as a historian and a curator, and that as such, he was understood to have expertise rooted in his supposed ability to make informed, scholarly, and empirical judgements based on the evidence at hand.

#### 4.4 Empirical evidence and professional identity

Callender and the SNR claimed to have specialist knowledge of the 'documentary evidence' related to the *Victory's* Trafalgar appearance, and also of the gaps in this evidence.<sup>856</sup> In a letter to *The Times* in early 1922, Callender announced that they would use this knowledge to stop the proposed restoration turning into a 'hasty patchwork or hypothetical reconstruction'.<sup>857</sup> This was 'scientific history': a form of historical practice that claimed that the close study of archival documents could reveal empirical, objective, historical truths.<sup>858</sup> Originally from Germany, 'scientific' history had begun to attract British practitioners by the end of the nineteenth

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<sup>853</sup> 'H.M.S. Victory' statement, signed by Admiral Sturdee, circa 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>854</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Rear Admiral Chetwode, 19 May 1930.

<sup>855</sup> S.T.H. Wilton to Geoffrey Callender, 13 July 1930, 1998/6 Box 11 Book 'Minutes - Letters etc Formation of V.A.T.C.', H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>856</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>857</sup> Ibid.

<sup>858</sup> Smith, 'Scientific History', pp. 1153-1156.

century.<sup>859</sup> Among its practitioners were the Navy Records Society, who published volumes of naval manuscripts, and did so in the hope that this would facilitate their 'scientific' analysis by a range of people, including modern naval policy makers.<sup>860</sup> And the SNR itself had been founded by members of this older society.<sup>861</sup> Callender could justify the SNR's control of the *Victory's* restoration on the basis of their 'scientific' historical expertise, and this same presumed expertise was what gave him his power to authenticate or invalidate relics.

Bonnie Smith has demonstrated that the identity of the 'scientific' historian was closely linked to professional, middle class, masculinity. 'Scientific' historians uncovered empirical 'truths' through peer analysis in the exclusively male environment of the seminar. Discovery of these truths required rational debate, and objective mastery over self-bias, both of which were supposedly masculine qualities. Archival research, with its necessary dedication to the task and often challenging working and travelling conditions, required 'masculine' endurance. Smith shows that 'scientific' historians (who were predominantly male) frequently asserted their professional identities against a female 'other' who they imagined was inherently ill-suited to archive-based work.<sup>862</sup>

We can see this association of 'scientific' expertise with maleness occurring amongst the *Victory* restorers themselves. Admittedly, several women provided logistical support to the restorers, but they almost always did so in an unofficial capacity.<sup>863</sup> An exception was Mrs 'Kenneth' Foster, sister in law of *Victory* Technical Committee member R. Lionel Foster, who was commissioned to make a replica of a set of embroidered hangings believed to have been used on Nelson's cot on the *Victory*.<sup>864</sup> She was, Foster praised, 'a very fine worker'.<sup>865</sup> But there were no

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<sup>859</sup> Ibid. pp. 1154-1156.

<sup>860</sup> Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, p. 17; Lewis-Jones, 'Displaying Nelson', p. 34.

<sup>861</sup> Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, pp. 5-7 & 15-16.

<sup>862</sup> Smith, 'Scientific History'.

<sup>863</sup> Dorothy Harris to Geoffrey Callender, 29 September 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM; Saxon Mills, *There Is a Tide*, pp. 49-50; Nigel J. H. Grundy, 'W.L. Wyllie, R.A.: The Portsmouth Years (Portsmouth Papers)', (Portsmouth: City of Portsmouth, 1996), (p. 18); Admiral Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender, 5 April 1923

<sup>864</sup> R. Lionel Foster to George Hope, 14 May 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>865</sup> R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender, 31 October 1927.

female members of the *Victory Technical Committee*, the group of supposed historical and technical experts who oversaw all plans for the ship's restoration.<sup>866</sup> They might have trusted a woman where textiles were concerned, but they were not going to trust one with the ship itself. Textile-working was an acceptable female hobby. And women often found it easier to claim expertise over decorative arts, including textiles, because of their association with 'feminine' consumerism and aesthetic taste.<sup>867</sup> And in this context Callender's misogynistic distrust of 'tiresome' women 'in commerce' begins to appear partially influenced by the value he placed on 'scientific' historical practice, and the association he made between this and masculine reason and professionalism.<sup>868</sup>

Callender's reputation as a 'scientific' historian was a vital component of the cultural power he wielded as a curatorial 'namer'.<sup>869</sup> We can see this in how he challenged Lawrence Feuerheerd's claim, rooted in family memory, that Nelson's dining table, sideboard, and wine cooler had been sold in Portugal by his steward when the *Victory* docked in Lisbon after Trafalgar:

Even if the *Victory* had visited Lisbon, which her Log shows clearly that she did not, the disposal of Lord Nelson's furniture was governed by his Last Will & Testament which had been deposited with his Solicitor, Mr. William Haslewood of Craven Street Strand. This Will, dated 10 May, 1805, directed that all goods & chattels belonging to him at death, except for the contents of the house at Merton and a few personal gifts of plate &c., should be sold for ease of distribution to the beneficiaries. I mention this again now, because some of the newspapers, perhaps naturally, have inferred that the Instrument dated on board the VICTORY 21 October, 1805, "In sight of the Combined Fleets" & witnessed by Henry Blackwood & T.M. Hardy, was Lord Nelson's Last Will & Testament. It was, as you know, only one of a number of codicils. As in all else that he did, Lord Nelson made elaborate arrangements beforehand for the disposal of his belongings after death.<sup>870</sup>

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<sup>866</sup> George Hope to Geoffrey Callender, 28 May 1928, SNR 7/14, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>867</sup> Clarke, 'Art Press', pp. 16-17.

<sup>868</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930.

<sup>869</sup> Taborsky, 'The Discursive Object', pp. 65-67; Pearce, 'Objects as Meaning', pp. 136-139.

<sup>870</sup> Draft Letter, Geoffrey Callender to Lawrence Feuerheerd, circa May 1930.

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Here, Callender weaponised his extensive, detailed knowledge of a combination of relevant historical documents in order to challenge and disprove Feuerheerd's family tradition. He maintained that it was completely impossible that Feuerheerd's furniture had been Nelson's, and he could prove it with empirical, 'scientific', archival evidence.

The above letter seems to imply that Callender believed that Feuerheerd's furniture had no place on the *Victory*, but we already know this not to be true. His actual goal had been to persuade Feuerheerd to sell his furniture at a significantly reduced price, and this he achieved.<sup>871</sup> Another had been to prevent Feuerheerd from accidentally inflating the prices of other, 'duly authenticated' Nelson relics owned by other prospective sellers to 'exorbitant' levels, and thus prevent Callender from 'secur[ing]' them 'for the ship'.<sup>872</sup> Gaps in the evidence mattered most to Callender when he could use them to lower the asking price.

As such, Callender and his colleagues often used scientific historical analysis to negotiate what they considered to be a fair price for relics. When, for example, the owner of a medicine chest attempted to claim that 'letters' kept inside 'establishe[d] its authenticity' as a genuine Nelson relic, Callender rebuffed him on the basis that said letters 'only show[ed] how constantly the chest ha[d] been loaned to... Exhibitions' [sic].<sup>873</sup> He was able to secure it for just fifty pounds, as a result.<sup>874</sup> When George Simmons attempted to sell the SNR 'a dressing chest that was supposed to have been used by Nelson' (although he '[could]not prove it'), for a sum of 'about £6000', Callender refused.<sup>875</sup> Soon after, Simmons was declared bankrupt, and the SNR secured the chest at auction for just £105.<sup>876</sup> Callender's 'scientific' knowledge gave him a distinct advantage over object sellers, and he used it knowingly, and to the SNR's great financial benefit.

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<sup>871</sup> Prentice, *The Authentic Nelson*, p. 157.

<sup>872</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Rear Admiral Chetwode, 19 May 1930.

<sup>873</sup> Geoffrey Callender to L. W. G. Malcolm, 12 April 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>874</sup> Geoffrey Callender to L. W. G. Malcolm 12 June 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM. Malcolm was Callender's contact at the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, and Callender hoped to persuade this organisation to buy the chest on the SNR's behalf. See: Geoffrey Callender to George Hope 12 April 1930, SNR 7/20, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>875</sup> George Simmons to 'Sir', 22 July 1927, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>876</sup> R. J. Geering to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 25 January 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM; Temple Barton Ltd. To Geoffrey Callender, 23 March 1928, SNR 7/14, SNR Records, NMM.

Clearly, Callender was not above using his reputation of 'scientific' historical expertise to his own advantage. And yet it is also clear that he genuinely believed that he had a professional duty to assess relic authenticity honestly, and that he took this duty seriously. We can see this in how he dealt with William Bond, proprietor of the Royal George Hotel, Knutsford, who in 1928 wrote to inform Callender of the hotel's long-term ownership of 'an old oak carved bureau', which according to local tradition had 'originally belonged to Lord Nelson'.<sup>877</sup>

At first, Callender invoked empirical 'proofs' to deny the authenticity of this supposed Nelson relic.<sup>878</sup> Bond had placed much emphasis on the fact that an inscription on the lock of the bureau, 'H.N. *Victory* 1790', appeared to corroborate the Nelson connection.<sup>879</sup> Callender's 'research', he told Bond, had indeed 'shown... that the "*Victory*" was in commission in 1790'.<sup>880</sup> But 'H.N.' could not have been carved by Nelson, since Nelson was on shore, and living in Norfolk, at this time. He concluded that 'H.N.' must have been carved by one of the 'other officers of the time with the same initials'.<sup>881</sup> And Callender admitted to Bond that he had provided him with this explanation in order to prevent 'a fictitious value' from becoming attached to the bureau which would 'put it at once beyond the [*Victory*] Committee's means.'<sup>882</sup> He was still interested in buying the bureau, provided that it was for an affordable price.

At first glance then, the William Bond episode seems to be another example of Callender deploying his empirical 'proofs' in order to acquire a moderately-priced antique for the ship.<sup>883</sup> But as a 'scientific' historian, making unbiased judgements was a core part of Callender's professional identity. This is obvious because, having denied the bureau's link to Nelson, Callender decided to test his hypothesis with further research, and despite being under no obligation to do so. What he found actually disproved his initial theory. He consulted the '*Victory*'s Muster Books

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<sup>877</sup> William Bond to the Secretary, Nelson Fund, 17 September 1928, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>878</sup> Geoffrey Callender to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 3 July 1928, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>879</sup> William Bond to the Secretary, Nelson Fund, 17 September 1928.

<sup>880</sup> Geoffrey Callender to William Bond, 25 September 1928, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>881</sup> Ibid.

<sup>882</sup> Ibid.; Geoffrey Callender to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 3 July 1928.

<sup>883</sup> Geoffrey Callender to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 3 July 1928.

of that year', but found 'no officer with the initials H.N'.<sup>884</sup> As a result, Callender reassessed the available evidence to form a new 'conjecture', which was that 'the bureau belonged to Lord Nelson in the year 1790; and that he had engraved upon the lock the inscription H.N. 1790; and that the word *Victory* was added at some subsequent date'.<sup>885</sup> This was an act of self-sabotage, in a way. If the bureau was authentic, then the SNR could never afford to buy it. Callender had certainly been guilty of refusing to endorse poorly-documented relics when the price was too high, and then changing his mind when the price was lowered. But the evidence suggests that he was largely unconscious of acting under this bias.

When documentary evidence had failed him, Callender turned to visual analysis to prove his new 'conjecture', namely that the bureau actually had been owned by Nelson.<sup>886</sup> Examining a photograph of the lock sent by Bond at Callender's request [**Appendix A, Figure 15**], Callender found that

Oddly enough the letter 'N' for Nelson and the figure '7' look very much as if they had been written by Nelson himself. The 'N' is almost unmistakable. On the other hand I have never seen an 'H' made by him of the character here depicted. Still we might argue, I think, that H.N. 1790 was scratched on by Nelson himself.<sup>887</sup>

Here, Callender turned to a different kind of empirical evidence: visual analysis, which was associated with connoisseurship and aesthetic expertise. The idea that connoisseurs had a trained, empirical gaze was very influential within art history circles, and had originated with the author Giovanni Morelli in the early nineteenth century. Morelli had argued that each individual artist painted minor features – including hands, ears, and drapery – in a distinct style, and had created a visual 'typology' of these features which he claimed would enable other connoisseurs to identify the artist of any given painting in a scientific manner, and without the need for additional

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<sup>884</sup> Geoffrey Callender to William Bond 29 November 1928, SNR 7/13, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>885</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>886</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>887</sup> *Ibid.*

documentary evidence.<sup>888</sup> When archival research failed Callender, he turned to a similar method of visual analysis and comparison. Except in this case, it was of samples of Nelson's handwriting.

Crucially, Callender remained open with Bond about the inconsistencies he saw in this new visual evidence: the unusual 'H', and the fact that all of the letters of the word 'Victory', apart from the V itself, were 'in a rough kind of copperplate hand, quite unlike any-thing that Nelson could do with his left hand when his flag was flying in the *Victory*.'<sup>889</sup> But he was happy to conclude, nonetheless, that 'Nelson himself' had 'scratched on' at least some of the inscription.<sup>890</sup> Clearly, Callender had confidence in his own ability to judge when inconsistencies did not outweigh the evidence in favour. His professional identity as a 'scientific' historian lay in rationally weighing the evidence, and the case of William Bond's 'Nelson' bureau reveals the extent to which he believed in testing his hypothesis, considering new evidence, and also being open about areas of doubt.

It is notable, however, that Callender applied a much less rigorous empirical gaze when owners were offering to donate, as opposed to sell their relics. Take J.E. Gear's father's mirror, for example. Callender did ask to see a drawing of this before making his decision, presumably because he wanted to verify that it was indeed decorated with Nelson's coat of arms.<sup>891</sup> But this coat of arms was not in itself proof that Nelson had owned the mirror. It had also featured on hundreds of commemorative items produced within his life time, and after it.<sup>892</sup> When Clemence Langford offered to donate a set of glass tumblers to the ship from Australia, SNR Chairman George Hope was sceptical. He told Callender that he was sure that the evidence of a genuine Nelson connection was 'rather weak'.<sup>893</sup> But Hope had also been firmly reminded by Admiral

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<sup>888</sup> Richard Wollheim, 'Giovanni Morelli and the Origins of Scientific Connoisseurship', in *On Art and the Mind: Essays and Lectures*, (London: Allen Lane, 1973), pp. 177-201 pp. 177-186 & 192).

<sup>889</sup> Geoffrey Callender to William Bond 29 November 1928.

<sup>890</sup> Ibid.

<sup>891</sup> John Kerley to Geoffrey Callender, 10 February 1925, SNR 7/7, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>892</sup> Prentice, *The Authentic Nelson*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>893</sup> George Hope to Geoffrey Callender, 19 May 1926, SNR 7/9, SNR Records, NMM.

Brock, Commander-in-Chief of Portsmouth, that in making the offer Langford had 'shewn a spirit' which was 'commend[able]'.<sup>894</sup> Hope and Callender accepted the donation.<sup>895</sup>

We can conclude from this that although Callender cared very much about authenticating relics, he also cared far more about encouraging generous donations, even when the objects themselves were almost useless. Patriotic 'spirit' mattered more than relic authenticity, and especially when relics were offered free-of-charge.<sup>896</sup> The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal had, after all, set out to encourage just this kind of patriotic sentiment amongst white Britons. And so, for collectors hoping to have their objects enshrined with the *Victory* as national 'relics', winning Callender's approval was essential.

## 4.5 Conclusion

As Honorary Secretary of the Society for Nautical Research, Geoffrey Callender was the gatekeeper between relic owners and the *Victory*'s restorers. He could make the case for which objects to accept, and which to reject, before any of his fellow committee members. In so doing, Callender had more power than anyone to decide which objects should be enshrined as national 'relics': whether at the *Victory* or the future National Maritime Museum. Callender was a 'scientific' historian by training, and cared, genuinely, about authenticating relics with empirical evidence. In reality, though, almost all of this evidence had gaps in it, and Callender's role was to decide what significance to attach to these gaps. As such, there was room for negotiation. If owners could convince Callender that they were motivated by ethical, patriotic intent, and that their asking price was justified according to personal circumstance, and in proportion to the evidential gaps, then he was likely to acquire their 'relics' irrespective of any private doubt he may have felt about their authenticity. Callender almost always advertised his doubt about evidence in order to negotiate down a price, not to prevent an acquisition outright.

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<sup>894</sup> Admiral Brock to George Hope, 4 May 1926, SNR 7/9, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>895</sup> George Hope to Geoffrey Callender 10 May 1926, SNR 7/9, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>896</sup> Admiral Brock to George Hope, 4 May 1926.

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As such, Callender placed relic owners under as much, and sometimes more, scrutiny than the objects themselves. Who, exactly, Callender presumed to be an 'ethical' collector was determined by gender, and often, also, by class. 'Scientific' history was a traditionally male and middle class profession, and so women like Emily Nevill Jackson who traded in relics often struggled to convince him that they were scholarly experts, rather than frivolous consumers, and that they were justified in their right to earn a living in this fashion. By contrast, Callender was usually willing to presume the best of male sellers, assuming them to be acting with ethical intent, and motivated by financial necessity; unless, that is, their price was obviously too high. As such, Callender's misogynistic distrust of 'women in commerce' has had a significant, yet mostly invisible impact on which Nelson 'relics' have been preserved in our national collections, and which have not. And as we shall shortly see, Callender and his colleagues had to make a similar set of decisions between cost, aesthetic impact, and empirical evidence when they decided how to preserve the *Victory* itself.

## Chapter 5 Restoration and Ideology

In July 1922, Gregory Robinson, an SNR founding member, wrote to Admiral Sturdee.<sup>897</sup> Three weeks earlier, Sturdee had announced at the SNR's AGM that the Admiralty had granted the society permission to take control of the proposed restoration of H.M.S. *Victory*.<sup>898</sup> The exact details of the scheme were still to be agreed upon. But early reports had disturbed Robinson enough that he felt he had to 'put my feelings with reference to the Victory on paper'.<sup>899</sup>

First as to the question of Restoration.

Her present head and stern are serviceable and presentable and I do not see why they should be pulled down and somebody's idea of what they were at Trafalgar put up, only to find, when all was completed at great cost, that there was some silly error... And if the practical difficulty of getting all correct were overcome, there still remains the question of taste – if we were restoring the Abbey, we wouldn't start by pulling down King Henry VII Chapel because it was later work – I hope we wouldn't.

Her Preservation seems to me another matter ... It seems to me we would be well employed in finding out how best she may be preserved so that she may continue in Service.<sup>900</sup>

As Robinson interpreted it, 'Restoration' meant to partially rebuild the ship in a way that mimicked its appearance at Trafalgar. 'Preservation' meant to make repairs to the ship, but to otherwise keep it in its current state. And mention of the word 'Restoration' had instantly made Robinson worried.

On paper, this is not surprising. Previous research on the British heritage preservation movement has tended to focus on anti-restoration organisations. One of these, the Society for

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<sup>897</sup> Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 6.

<sup>898</sup> Re: this permission, and Sturdee's plans to announce it at the AGM, see: Rear-Admiral Field, comments, Memorandum and Minute D.9981 'Restoration of "Victory" to Trafalgar Rig', 7 June 1922, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew; Admiral Sturdee to Rear-Admiral Field 3 June 1922, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>899</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>900</sup> *Ibid.*

the Protection of Ancient Buildings, has become something of a 'foundation myth' for Britain's preservation sector.<sup>901</sup> As a result, the written history of this sector has traditionally been concerned with how anti-restoration campaigners steadily grew in power and influence from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, and how they slowly shifted British preservation practice away from restoration.<sup>902</sup>

There is good evidence to back up this narrative. In December 1923, Frank Baines, Director of the Office of Works, publicly described 'restoration' as 'an archaistic idolatry'.<sup>903</sup> Baines's department regulated how sites which had been officially scheduled as 'monuments' were used and preserved, under powers set out by 1913 Ancient Monuments Act.<sup>904</sup> As such, he was one of the most prominent figures in Britain's preservation sector at the time of the *Victory's* restoration. He made these comments just six months after restoration work on the ship began.<sup>905</sup> And if the leading figure of the sector spoke out publicly against restoration, then Gregory Robinson's objection to the *Victory's* restoration on the grounds of 'taste' seems very unsurprising.<sup>906</sup> It seems remarkable, in fact, that the SNR and Admiralty decided upon restoration at all.

The British public do not seem to have agreed, however. Gregory Robinson's letter was an anomaly. The *Times* expressed their 'satisfaction' with the news that the SNR planned 'to restore the *Victory* to the appearance she wore when Nelson flew his flag in her'.<sup>907</sup> The *Portsmouth Evening News* hoped that the restoration would allow the ship to 'remain one of the greatest monuments of the nation's naval achievements' and 'for many years'.<sup>908</sup> The *Western Morning News* made supportive comments about it being a public 'duty to see that the vessel is properly

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<sup>901</sup> Miele, 'The First Conservation Militants: William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings', p. 37; Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, p. 27.

<sup>902</sup> Pevsner, 'Scrape and Anti-Scrape'; Miele, 'The First Conservation Militants: William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings'.

<sup>903</sup> Frank Baines, 'Preservation of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 31 (1923), 104.

<sup>904</sup> Champion, 'Protecting the Monuments', p. 43.

<sup>905</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>906</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>907</sup> 'Ships and Memories', *The Times*, 16 June 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>908</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

restored and preserved', and about the SNR's proposal to remove those elements of the ship's 'present superstructure' which were 'of entirely modern character'.<sup>909</sup> These were opinion pieces, but even the factual reports contained in newspapers like *The Morning Post*, *Daily Mail*, and *Lisburn Herald* made no reference to any form of public opposition to the scheme.<sup>910</sup> Perhaps we should conclude, then, that although the British preservation movement was strongly anti-restoration, this position was not shared by the public at large?

This hypothesis fails to account, however, for the fact that the *Victory's* restoration actually appears to have been supported by external preservationists and heritage professionals as well. The Office of Works had no formal jurisdiction over the *Victory*, but they still offered the SNR assistance when the latter realised that restoration work meant that they needed to rehome Nelson's funeral barge, which had been on display on board up to that point.<sup>911</sup> And there are other examples. The anti-restoration Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings offered the SNR information about a supposed '*Victory*' cannon which had been found in a Morden churchyard.<sup>912</sup> L.W.G. Malcolm, Conservator of the Wellcome Medical Museum took responsibility for recreating a medical dispensary in the restored *Victory*, and at Henry Wellcome's expense.<sup>913</sup> There is no evidence that any of the several heritage professionals who offered the SNR assistance made any negative comments about the restoration scheme at any point.

Looking more widely, it is easy to find contemporary examples of British preservationists who *were* involved with restoration schemes. An example is Frank Baines' former teacher Charles Ashbee, who, as a member of the British occupying administration in Palestine, instigated a

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<sup>909</sup> 'Nelson's Flagship. To Be Preserved for All Time. Appeal for £150,000', *Western Morning News and Mercury*, 24 January 1923, p. 8.

<sup>910</sup> 'HMS Victory: Restoration Fund to Be Raised', *Morning Post*, 15 June 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM; 'The Victory: Nelson's Flagship to Remain in Dry Dock', *Daily Mail*, 15 June 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM; 'HMS Victory: Suggestion That It Should Be Erected in London Square', *Lisburn Herald*, 24 June 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>911</sup> Charles Walker to the Ministry of Works, Folder D.14490, 29 September 1923, ADM 116/2340/8, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew; V. W. Baddeley to the Ministry of Works, memorandum, Folder D.14490, 24 October 1923, ADM 116/2340/8, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>912</sup> A. R. Powys to the Secretary of the Admiralty 21 October 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>913</sup> Alan Moore to Geoffrey Callender, 30 April 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 41.

project to restore the city of Jerusalem back to its 'medieval' appearance.<sup>914</sup> Even St Paul's Cathedral was undergoing restoration work in this period.<sup>915</sup> And so it seems sensible to conclude that despite expectation, many Britons accepted, and even welcomed, heritage restoration under certain conditions, even the professionals. The *Victory* is a case study that can begin to reveal what these conditions were, and, in so doing, let us begin to draw a more nuanced picture of British preservation ethics in this period.

This chapter finds that restoration was acceptable provided that it avoided the most common criticisms that preservationists tended to throw at such projects. Gregory Robinson knew what these criticisms were likely to be in regards to the *Victory*: the need to remove historical sections of the ship when they dated from its life after Trafalgar, and the danger of misinterpreting evidence and making 'silly error[s]' at great and unnecessary cost.<sup>916</sup>

Context was also key. The age, condition, and present use of a heritage site all dictated what forms of preservation were held to be acceptable. In this case, the *Victory* was to be preserved as a 'national memorial'; 'a reminder to every Briton of the stirring days during which sea-power laid the foundation of our world-wide Commonwealth'; 'the symbol' of the Royal Navy's role in Britain's 'safety and... power'; and as, Chapter Two in particular explains, as a shrine to Nelson and to imperialist masculinity.<sup>917</sup> The ship needed to be preserved as a working monument, a symbol of the continuous link between the modern Royal Navy and Nelson. And if this were to be an effective, the *Victory* also needed to project the right aura: it needed to look

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<sup>914</sup> Simon Goldhill, 'The Cotswolds in Jerusalem: Restoration and Empire', in *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, C.1800-1940.*, ed. by Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (Oxford and New York: The British Academy / Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 115-145. Regarding Ashbee's tutorship of Baines, see: Michael H. Lang, 'The Design of Yorkshp Garden Village: Product of the Progressive Planning, Architecture, and Housing Reform Movements', in *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City*, ed. by Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 120-144 (p. 130).

<sup>915</sup> Anonymous, 'St. Paul's Cathedral', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 32 (1925).

<sup>916</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>917</sup> L. E. Power, memorandum, in D. 19698, Memorandum and Minute: 'HMS Victory: Preservation Of: Proposal to Place in No. 2 Dock', 3 August 1921, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew; 'H.M.S Victory', *The Times*, circa February 1923, SDEE 1/19/2, Sturdee Papers, Churchill Archives Centre.

historic, and it needed to be aesthetically pleasing. Under conditions such as these, restoration became not just acceptable, but actively desirable.

## 5.1 Heritage preservation: restoration and conservation

Gregory Robinson might have objected to the 'restoration' of the *Victory*, but 'her Preservation' was 'another matter'.<sup>918</sup> He wanted the ship 'preserved so that she may continue in [naval] Service', albeit in dry dock as a ceremonial flagship, and as a venue for naval court martials'.<sup>919</sup> When Robinson called for preservation, then, he called for repairs that would stabilise the structure of the ship without altering its present appearance. Today, we would refer to this as 'conservation'.

Our problem, however, is that in practice, 'restoration' and 'conservation' approaches can overlap considerably. In fact, most preservation projects involve elements of *both* conservation and restoration.<sup>920</sup> It is therefore necessary to unpick what contemporary preservationists considered each of these terms to refer to, and the conditions under which restoration formed a part of normal preservation practice at this time.

Frank Baines is, again, a useful place to begin. Between 1923 and 1924, the RIBA journal published a two-part paper in which Baines laid out what he considered to be best practice in heritage preservation.<sup>921</sup> The first part explained his objection to restoration, which he defined as 'replac[ing]... what is gone'.<sup>922</sup> The second offered examples of previous Office of Works preservation projects to illustrate his preferred methods.<sup>923</sup> Baines accused restorers of obscuring the 'distinct character and individuality of the mediæval constructor'.<sup>924</sup> 'Replicas of ancient work'

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<sup>918</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>920</sup> David A. Scott, *Art: Authenticity, Restoration, Forgery*. (Los Angeles: UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2016), pp. 5-7.

<sup>921</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1'; Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 2'.

<sup>922</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1', p. 104.

<sup>923</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 2'.

<sup>924</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1', p. 104.

could 'have no real historic or archaeological value whatever', no matter how 'perfectly and accurately executed'.<sup>925</sup> A medieval ruin should never be re-built until it was complete again.

Restoring non-ruined structures back to a particular period was also a problem, because this would likely require the removal of later, but still historic, sections of the building. Or, to use Baines's words, the 'removal of such work existing which did not approximate to pre-existing remains'.<sup>926</sup> When Gregory Robinson compared restoring the *Victory* to 'pulling down' the Tudor 'King Henry VII Chapel', from the medieval Westminster Abbey, 'because it was later work', he made the same objection.<sup>927</sup> His choice of analogy is a reminder that British preservationists had been trained to object to 'restoration' in the context of a specific type of project. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had seen a trend in restoring churches and cathedrals back to their 'medieval appearance', often at the expense of features which dated from later periods. The anti-restoration movement had begun as a backlash to this tradition.<sup>928</sup> It is easy to see why preservationists like Baines considered restoration to be 'dangerous', given this history.<sup>929</sup>

Instead, Baines's paper made the case for what he interchangeably termed 'preservation' or 'conservation'.<sup>930</sup> He argued that preservers could intervene with the material structure of a site, but only where necessary to retain 'the building or monument in a sound static condition', and limit future decay.<sup>931</sup> Repairing modern damage was also acceptable.<sup>932</sup> They should not make 'any material addition... or subtraction' from the site otherwise.<sup>933</sup> Conservators today sometimes use an alternative definition of 'restoration', in which they understand this word to refer to any kind of physical intervention, including practices which Baines endorsed as 'conservation' in his case studies, such as reassembling damaged fragments, or adding additional

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<sup>925</sup> Ibid.

<sup>926</sup> Ibid. p. 106.

<sup>927</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>928</sup> Pevsner, 'Scrape and Anti-Scrape'.

<sup>929</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1', p. 104.

<sup>930</sup> Ibid. p. 104 & 106.

<sup>931</sup> Ibid. p. 104.

<sup>932</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 2', p. 170.

<sup>933</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1', p. 104.

material for support.<sup>934</sup> But as Baines used the terms, 'conservation' meant to strengthen an existing structure, while 'restoration', meant to partially re-build it.

Whatever their methods, Baines also warned that preservers 'should aim at some finality' to stop them from 'repeated[ly] return[ing] to the structure' whenever more funds were available.<sup>935</sup> Modern conservators refer to this principle as 'minimum intervention'.<sup>936</sup> The principle stipulates that conservators should subject whatever they are trying to preserve to as small a degree of physical change as possible. But just what level of physical intervention constitutes 'minimum intervention' depends entirely on what is being preserved, and for what purpose. It is therefore also highly subjective, and open to debate.<sup>937</sup>

Restoration could be considered 'minimum intervention', even by preservationists in interwar Britain. It just depended on the context – and likely personal opinion also. We can see this in the pages of the RIBA Journal, which was an important trade publication for the heritage sector.<sup>938</sup> It had published the first of Frank Baines' anti-restoration papers in its thirty first volume, in 1923.<sup>939</sup> The same volume contained a paper by G. Topham Forrest, which celebrated an ongoing project to rebuild the medieval buildings of Ypres, which had been all but destroyed in the Great War.<sup>940</sup> We can infer that the editors considered both approaches to be valid. And even Frank Baines had written approvingly about an Office of Works project to restore an arch at Whitby Abbey which had collapsed under wartime bombing.<sup>941</sup> Restoration could be acceptable, or even highly desirable. It all depended on the context.

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<sup>934</sup> Scott, *Art*, p. 8; Chris Caple, *Conservation Skills: Judgement, Method, and Decision Making*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 119; Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 2', p. 170 & 172.

<sup>935</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1', p. 104.

<sup>936</sup> Scott, *Art*, pp. 4-5; Caple, *Conservation Skills*, p. 65.

<sup>937</sup> Scott, *Art*, pp. 4-5; Caple, *Conservation Skills*, p. 65.

<sup>938</sup> Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, p. 77.

<sup>939</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1'.

<sup>940</sup> G. Topham Forrest, 'The Rebuilding of Ypres', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 31 (1923).

<sup>941</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 2', p. 170.

Take, for example, Baines' case study of Whitby Abbey and its bombed arch. The Office of Works had restored it using the original stonework wherever possible. When it was not, they had filled in gaps with new stone 'shaped to the general outline' of the originals, but which did not try to mimic the decorative carving.<sup>942</sup> The principle, as described by Baines, had been that 'no intelligent observer could do other than perceive accurately what is original work and what is the later work of strengthening and repair.'<sup>943</sup> The technical term for this form of restoration is 'anastylosis', and it is still an important principle within modern conservation work.<sup>944</sup> Baines believed that new material could be added for strength, so long as observers could easily tell that it was a new addition.

The SNR's restoration of the *Victory* took a different approach. Unlike Baines and the Office of Works, the SNR set out to 'restore' the *Victory* as near as possible 'to her condition at Trafalgar', or at least as far as 'money will permit'.<sup>945</sup> They were prepared to remove and replace structurally sound material in order to achieve this vision. Their goal was for the ship to look accurate to Trafalgar, even if much of its actual structure was modern. They claimed to want to 'satisf[y] the critical eye of the naval archaeologist'.<sup>946</sup> As such, the SNR hoped that 'intelligent observer[s]' would *not* be able to tell the difference between new and old.<sup>947</sup> This did not mean, however, that they deliberately lied to the public, who were, after all, allowed on-board to see the restoration in progress.<sup>948</sup>

There were, however, significant differences about the *Victory* as a preservation project that explain this discrepancy. Frank Baines and the Office of Works had no jurisdiction over inhabited buildings, or buildings used for religious worship.<sup>949</sup> As such, Baines' interpretation of

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<sup>942</sup> Ibid.

<sup>943</sup> Ibid. p. 172.

<sup>944</sup> Scott, *Art*, p. 5.

<sup>945</sup> Press release, 'Save the Victory' Fund, undated, circa October 1922.

<sup>946</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>947</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 2', p. 172.

<sup>948</sup> Colin Keay to 'Secretary, HMS Victory Restoration Committee', February 1926, SNR 7/8, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>949</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1', p. 106.

'minimum intervention' had been shaped according to ruined and uninhabited structures, rather than to decaying but substantially complete ones like the *Victory*. And as a working, inhabited structure the ship had already 'underwent a good many alterations' since the end of its active naval service in 1812.<sup>950</sup> Large amounts of ships timbers had been replaced in the 115 years since Trafalgar as part of ongoing repair work, including a major reconstruction between 1813 and 1816. Wooden ships suffer a high rate of decay, and this work had been necessary to keep the *Victory* fit for harbour service.<sup>951</sup> Materially speaking, only a limited amount of 'Nelson's' ship remained. And none of these previous alterations had attempted to highlight the difference between 'strengthening' and 'original work', so there was now little point in the SNR doing the same.<sup>952</sup>

The *Victory's* appearance had also changed considerably since 'Nelson's' day. During the reconstruction of 1813-1816 the ship had been updated with a new round bow. This 'Seppings' bow was more resistant to cannon fire than the previous 'beakhead' bulkhead design.<sup>953</sup> Its wooden masts had been replaced with hollow iron masts in the 1880s to reduce strain.<sup>954</sup> Two of these replacement masts, the main and the mizzen, were now noticeably shorter.<sup>955</sup> A squat nineteenth century museum hut sat on the upper deck.<sup>956</sup> These had all been practical additions, and some of them were over a hundred years old. But to the SNR's Geoffrey Callender, they were 'anachronistic accretions' from which the ship needed to be 'cleansed'.<sup>957</sup> While Frank Baines argued that without due care, restoration could obscure the 'distinct character and individuality of the mediæval constructor', Callender claimed that restoration could recover the original structure from underneath later additions, repairs, and previous inaccurate restoration

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<sup>950</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*, p. 27.

<sup>951</sup> McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*, pp. 14 & 27-30.

<sup>952</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 2', p. 172.

<sup>953</sup> McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>955</sup> Minutes, 'Conference Regarding... Re-Rigging H.M.S. "Victory"', 31 March 1925, ADM 179/62, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew pp. 26-28.

<sup>956</sup> Report, 'The Victory Museum', circa 26 May 1926, SNR 7/9, SNR Records, NMM p. 1.

<sup>957</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

attempts.<sup>958</sup> Although these positions were vastly different, they were also applied to such different contexts that they would not, in practice, actually come into conflict with each other.

We can conclude, then, that interwar preservationists applied different criteria to different kinds of heritage. Historically, the anti-restoration movement had been concerned with protecting medieval architecture. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings would only found a Georgian Group in 1937, fifteen years after the *Victory's* restoration had been announced.<sup>959</sup> For most preservationists in 1922, Victorian modifications to a Georgian ship would not have been worth protecting. More than this, unlike the Office of Work's medieval ruins, the *Victory* was being preserved as a monument to Admiral Nelson, not to the craftsmanship of Georgian shipwrights. The 'heritage' that the SNR wanted to 'possess... for ever', was 'the ship that NELSON knew'.<sup>960</sup> Recreating Nelson's lived environment was far more important to the SNR than allowing visitors to distinguish between Georgian technical skill and modern imitation.

Taken altogether, it is possible to infer that 1920s preservationists believed in the principle of 'minimum intervention', even if they did not necessarily use this exact term. We can also infer that some of them considered restoration to be an entirely appropriate form of heritage preservation in certain circumstances. It depended on the age and physical condition of the site, and also on the reason for wanting to preserve it in the first place. It was justified, in the case of the *Victory*, because the aim was less to preserve historic timbers, and more to make the ship as cosmetically similar to the Nelson period as possible. The bow may have been erected just fifteen years after Trafalgar, but it was so visually different that the SNR felt justified in replacing it with a modern recreation: indeed, this was considered high priority.<sup>961</sup> Altogether, this meant that the SNR could easily justify that restoration was by far the most appropriate form of preservation for both practical and ideological reasons. If Frank Baines and the Office of Works had concerns, they

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<sup>958</sup> Baines, 'Ancient Monuments Part 1', p. 104.

<sup>959</sup> Stamp, 'Conservation Societies', p. 83.

<sup>960</sup> 'H.M.S Victory', circa February 1923.

<sup>961</sup> E. A. Pearce to the Director of Dockyards, 15 March 1923, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew; Admiral Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 17 December 1923 SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM.

did not voice them: and they had contacts within the Admiralty that would have made this easy to do.<sup>962</sup> Perhaps not all preservationists approved of the *Victory's* restoration – but very few of them actively objected either.

## 5.2 Ideology, use, and the monument

As far as the SNR were concerned, to restore the *Victory* back to its 'Trafalgar' appearance was not merely acceptable, but highly desirable. They believed that the nature of the ship as a monument meant that restoration would 'add greatly to the value and interest of the old ship to the nation'.<sup>963</sup> To understand why this is, we must turn to the early debates within the Admiralty, and within the SNR, about the ship's future. They considered a very wide range of suggestions. Almost all agreed that the ship should be preserved as a working monument, a symbol of continuity between modern Royal Navy and the navy of Nelson's day. This made restoration an especially appropriate form of preservation, as we shall see.

Before we turn to these debates, though, we need, once again, to consider their context. The *Victory* was a wooden ship, and as such was already part of an alternative preservation tradition in which restoration was the default practice. Wooden ships are subject to a high rate of decay, and especially when they are waterborne. As such, before the 1920s the *Victory* had already undergone no less than three 'great repairs' (1788, 1800-1803, and 1813-1816), and had been heavily rebuilt each time, and its appearance significantly altered.<sup>964</sup> The SNR also had naval custom on their side. A naval ship, they explained to the public, inherited the 'records & tradition' of all previous ships of that name 'notwithstanding a different hull constructed of wood, iron or

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<sup>962</sup> Charles Walker to the Ministry of Works, Folder D.14490, 29 September 1923; V. W. Baddeley to the Ministry of Works, memorandum, Folder D.14490, 24 October 1923.

<sup>963</sup> Admiral Fanshawe to unknown, circa June 1921, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. *Victory* Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>964</sup> McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*, pp. 14-30.

steel'.<sup>965</sup> Put simply, the *Victory's* custodians believed that the spirit of a ship was not confined to its material structure.

There were other precedents for restoring the *Victory*. One was the phenomenon of sail training ships. Sail training continued to be a popular activity for naval cadets in this period, even though it was now a mostly irrelevant skill for actual naval service. Many sail training ships were restored historic vessels. Nelson's former flagship H.M.S. *Foudroyant* which had been active as a sail training ship in the 1890s, until it had run aground in 1897. In the 1920s, the *Foudroyant's* former owner, Geoffrey Wheatley Cobb, approached the SNR to help him raise funds to restore H.M.S. *Implacable*, another Trafalgar survivor, for the same purpose.<sup>966</sup> The restorers of such vessels needed to have a relaxed attitude towards removing historic material. The structural integrity of the vessel, and its sea-worthiness, were more important than preserving original timbers. This was not without precedent in the heritage sector either, where there is a long tradition of restoring industrial collections back to working condition. Like industrial collections, the heritage value of historic ships lay, in part, in their ability to be used, rather than displayed statically. This fully justified replacing original parts once they had degraded.<sup>967</sup> Traditionally, then, the preservation of historic ships had had very little in common with the Office of Work's static ruins.

In practice, it would have been impossible to restore the *Victory* back into a sea-worthy condition. The cost, estimated at £115,500, was 'so much in excess of the expense of permanently supporting her in dry dock' (£27,000 for supports and repairs), that the Admiralty could not justify

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<sup>965</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The *Victory* and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922.

<sup>966</sup> Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, pp. 35-38 & 41-42. I am also grateful to Alexa Price's paper 'Displaying the Wooden Walls of Old England: The HMS *Foudroyant* as a Monument to Lost Skills and Manhood, 1892-1897' presented at the 'Maritime Masculinities' conference, Oxford, December 2016.

<sup>967</sup> For a summary of the different values which can be attached to heritage, and the need to weigh up the significance of these when making preservation decisions, see: Scott, *Art*, pp. 13-14.

the money.<sup>968</sup> But the above precedents still remained, even with a ship that was to be preserved in dry dock.

The restorers were so committed to the idea that the *Victory* should be restored to working order, in fact, that they came up with a number of elaborate schemes to try and make it appear as though the ship could still float. Could they, for example, display it in Portsmouth Harbour after all, if they adapted a 'Monitor' class ship to act as a cradle? The Admiralty gave this scheme serious consideration despite its elaborate and somewhat bizarre nature. But they were forced to conclude, with reluctance, that the 'most economical', and only practical solution was to keep the ship permanently in No. 2. Dry Dock in Portsmouth Dockyard.<sup>969</sup> Even then, Admiral Calthorpe, Commander in Chief of Portsmouth, wondered whether it would be possible to 'have the vessel partially waterborne' in dock.<sup>970</sup> After all, the *Victory* was Calthorpe's flagship, and until this point no Admiral had ever had a flagship that was unable to float in harbour, even if it was not actually seaworthy. Calthorpe's idea to flood the dock was also turned down on the basis of cost.<sup>971</sup> Nevertheless, these unrealised schemes reveal how important it was to all parties that the *Victory* still gave the appearance of being a working, seagoing ship, even though this was no longer possible.

So far as the SNR and Admiralty were concerned, the *Victory's* continued use by the Royal Navy was an essential part of its status as a monument. 'The Ship serves her purpose as a National Memorial much better in the Harbour than she would in a Dock': so L.E. Power, Director of Dockyards commented when plans to move the *Victory* were first discussed in 1921.<sup>972</sup> SNR

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<sup>968</sup> Admiral Calthorpe to Admiral Phillimore, 10 March 1922, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth; G.E. Suter to the Admiralty, postagram, 1 March 1922, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>969</sup> Captain of Dockyard et al. To the Admiralty, postagram, 23 July 1921, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>970</sup> Note, D.10183, 'List of Repairs Absolutely Required. Other Reasons Than "Fighting and Seagoing Efficiency"', April 1922, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>971</sup> E.M. Barton to the Admiralty, postagram, 18 May 1922, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew; Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, 26 June 1922, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>972</sup> L. E. Power, memorandum, in D. 19698, Memorandum and Minute: 'HMS Victory: Preservation Of: Proposal to Place in No. 2 Dock', 3 August 1921.

member Alan Moore feared that moving the *Victory* into dry dock would put it in danger of 'cease[ing] to be a ship of H.M. Navy', and becoming 'a museum specimen'.<sup>973</sup> Admiral Calthorpe offered similar comments.<sup>974</sup> The SNR's Gregory Robinson reminded Callender that the ship had always been found 'honourable uses', despite the fact that it had not actually left Portsmouth Harbour in 150 years, except for maintenance work.<sup>975</sup> It had been a flagship for much of this time, as well as a floating barracks, signal school, training ship, and a court martial venue.<sup>976</sup> Most of these were fairly mundane tasks that could have been performed as well, if not better, by either a shore establishment, or by a newer ship. The Admiralty had no practical reason to keep the *Victory* in use anymore, but the symbolic power of doing so more than made up for this.

'The *Victory*, in spite of her venerable age, still connects the Nelsonian Navy with the Navy of today of steel and steam', declared journalist and SNR member Archibald Hurd in a newspaper column in 1922.<sup>977</sup> 'It would be a thousand pities if this association were broken'.<sup>978</sup> Final decisions about the ship's future were yet to be made. Like other commentators, Hurd advocated for the *Victory* to remain at Portsmouth 'at some point overlooking that historic anchorage', and the assembled naval fleet, allowing it to 'still act as the flagship of the Commander-in-Chief of the port'.<sup>979</sup> Hurd was a committed navalist, so it is not a surprise to see him arguing that the *Victory's* most important function was to symbolise, through location and use, that the modern Royal Navy still carried Nelson's legacy.<sup>980</sup> This was more important to Hurd even than the *Victory's* status as an imperial monument, and he rejected an alternative proposal that 'the ship should be brought to London, the Mecca of the British Empire', despite the 'thousands of people of the English-speaking race' - white 'Britisher's' from around the Empire - who would have more opportunity

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<sup>973</sup> Alan Moore to Geoffrey Callender, 19 June 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>974</sup> Admiral Calthorpe, comments, Folder D.3931, 'Victory: Payment for Admission', 2 March 1923, ADM 116/2340/5, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew.

<sup>975</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>976</sup> Lavery, *Nelson's Victory*, pp. 174-178.

<sup>977</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>978</sup> Ibid.

<sup>979</sup> Ibid.

<sup>980</sup> Redford, 'Collective Security', pp. 53-54.

to visit the ship if it were there.<sup>981</sup> Hurd's comments illustrate why it was that so many of the restorers vocally objected to the *Victory* being decommissioned and turned into a civilian 'museum.'<sup>982</sup> They feared it would lose its power as a symbol of continuity between Nelson and the modern Royal Navy.

Navalists like Hurd had good reason to want to promote the idea that the modern Royal Navy had inherited Nelson's legacy. The interwar navy had suffered a series of challenges to its public reputation. It had succeeded in blockading the German High Seas Fleet in harbour during the war, but had failed to win almost any clear, decisive victories.<sup>983</sup> The only large scale battle of the Great War had been Jutland in 1916, and the outcome of this had been ambiguous enough that both Britain and Germany had attempted to claim it as a victory.<sup>984</sup> Meanwhile, the British public had been trained to expect large scale, conclusive battles like Trafalgar.<sup>985</sup> Now that the war was over, the Royal Navy had to prove that it was still relevant, and also that it was cost effective.

With the end of the Great War, the Royal Navy's budget, and also fleet size, came under threat from several corners. These included the Washington Treaty of 1922, which limited the number of battleships and aircraft carriers that Britain was allowed to maintain; 'the extreme air and submarine advocates' (to use SNR President Admiral Sturdee's words) who insisted that these technologies were more cost effective than traditional battleships; and a government who, having made 'financial stringency' their watchword, were looking for excuses to drastically reduce naval spending.<sup>986</sup> Don Leggett argues that navalists saw the *Victory* as 'a dependable icon of naval strength' which could encourage public confidence in the Royal Navy in the face of these

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<sup>981</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>982</sup> Admiral Calthorpe, comments, Folder D.3931, 'Victory: Payment for Admission', 2 March 1923.

<sup>983</sup> Rürger, *Great Naval Game*, pp. 257-258.

<sup>984</sup> Leggett, 'Restoring Victory', pp. 63-64; Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 1*, pp. 233-234.

<sup>985</sup> Leggett, 'Restoring Victory', pp. 63-64.

<sup>986</sup> Sturdee, 'The Importance of Battleships, Cruisers, and Suitably Placed Bases for Maintaining the Overseas Communications', p. 629; memorandum, 'Question of the Future of the "Victory": Memorandum for the Board by the Controller' 3 March 1922, ADM 116/2340/2, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew; Rose, *Power at Sea : Volume 2*, pp. 26-30 & 36.

anxieties.<sup>987</sup> And this influenced how the SNR chose to preserve the ship. 'The real point of the whole thing', Admiral Sturdee privately maintained, was that 'we will have to fight again'.<sup>988</sup> And making the *Victory* 'the most representative ship of Nelson's time', would 'help the sentiment of the Navy.'<sup>989</sup> Promoting a sense of continuity between old and new was important, and it extended even to preservation decisions.

It was this, more than anything, which made restoration the most desirable method of preserving the *Victory*. Merely keeping the ship in use was not enough. The restorers wanted to emphasise to the public that the ship came 'out of the past'.<sup>990</sup> Sturdee and Callender discussed the importance of making sure that the *Victory* give visitors 'a sort of feeling of awe from their unfamiliar surroundings', and their fears that this had been made harder now that the ship was in the dockyard as opposed to in harbour.<sup>991</sup> The Romantic movement of the eighteenth century had idolised ancient ruins: viewing them as something which provided a tantalising glimpse into the past, while also emphasising its distance and mystery.<sup>992</sup> The *Victory's* restorers wanted to create a similar effect, except that their monument was *not* a ruin. There is a difference between 'an indescribable atmosphere reminiscent of the past' – words used by the Hampshire Telegraph to describe the ship after the restoration – and something which just looks old fashioned.<sup>993</sup> And without restoration which removed its more-distinctively nineteenth-century features, the ship risked being 'disappointing' even to 'uninformed visitors', at least in the opinion of Archibald Hurd.<sup>994</sup> Restoration might ruin the ability of the 'ancient monuments' cared for by the Office of Works to inspire awe, but it would materially help the *Victory*.

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<sup>987</sup> Leggett, 'Restoring Victory', pp. 64-65.

<sup>988</sup> Minutes, 'Conference Regarding... Re-Rigging H.M.S. "Victory"', 31 March 1925, p. 29.

<sup>989</sup> Ibid. pp. 29-30.

<sup>990</sup> Screen titles, 'The Immortal Story of H.M.S. Victory', circa 1923.

<sup>991</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM;  
Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 15 September 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>992</sup> Semmel, 'Tangible Past', p. 15.

<sup>993</sup> 'The Navy at Work', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 1 August 1930, p. 5.

<sup>994</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

And finally, of course, the SNR claimed that without restoration, Nelson himself would have been disappointed. 'There was little enough for Nelson to recognise', Callender reminisced in 1929, 'had he come aboard to investigate it'.<sup>995</sup> The *Victory's* power as a relic rested in its tangible connection to Nelson.<sup>996</sup> It had been the site of his greatest glory, and martyrdom. It had also been his home. And so restoring the *Victory* improved visitors' ability to imagine themselves 'walk[ing on] the very planks which Nelson trod', and looking around at surroundings 'that Nelson knew'.<sup>997</sup> To be an effective navalist monument, a satisfying symbol of continuity between Nelson and the modern navy, the ship needed to look the part.

### 5.3 The restoration in practice: priorities and compromises

The SNR may have claimed that they wanted the ship to be 'as representative, as realistic and as archaeologically correct' to its Trafalgar appearance 'as possible', but in practice, this was difficult to achieve.<sup>998</sup> Admiral Sturdee's dilemma was this: on the one hand, he believed that 'the Public' wanted the ship to be restored 'as far as possible as she was in Nelson's time'.<sup>999</sup> But on the other, 'there is one way of doing that and one way of economising with the money'.<sup>1000</sup> He was specifically talking about the ship's rigging here, but this was emblematic of the wider problem. Although the SNR may have in theory wanted to rebuild the ship to its exact 'Trafalgar' appearance, in practice, they had finite resources to do so. As such, what they prioritised for 'archaeologically correct' restoration, and what they did not, can tell us a great deal about their understanding of what, exactly it was that would make the ship feel as though it came 'out of the past'.<sup>1001</sup>

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<sup>995</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 8.

<sup>996</sup> On relics as tangible links to the past, see: Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 135; Semmel, 'Tangible Past', p. 10; Lowenthal, *Foreign Country*, pp. 389-395.

<sup>997</sup> 'Portsmouth's "Navy Week"', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1930, p. 4; 'H.M.S. Victory. Progress of the Work on the Famous Old Ship', *Shields Daily News*, 14 August 1925, p. 5.

<sup>998</sup> Minutes, 'Conference Regarding... Re-Rigging H.M.S. "Victory"', 31 March 1925, p. 30.

<sup>999</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>1000</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1001</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30; Screen titles, 'The Immortal Story of H.M.S. Victory', circa 1923.

Despite the fact that the ship was supposed to be restored as close to its Trafalgar condition as possible, there are several examples of occasions where the SNR compromised. The majority of the ship's guns were wooden replicas, the water pumps were purely decorative and not designed to work, as were the bundles in the rigging which mimicked furled sails.<sup>1002</sup> The restorers also allowed a certain number of very un-Trafalgar-like modern fixtures for the comfort of the ship's permanent crew, including electricity, running water, and, in the officer's cabins, heating.<sup>1003</sup> Admiral Sturdee's warning about economy in 1925, above, had encouraged his colleagues to agree to recreate the ship's standing rigging in steel wire, instead of in hemp, which was historically accurate but expensive.<sup>1004</sup> Admiral Phillimore had made the same suggestion in 1921, when he had drawn up the initial restoration proposal on behalf of the Admiralty. Wire rigging, Phillimore argued, was a perfectly acceptable compromise. 'We must face the fact', he wrote, 'that, even to the Navy of the present day, the existing rigging of the "VICTORY" is of almost antiquarian interest'.<sup>1005</sup> Financial costs, as well as the ship's weakened structure, made such compromises inevitable.

Most of these compromises caused the SNR no great concern. The wire rigging, however, was a source of great and ongoing discomfort. Work was due to begin in 1926, until several members of the SNR's Victory Technical Committee put in a last minute objection. Their change of heart seems to have been triggered by the realisation that the ship's hull 'would not be able to bear the strain' of wire rigging if it had been woven to be as thick in circumference as the traditional hemp. And if the wire rigging was too thin, it would, they complained, 'give the ship a character quite at variance with Trafalgar usage' in a way that dummy cannon and electric lighting

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<sup>1002</sup> Admiral Fremantle to the Admiralty, 23 December 1924, ADM 179/62, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew; Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; V. W. Baddeley to Geoffrey Callender, 29 June 1926, SNR 7/8, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1003</sup> C.K. Bampton to Chief of Staff, 4 April 1922, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>1004</sup> Minutes, 'Conference Regarding... Re-Rigging H.M.S. "Victory"', 31 March 1925, pp. 29-34.

<sup>1005</sup> Admiral Phillimore to Admiral Calthorpe 4 May 1922.

apparently did not.<sup>1006</sup> We can therefore infer that the SNR only really required materials to be strictly accurate when they believed that 'uninformed visitors' might notice the difference.<sup>1007</sup>

Why did the SNR have so much anxiety over rigging when they had compromised so easily elsewhere? The case made by Geoffrey Callender and George Hope, now Chairman of the society after Sturdee's death the previous year, was that 'the appearance of a ship depends even more on her rigging than on her hull', at least 'to the lay mind', and this made visually-inaccurate rigging 'difficult to justify'.<sup>1008</sup> They believed that for the *Victory* to be an effective monument, they had to prioritise the restoration of features that they felt the public strongly identified with the era of Nelson's navy. Rigging, we must conclude, had a powerful romantic value.

Sailing ships were almost obsolete by the early twentieth century. Naval training had not formally included sail training since 1903, twenty years earlier.<sup>1009</sup> But at the same time, sailing ships provoked a strong sense of nostalgia. A growing number of societies, galleries, and authors romanticised the sailing navy as a 'lost' era in Britain's history, and dedicated themselves to capturing and preserving it.<sup>1010</sup> It was tied up in the popular imagination with the expansion and defence of empire: it was the 'the wooden walls of old England without which there would have been no Greater Britain', to quote Archibald Hurd.<sup>1011</sup> And sailing ships were also an important symbol of the courage, strength, and adventurous spirit of historical British sailors. These qualities formed part of a 'rugged' manly heroism which navalist writers claimed represented the 'strength' of Britain's navy as a whole, an idea which had first been triggered during the intense imperialist rivalries of the 1890s.<sup>1012</sup> Nothing demonstrated the courage and strength of the ordinary British sailor more than their ability to climb and handle rigging. It was emblematic of Britain's glorious

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<sup>1006</sup> George Hope and Geoffrey Callender to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 August 1926, SNR 7/10, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1007</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>1008</sup> George Hope and Geoffrey Callender to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 August 1926; 'Obituary. Sir Doveton Sturdee. The Victory of the Falklands', circa May 1925.

<sup>1009</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p. 132.

<sup>1010</sup> Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>1011</sup> Hawke's Bay Navy League, specimen letter, 'an Appeal to the Schoolchildren of Hawke's Bay from the Navy League', 18 May 1923.

<sup>1012</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 13 & 142-147.

naval past, and therefore an essential element of the *Victory's* power as a monument.

'Archaeologically correct' rigging, as a result, mattered more than historically-correct lighting when it came to giving the ship an aura of coming 'out of the past'.<sup>1013</sup>

Of course, interventions which were made for 'archaeological' reasons were also made for aesthetic ones.<sup>1014</sup> One of Callender and Hope's key objections to the use of 'wire rope for the new standing rigging', was that 'from both the historic and the artistic points of view a very great part of the value of the restoration will be lost'.<sup>1015</sup> Callender had previously claimed that the ship's Victorian 'anachronistic accretions' detracted 'from her value and her beauty'.<sup>1016</sup> The SNR had similarly branded the old Victorian museum hut on the main deck an 'ungainly edifice'.<sup>1017</sup> And as we know, Archibald Hurd had claimed that the unrestored ship was visually 'disappointing' to visitors **[Figure 6]**.<sup>1018</sup> Meanwhile, the restorers also maintained that restoration would give the ship 'all her old beauty'.<sup>1019</sup> In 1921, when the ship was still in harbour, Admiral Phillimore had longed to restore its 'beautiful bow', if funds allowed.<sup>1020</sup> Beauty and 'archaeological' accuracy became almost interchangeable. No restored feature of the ship, in fact, was ever implied by the SNR to be visually unattractive. 'Beauty' became a way of justifying visual 'accuracy' – and vice versa. For the *Victory* to be a satisfying monument, it had to embody both qualities.

Beauty is subjective, but our criteria for what is or is not 'beautiful' is also trained by cultural precedent. Admiral Sydney Fremantle, then Commander in Chief of Portsmouth, had a clear sense in his head of the 'characteristic feature[s]' of eighteenth century sailing ships, which he had 'learn[t] from... looking at prints and that sort of thing'.<sup>1021</sup> One such feature was 'the main

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<sup>1013</sup> Minutes, 'Conference Regarding... Re-Rigging H.M.S. "Victory"', 31 March 1925, p. 30; Screen titles, 'The Immortal Story of H.M.S. Victory', circa 1923.

<sup>1014</sup> Minutes, 'Conference Regarding... Re-Rigging H.M.S. "Victory"', 31 March 1925, p. 30.

<sup>1015</sup> George Hope and Geoffrey Callender to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 August 1926.

<sup>1016</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>1017</sup> Report, 'The Victory Museum', circa 26 May 1926, p. 1.

<sup>1018</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>1019</sup> W. L. Wyllie to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, circa April 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1020</sup> Admiral Phillimore to Admiral Calthorpe 4 May 1922.

<sup>1021</sup> Minutes, 'Conference Regarding... Re-Rigging H.M.S. "Victory"', 31 March 1925, p. 28.

mast', which should be 'distinctly higher than the fore mast'.<sup>1022</sup> This was certainly not true of the *Victory's* current iron masts.<sup>1023</sup> Fremantle was no historical expert, but the visual impression left by these images coloured his opinion of what should be prioritised for restoration, and how. And he was not alone, because there was no inherent quality in the *Victory's* later bow which made it 'disappointing' [Figure 6], or in the 1805 bow to make it 'beautiful' [Figure 7].<sup>1024</sup> Most visitors would not have noticed the difference. But the SNR themselves were more familiar with historical images of the *Victory* than the average member of the public, and as such, the current bow was disappointing to *them*, and had to be replaced.



Figure 6 Symonds & Co., 'Ships of the Royal Navy' (H.M.S. *Victory* pre restoration). Photograph, 1909. Image © IWM (Q 40455), Imperial War Museums. <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205022150> [ Accessed 11/08/2016].

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<sup>1022</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1023</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1024</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; Admiral Phillimore to Admiral Calthorpe 4 May 1922.

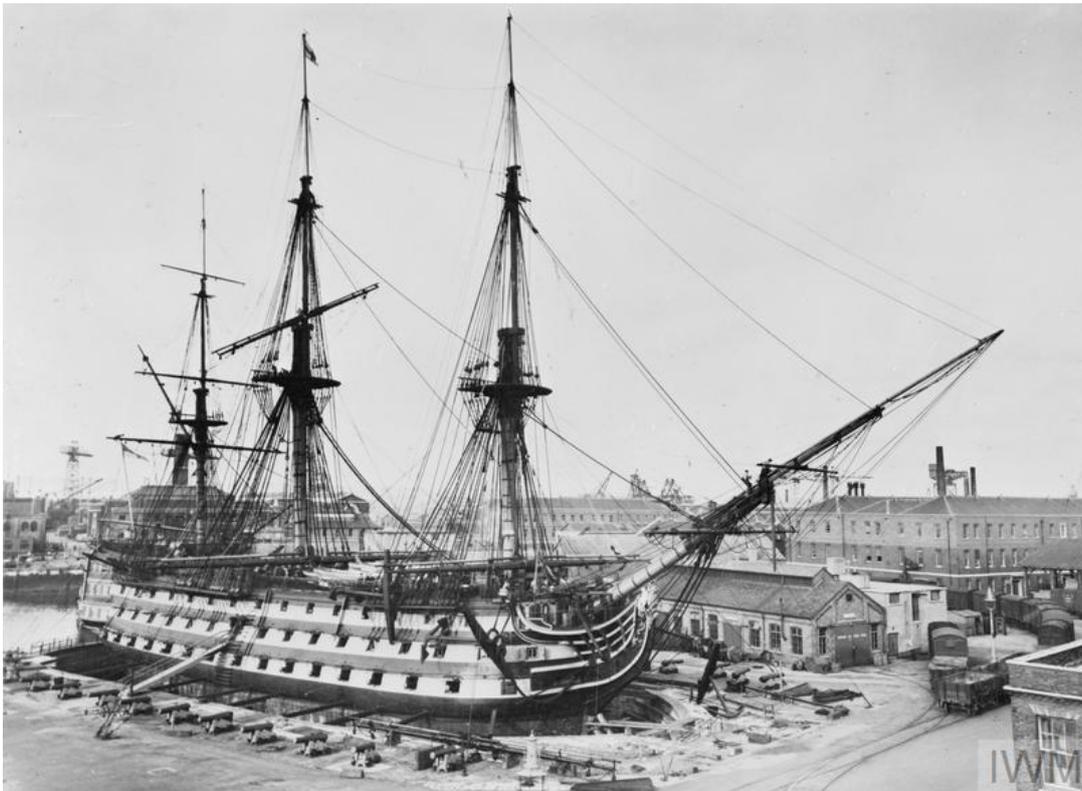


Figure 7 Admiralty photographer, 'Nelson's flagship gets back her pre-war rig' (H.M.S. *Victory* post-restoration). Photograph, 1945. Image © IWM (A 30810), Imperial War Museums. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205016245> [Accessed 26 July 2019].

Maritime art had trained the restorers to expect that a 'beautiful' ship looked a certain way, and this included the setting. They expected their 'beautiful' ships to be afloat, and with the waterline some way below the lower gun ports. They were deeply unhappy to discover, then, that once it had been installed in dry dock, very little of the *Victory's* sides were visible. Worse, the ship was resting on a slant, with the bow over two feet lower in dock than the stern.<sup>1025</sup> There is a story, probably apocryphal, that King George V was so disappointed when he saw how low the ship sat in the dock that he issued a personal instruction that the restorers should 'get her up'.<sup>1026</sup>

<sup>1025</sup> Note, 'copy of para of private letter from Sir P. Watts dated 1/8/23 respecting "Victory"', circa 4 August 1923, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. *Victory* Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>1026</sup> For example McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*, p. 31; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 30. This story seems to originate from Bugler, *Buildng, Restoration, Repair*, p. 40. Bugler had worked on the original restoration at the beginning of his career as a shipwright, and it seems probable that he heard this story from dockyard gossip.

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And regardless of the truth of this story, the SNR certainly believed that raising the ship would improve 'the beauty of... [its] appearance'.<sup>1027</sup>

They claimed, too, that raising the ship in the dock would 'give a proper reproduction of the ship at Trafalgar'.<sup>1028</sup> The plan was to raise the ship until the dock wall was at a similar height to where the ship's waterline would have been, had it been at sea.<sup>1029</sup> But if historical accuracy had truly been the most important consideration, then the restorers would have left the ship in its natural position in the dock. And this also would have been significantly easier, cheaper, and *safer*, because in order to raise the ship, the dock had to be flooded, and the ship re-floated so that divers could add extensions to its supporting cradle. The process then had to be repeated two further times.<sup>1030</sup> The dockyard engineers had concerns, but were forced to bow to the 'very strong feeling' of the SNR's restoration 'Committee', and of 'several distinguished Naval Officers', that the procedure should go ahead.<sup>1031</sup> Aesthetics overruled almost all other considerations when it came to deciding how the ship should be preserved, and displayed.

For the ship to be an effective monument, visitors had to be suitably impressed by its appearance. Successful propaganda, after all, requires emotional impact.<sup>1032</sup> Both the SNR, and the wider British public, had been trained to expect sailing ships to look a certain way: a 'beautiful' ship was one with its sides clearly visible, and with its masts in place. These things added to the physical strain on the ship, but the benefits outweighed the risks. So when the SNR prioritised certain features of the ship for restoration, and claimed that they did so for 'accuracy', this decision had actually been influenced heavily by what they had been trained to think of as 'beautiful', and also vice versa. Features that they considered to be 'beautiful' tended, as well, to

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<sup>1027</sup> 'Saving the "Victory". Work of the Nautical Research Society', *Lloyd's List*, 27 May 1926, SNR 7/8, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1028</sup> Admiral Sturdee to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 25 May 1923, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>1029</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1030</sup> McGowan, *HMS Victory: Her Construction, Career and Restoration*, p. 31.

<sup>1031</sup> Philip Watts to G.E. Suter 6 April 1923, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>1032</sup> Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, p. 121.

feature prominently within popular nostalgia for the sailing navy – such as hemp rigging - and therefore also within the navalist propaganda which capitalised on this nostalgia. And this, of course, is another reason why restoration seemed to the SNR to be the best way to preserve the *Victory* as a monument.

## 5.4 Records and evidence

For both the Admiralty and the SNR, an effective, ‘beautiful’ historic monument was one which was as ‘archaeologically correct as possible’.<sup>1033</sup> Given this, what role did actual historical evidence play in deciding how the *Victory* was restored? ‘As possible’ was the key phrase here. Just as the SNR would have to compromise on materials, they also had to lower their standards for ‘accuracy’ when the records themselves were incomplete. The SNR’s Gregory Robinson had predicted this problem when he had warned Callender about the possibility of ‘silly error[s]’, should restoration go ahead.<sup>1034</sup> Robinson’s concern had been justified. The best possible source for the *Victory*’s ‘Trafalgar’ appearance would have been the plans drawn up for its ‘Great Repair’ completed during 1803, except that these plans could not be located.<sup>1035</sup> The *Victory* papers held at Chatham Dockyard, where the ship had been built, had also gone missing (indeed, the plans may have been among them).<sup>1036</sup> And aside from these missing plans, restoration would have always required a certain degree of artistic licence. Technical plans would not have included smaller, but still important details, such as the decorative scheme in Nelson’s cabins, for example.<sup>1037</sup> The SNR had to be able to justify to the public, and to themselves, that restoring the ship was worth the very real risk of ‘silly error[s]’.<sup>1038</sup>

<sup>1033</sup> Minutes, 'Conference Regarding... Re-Rigging H.M.S. "Victory"', 31 March 1925, p. 30.

<sup>1034</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>1035</sup> Constructive Drawing Office to Mr Noble, 11 June 1923, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. *Victory* Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth; Admiral Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 24 July 1923 SNR 7/3, SNR Records, NMM; Lavery, *Nelson's Victory*, p. 103.

<sup>1036</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>1037</sup> The SNR took the question of what colours to paint the ship’s interiors very seriously. See: C.N. Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 12 January 1927, SNR 7/9, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1038</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

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Geoffrey Callender had, in fact, pre-empted Robinson's concerns. In January 1922, he acknowledged the missing Chatham documents in a letter published in the *Times*. He wanted to reassure readers that 'nothing in the nature of hasty patchwork or hypothetical reconstruction should be attempted' until the documents were 'forthcoming'.<sup>1039</sup> In so doing, Callender insisted that the restoration would have a specific and achievable end point, and also that 'silly error[s]' were not going to happen because the restoration would be firmly based in historical evidence.<sup>1040</sup> The previous year, Admiral Sturdee had been ready to turn down the SNR's offer that he become their new President. He had been reluctant to take responsibility for 'the restoration of the *Victory*', until Callender had reassured him that 'the Society had all the necessary drawings'.<sup>1041</sup> In hindsight, this had been an extremely overconfident statement. Still, Callender was aware of the criticisms that could be levelled against restoration, and he was determined to counter them. He was therefore very careful about how he explained evidence gaps to the public.

Despite Callender's calming public words, the SNR's *Victory* Technical Committee inevitably found themselves arguing over whether or not the remaining evidence gave them sufficient information to justify going ahead with restoration. Without the 1803 plans, they had to gather information from alternative sources. These included contemporary prints and drawings of the *Victory*, plans and models of different but contemporary ships, and also a model of the *Victory* itself, made by its architects prior to the construction of the real ship.<sup>1042</sup> None of these could recover exact technical information in anything like the same detail as the lost plans.

The problem came to a head in July 1923, a month after restoration work had begun.<sup>1043</sup> Initial plans for the restoration had been drawn up by *Victory* Technical Committee chair Phillip

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<sup>1039</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>1040</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>1041</sup> Admiral Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 24 July 1923

<sup>1042</sup> J.H. Matthews to Mr Davies, 23 June 1923, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. *Victory* Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth; 'Restoring the *Victory*: Progress of the Work', *The Times*, 13 April 1925, SNR 7/7, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1043</sup> Restoration work officially commenced on 1 June 1923. See: 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

Watts, fellow SNR member Harold Wyllie, and the Constructive Department at Portsmouth Dockyard.<sup>1044</sup> Watts was a celebrated naval architect – the designer of the *Dreadnaught* – and a retired Director of Naval Construction.<sup>1045</sup> This did not mean that his plans were universally embraced. The problem, the historian L. G. Carr Laughton complained, was that although ‘the information collected’ by Watts and Wyllie about the *Victory’s* Trafalgar appearance probably went ‘very near to the truth’, at least ‘in essentials’, ‘it lack[ed] the authority of official papers, and may be incomplete.’<sup>1046</sup> Laughton insisted that the SNR must conduct a thorough search of the Admiralty Records, and was prepared to resign from the committee to reinforce his point.<sup>1047</sup>

Admiral Sturdee was furious to find that Geoffrey Callender agreed with Laughton’s suggestion of a further search. Callender had reassured Sturdee some months previously that the SNR had already found all of the necessary records. So ‘what’, Sturdee questioned Callender, ‘are the ones you think Laughton can find?’<sup>1048</sup> Sturdee felt lied to. He feared that incomplete or ambiguous sources made it more likely that the ship could end up as just ‘somebody’s idea’ of what it was ‘at Trafalgar’, as Gregory Robinson had warned.<sup>1049</sup> Laughton had successfully made his case, and was duly paid to conduct his search.<sup>1050</sup> And even Phillip Watts, who disagreed with ‘some of the conclusions’ of Laughton’s work, was willing to admit that being able to say that the restorers had ‘made a thorough search through the Admiralty Records’ had ‘value’.<sup>1051</sup>

As such, the restorers faced a fundamental dilemma. It was important that they avoid a ‘hasty’ or ‘hypothetical reconstruction’, but once work had begun in practice they found themselves under pressure to make decisions in a timely fashion.<sup>1052</sup> ‘The work having been

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<sup>1044</sup> Manager, Constructive Department to Admiral Superintendent, 18 July 1923, SNR 7/3, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1045</sup> Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 32.

<sup>1046</sup> L. G. Carr Laughton to Philip Watts, 17 July 1923, SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1047</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1048</sup> Admiral Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 24 July 1923

<sup>1049</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>1050</sup> Admiral Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 31 August 1923 SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM; L.G. Carr Laughton: ‘H.M.S. "Victory": Report of Search’, circa September 1923 SNR 7/3, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1051</sup> Philip Watts to Geoffrey Callender, 16 October 1923, SNR 7/4, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1052</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

started must not be obstructed', Sturdee noted to Callender, 'but we [must] at the same time be sure that... [we are] restoring the ship to her 1803 status' or at least 'so far as it is known'.<sup>1053</sup> Conservators and restorers can only decide how to preserve something using the facts available to them at the time.<sup>1054</sup> The *Victory* Technical Committee might have delayed the project for Laughton's Admiralty research, but they could not delay indefinitely, or on the off-chance that additional evidence might yet be discovered in unlikely places. The most important thing, as Laughton had told Watts, was that 'outside critics' could not 'point to discrepancies in the work done with information in the official records'.<sup>1055</sup> And so even though the SNR had hoped to restore the ship with total accuracy, they had to settle for making decisions that were merely probable, but not definite, 'accurate' in that they could not easily find contradictory evidence within time constraints.

A certain amount of uncertainty over the accuracy of the restoration was therefore inevitable. But the SNR could have avoided this, at least in part, if they had chosen to restore the *Victory* back to a different date. They had access to the original sheer plan of the *Victory*, which dated from the start of its construction in 1759, 'now in a somewhat fragmentary state', but still more than they had for 1803.<sup>1056</sup> They also had access to detailed plans of the ship made in 1830, just twenty five years after Trafalgar.<sup>1057</sup> Either would have allowed the SNR to remove several of the ship's 'disappointing' Victorian features, and recover its feeling of historical 'awe'.<sup>1058</sup> In Boston just a few years later, the custodians of the USS *Constitution* would do something similar when they decided to base their own ship's restoration on the period for which they held the most detailed plans, which in their case was the 1850s. The *Constitution* was actually revered in

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<sup>1053</sup> Admiral Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender 24 July 1923

<sup>1054</sup> Scott, *Art*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>1055</sup> L. G. Carr Laughton to Philip Watts, 17 July 1923.

<sup>1056</sup> Illegible signature, D.N.C. Department to W. J. A. Davies, 9 February 1922, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth; E. A. Pearce to the Admiral Superintendent, Portsmouth, 12 July 1921, 1998/6 Box 1 Folder C, H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>1057</sup> E. A. Pearce to the Admiral Superintendent, Portsmouth, 12 July 1921.

<sup>1058</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 15 September 1922.

America for its role in the war of 1812.<sup>1059</sup> Perhaps the SNR had greater confidence in their ability to find alternative sources than the *Constitution's* restorers. Or, equally likely, they believed that the ideological power of presenting the ship as 'at Trafalgar' made restoration back to 1805 a risk worth taking.

In essence, restoration, with its associated dangers of mistakes, external criticism, and costs, was justifiable because it allowed the ship to stand as a visually satisfying monument to the Battle of Trafalgar, and to Horatio Nelson. Trafalgar represented the beginning of the so-called 'Pax Britannica', a period of British dominance at sea that lasted until the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>1060</sup> And it was 'in virtue' of its 'sea power', Archibald Hurd claimed, that Britain's empire 'ha[d] achieved so much in the spread of civilisation'.<sup>1061</sup> More than any other period, then restoration back to 'Trafalgar' emphasised that the *Victory* was symbolic of the Royal Navy's role in building, and defending, the British Empire.

Even more importantly, restoration as 'at Trafalgar' would allow the ship to be more 'fittingly preserved as a lasting memorial' to Admiral Nelson.<sup>1062</sup> 'If the success of the "Save the Victory" Fund should enable her to be restored to the exact state in which she fought at Trafalgar', Leo Amery, First Lord of the Admiralty wrote in early 1923, 'she will... constitute a magnificent memorial to our great naval hero, without an equal in this or any other land'.<sup>1063</sup> Nelson was an exemplar of 'Anglo-Saxon' masculinity, and specifically of the 'chivalric' heroic virtues of duty, piety, and self-sacrifice.<sup>1064</sup> For Archibald Hurd, the *Victory* would 'always be associated with Nelson's crowning victory and his death'.<sup>1065</sup> And in the eyes of right wing activists like Hurd, Nelson's example was also a valuable tool by which they could reassert respect for duty

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<sup>1059</sup> Charles E. Brodine, Michael J. Crawford, and Christine F. Hughes, *Interpreting Old Ironsides: An Illustrated Guide to USS Constitution*. (Washington: Naval Historical Center, 2007), pp. 83-84.

<sup>1060</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p. 20. On Trafalgar as the start of this 'peace', see: Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>1061</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy', p. 6.

<sup>1062</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

<sup>1063</sup> L. S. Amery to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 12 February 1923.

<sup>1064</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>1065</sup> Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922.

and traditional order amongst Britain's working class. 'No one, whatever his trade or calling, can tread the deck of this ship without gaining... fresh inspiration for the battle of life.'<sup>1066</sup> And so the *Victory's* restoration back to its 'Trafalgar' appearance, despite gaps in the evidence, was justified by popular commemoration of Nelson as an exemplar of heroic, British masculinity. For the SNR, it felt justified, as well, because encouraging this public worship of Nelson and Trafalgar suited their personal navalist and anti-socialist political agendas. The most important thing was that no one could actually prove that the SNR had got it wrong. And under these conditions, restoration became not just defensible, but - at least to some - highly desirable.

## 5.5 Conclusion

At first glance, the fact that HMS *Victory* was restored as 'at Trafalgar', and with minimal objections from either the public or from preservationists, seems astonishing. Gregory Robinson, a founding member of the SNR, was vocally against the idea. The preservation sector was dominated by figures like Frank Baines, who publicly campaigned against heritage restoration. And yet Robinson was an anomaly. Anti-restoration organisations like the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings did not publicly endorse the *Victory's* restoration, but there is also no evidence that any of them raised any objection either. In fact, some of these bodies even assisted the *Victory* restorers in a minor capacity. We must conclude that the specific conditions of the *Victory's* restoration made the project at least broadly acceptable to most preservationists. For some, including the ship's custodians themselves, these conditions made restoration highly desirable. It is clear, as a result, that the British preservation sector had a much more nuanced relationship with restoration than it is usually given credit for.

The age and condition of the *Victory* were important factors. Restoration, the SNR claimed, revealed the ship's 'archaeological' accuracy underneath Victorian and twentieth century additions. Very few preservationists at the time were actively interested in protecting architecture

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<sup>1066</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

from these periods. There was also precedent, because historic sailing ships had tended to be preserved in a working state wherever possible, and some degree of restoration was essential for this. Even Gregory Robinson had agreed that the *Victory* should ideally be restored back to working order (although not to its 'Trafalgar' appearance).<sup>1067</sup>

But what it came down to was the rationale for preserving the ship in the first place. The *Victory's* custodians wanted it to be an awe-inspiring monument that would encourage visitors to see continuity between the modern naval fleet and its historical glories. Without restoration the ship just looked out of date, but with restoration it looked as though it came 'out of the past'.<sup>1068</sup> The restorers hoped that it could inspire the British public to campaign against further cuts to the present Royal Navy. They believed, as well, that a ship that was 'historically' accurate was also more aesthetically beautiful, and this was another reason why restoration would transform the ship into a more emotionally-stimulating monument. And, lastly but most importantly, restoration back to the ship's 'Trafalgar' appearance would turn it into *Nelson's* ship once more: a monument to his sacrifice on behalf of the nation, and his apotheosis from mortal man to national hero. Restoration improved the ship's tangible connection to Nelson, and this was vital since, as the final chapter explores, the ship was not just a monument, but a shrine to white male sacrifice. To the SNR, this overruled all other considerations, even the missing 1803 plans.

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<sup>1067</sup> Gregory Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 4 July 1922.

<sup>1068</sup> Screen titles, 'The Immortal Story of H.M.S. *Victory*', circa 1923.

## Chapter 6 ‘Giggling girls flirting in Nelson’s own cabin!’: gendering the H.M.S. *Victory* visitor experience

Leo Amery was ‘delighted’ when HMS *Victory* was moved permanently into dry-dock, from Portsmouth Harbour, in January 1922.<sup>1069</sup> Amery was the current First Lord of the Admiralty under Andrew Bonar Law’s Conservative government. It was now February 1923, and he was writing to the SNR’s Admiral Sturdee to offer his official congratulations.<sup>1070</sup> ‘The numbers, particularly of young people, that have been on board of her since she was placed in dock have, I believe, surpassed all records’.<sup>1071</sup>

Visitors had always been able to tour the ship in harbour, but the fact that it could only be reached by hiring a row boat meant that ‘many... could not visit her when she was in the stream’.<sup>1072</sup> Now, however, the ship was ‘accessible’: free to visit, in the centre of Portsmouth, and directly next to Portsmouth Harbour train station.<sup>1073</sup> By the early 1930s, post-restoration, the ship averaged 1000 visitors a day, rising to 2000 in the summer.<sup>1074</sup> In Navy Week 1930, 2,500 visitors were reportedly shown over the *Victory* in the first two and a half hours of opening.<sup>1075</sup> Amery’s comments about ‘young people’ reveal that this surge of public interest began even before restoration work started.<sup>1076</sup> And it is also a reminder of the importance which the restorers placed on inspiring British youths. As we know from the opening chapter, this was a popular imperialist sentiment but in this case carried distinctly anti-socialist overtones.

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<sup>1069</sup> L. S. Amery to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 12 February 1923; Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>1070</sup> L. S. Amery to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 12 February 1923.

<sup>1071</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1072</sup> Ibid.; Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>1073</sup> L. S. Amery to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 12 February 1923; The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 30.

<sup>1074</sup> This average was for the years 1928-1932. ‘Restoration of the Victory. Over £100,000 Spent on the Ship’, *Western Morning News and Mercury*, 7 July 1932, p. 8.

<sup>1075</sup> ‘Portsmouth’s Navy Week Records. Distinguished Visitors’, *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 8 August 1930, p. 14.

<sup>1076</sup> L. S. Amery to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 12 February 1923.

In practice, however, greater accessibility was not always conducive to the SNR's propagandist goals. 'How shocked I was at the irreverence of the crowds', an incensed Geoffrey Callender reported to Admiral Sturdee a few months later.<sup>1077</sup> Some of the behaviour that he had witnessed, he told Sturdee, had been 'nauseating'.<sup>1078</sup> Worst of all, in Callender's opinion, had been the 'giggling girls' whom he had found 'flirting in Nelson's own cabin!' <sup>1079</sup> Note that his ire was focussed on these young women, and not on their unnamed accomplices, which later remarks in this letter imply were probably their Royal Marine guides (unless, of course, the young women had been flirting with each other). Why, exactly, was Callender so scandalised by 'giggling girls'? And why, given the SNR's desire to engage young people, did he not consider their obvious enjoyment to have been a good thing?

Other chapters have commented on Callender's misogyny. It would, however, be a mistake to gloss over this incident as 'just' misogyny. Callender's upset over these young women actually speaks volumes about how, exactly, he hoped to curate the ship. He and his colleagues wanted visitors to experience the *Victory* as 'a lasting monument to the memory of the greatest seaman of all ages- Lord Nelson', a 'memorial' to heroic 'self-sacrifice', and as a 'shrine of manly virtues' more generally.<sup>1080</sup> The ship was also to be a celebration of Nelson's death as a patriotic and Christian act, albeit a celebration that partially acknowledged the horrors of war, and demanded a reverential tone. It was also to be a pilgrimage site, and the restorers made a conscious effort to encourage visitors to interact with it accordingly. And as such, Callender's hostility towards these 'giggling girls' also indicates how he expected visitors to behave when they were on-board, but also the heavily gendered nature of his expectations. And these things were linked, as well, to the supporting role which Callender and his colleagues imagined for historical white women in the

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<sup>1077</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1078</sup> Ibid.; The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 30.

<sup>1079</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1080</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 6; Archibald Hurd, 'Nelson's Flagship, Saving "The Victory"', circa 16 June 1922; 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

Trafalgar story, be they Emma Hamilton, Nelson's mistress, or the unnamed women who had actually lived and sailed on the ship.

Masculinities are always constructed in relation to femininities.<sup>1081</sup> And so to curate the *Victory* as the 'shrine of manly virtues', a celebration of male sacrifice, stoicism, and moral virtue, Callender and his colleagues had to present the ship as an environment in which women did not belong.<sup>1082</sup> The proper role for women, they believed, was to support male imperialist endeavour from afar. In person, women threatened to divide sailors' loyalties, and offered the possibility of sexual distractions from their duty. As such, reserved women were welcome to visit the *Victory*. 'Giggling girls' were not.

## 6.1 Creating the pilgrimage

To understand why Callender was so put out by a group of young women enjoying themselves, we have to understand how he had *planned* for visitors to experience the ship, and the reasoning behind this. In this period, Callender effectively acted as the *Victory's* curator, albeit in an unofficial capacity. As the SNR's Honorary Secretary and resident Nelson expert, all decisions about how the ship was managed, and displayed to the public, came through him. And his encounter with the 'irreverent' crowds triggered discussions between him and his fellow *Victory* custodians about how they could train visitors to show at least 'some reverence to the memory' of Nelson.<sup>1083</sup> Today, museum professionals collectively refer to all methods of educating and influencing visitors as 'interpretation'.<sup>1084</sup> Callender and his colleagues might not have used this term, but they certainly used all of the strategies that it implies, and consciously.

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<sup>1081</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 2; Francis, 'Domestication of the Male', p. 638 & 652; Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity', p. 500.

<sup>1082</sup> 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>1083</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender, 11 September 1922, SNR 7/2, SNR Records, NMM; Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 15 September 1922.

<sup>1084</sup> Marcella D. Wells, Barbara H. Butler, and Judith Koke, *Interpretive Planning for Museums: Integrating Visitor Perspectives in Decision Making*. (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2013), p. 38.

It is not possible to fully recover the content of the 'interpretation' designed by the SNR. It is equally difficult to judge how these messages were received by visitors, who came with their own prior-knowledge and personal experiences, and were not guaranteed to respond in the way that the SNR had intended.<sup>1085</sup> Nonetheless, enough evidence survives to be able to draw some general conclusions. Most visitors were shown around in small groups by marine guides; and although we cannot recover the exact content of these tours, we do know that following the above incident the SNR were very insistent that they be vetted for their accuracy and 'respectful' tone.<sup>1086</sup> We also have access to the *Victory* guidebook, originally drafted by Gerrard Wells, a Navy Captain, in 1927, but 'improved' by Callender and co. in 1928.<sup>1087</sup> This is a particularly valuable source for the information which Callender *hoped* that his visitors would take away from the ship (given that visitors who bought the guidebook did not necessarily read it cover to cover). These things were obvious ways to encourage visitors to draw particular conclusions about the *Victory* itself, and about the people (and especially the men) who had lived and died there.

First, though, we should consider the one part of visiting the *Victory* that no one could escape: the environment itself. Even this could be manipulated by Callender and the SNR, at least to some extent. And we shall see that they considered how visitors interacted with the interior of the ship to be just as important in inspiring 'reverence to the memory' as any other means of instructing visitors.<sup>1088</sup>

What Callender and the SNR wanted most from the *Victory* crowds was for them to treat their visit to the ship as a sacred pilgrimage, not as an everyday tourist experience. The language of pilgrimage was embedded in the SNR's press campaign before visitors even arrived at the ship. Readers of the *Times* heard that the ship had narrowly avoided the 'impious sacrilege' of being

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<sup>1085</sup> Taborsky, 'The Discursive Object', p. 67.

<sup>1086</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender, 11 September 1922.

<sup>1087</sup> Gerard Wells to George Hope, 5 May 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM; Geoffrey Callender to Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, Circa October 1928, SNR 7/14, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1088</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to Geoffrey Callender, 11 September 1922.

sold to ship breakers in the nineteenth century.<sup>1089</sup> Historic artefacts offered for display on the ship were referred to as 'Nelson Relics', and in official paperwork, as well as in the press.<sup>1090</sup> This language filtered out to supporters: David Dighton, a Daily Mail reporter, described the *Victory* as a ship that was 'sacred' as well as 'historic' in a private letter to Callender.<sup>1091</sup> Other newspapers directly referred to *Victory* visitors as 'pilgrims'.<sup>1092</sup> As defined within museology, a 'pilgrimage' does not have to be a religious act. Rather, it is an experience that is undertaken with the expectation that it will be in some way transformative to the individual in question.<sup>1093</sup>

*Victory* 'pilgrimages' may not have been strictly religious, but they were nonetheless concerned with the worship of Nelson as a model Christian imperialist hero. During Navy Week 1932, the Bishop of Portsmouth officiated over a communion service on board, during which he 'recall[ed] Nelson's last words, "Thank God I have done my duty"', and 'spoke in moving terms of the fervent spirit of the great Admiral'.<sup>1094</sup> The 'fervent spirit' in question was one 'of service to God, King and country', of which, he claimed, Nelson was the country's 'best and highest' exemplar.<sup>1095</sup> The *Victory* was a space in which Nelson's piety, sense of duty, and acts of self-sacrifice were to be praised. Less admirable episodes, such as his passionate support for the Atlantic slave trade, were conveniently forgotten.<sup>1096</sup>

Worship of the righteous Christian warrior-hero was rooted in Victorian nostalgia for medieval codes of chivalry. This valorised warfare, and the idea of the just warrior, and therefore helped to reinforce Victorian belief that their rapidly-expanding empire was a progressive force,

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<sup>1089</sup> Geoffrey Callender, Letter to the Editor, undated, circa January 1922.

<sup>1090</sup> Frank Chilton to Captain Gerard Wells, 18 October 1927, ADM 179/62, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew p. 424; 'Nelson Relic Bought by the Queen', *The Times*, 16 August 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1091</sup> David Dighton to Geoffrey Callender, 23 October 1929, SNR 7/17, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1092</sup> 'Victory's Pilgrims. Touching Quarter-Deck Incident. 15,000 Visitors'; 'Victory's Pilgrims. Touching Quarter-Deck Incident. 15,000 Visitors'.

<sup>1093</sup> Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and the Challenges of Representation*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2014), pp. 183-184.

<sup>1094</sup> 'Our Portsmouth Searchlight. Service on the Victory', *West Sussex Gazette*, 4 August 1932, p. 10.

<sup>1095</sup> 'Public at Worship on the Victory. Navy Week Innovation', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 01 August 1932, p. 2.

<sup>1096</sup> Petley, 'Royal Navy', pp. 129-130.

rather than a jingoistic one.<sup>1097</sup> It had come back into vogue during the Great War, a time when mass conscription coupled with an unprecedented number of casualties gave immediate resonance to the idea that piety, duty, and self-sacrifice were the most important heroic virtues.<sup>1098</sup> Such hero-cults gave random and tragic deaths meaning by turning them into acts of Christian martyrdom.<sup>1099</sup> When the SNR and their supporters publicly linked Nelson's death to his faith, and sense of patriotic duty, they did likewise. It is fitting, then, that the *Victory* guidebook strongly implied that Nelson's death had been a somewhat willing act, in which he 'gave up his life content that he had done his duty.'<sup>1100</sup> So: to visit the *Victory* was to go on a pilgrimage to the site of Nelson's death, willing sacrifice, and martyrdom. At least, that was Callender and his colleagues' intention.

Of course, the 'irreveren[t]' crowds which Callender had witnessed in 1922 indicated to him that many visitors were not actually experiencing their visit as the transformative pilgrimage which he had planned.<sup>1101</sup> He wondered about introducing 'a charge per head' to ensure that visitors were more likely to be genuine Nelson enthusiasts rather than causal tourists: 'essential', he told Sturdee, for 'the preservation of decency'.<sup>1102</sup> But the problem was not just the ship's new accessibility. When the *Victory* had been in harbour, Callender mused, 'the very act of being pulled out to the *Victory*' in a rowboat had left many visitors overwhelmed by their 'unfamiliar' environment.<sup>1103</sup> They had arrived ready to be impressed. How, then, could he begin to recreate this effect with the ship in dry-dock?

Callender had to accept that his visitors would now have a less awe-inspiring journey to the ship. But he could now control their journey through it: their route, what they saw on it, and

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<sup>1097</sup> Paris, *Warrior Nation*, pp. 21-25.

<sup>1098</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 164-166.

<sup>1099</sup> For the continued popularity of the heroic trope of the Christian imperialist 'martyr' during the Great War, see: *ibid.* pp. 170-171.

<sup>1100</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 19.

<sup>1101</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1103</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee 15 September 1922.

aspects of the environment itself, such as the lighting. He created a ‘choreographed passage’ (to borrow Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich’s term): a route that forced the majority of visitors to interact with the space in a particular, pre-meditated, way.<sup>1104</sup> A plan made for King George V’s official visit to the ship in 1928 is an excellent indicator of Callender and his colleagues’ preferred route for tour parties to take [Appendix One, Figure 16].

This route made sure that a visit to the *Victory* was bookended by the two spaces that marked the two most important episodes in the narrative of Nelson’s death.<sup>1105</sup> These were ‘ritual-architectural’ events, moments of interaction between visitors and the space which establish a site’s meaning and significance.<sup>1106</sup> In a museum context, these might be points where the design of the space can encourage visitors to engage in certain types of behaviour or emotional responses.<sup>1107</sup>

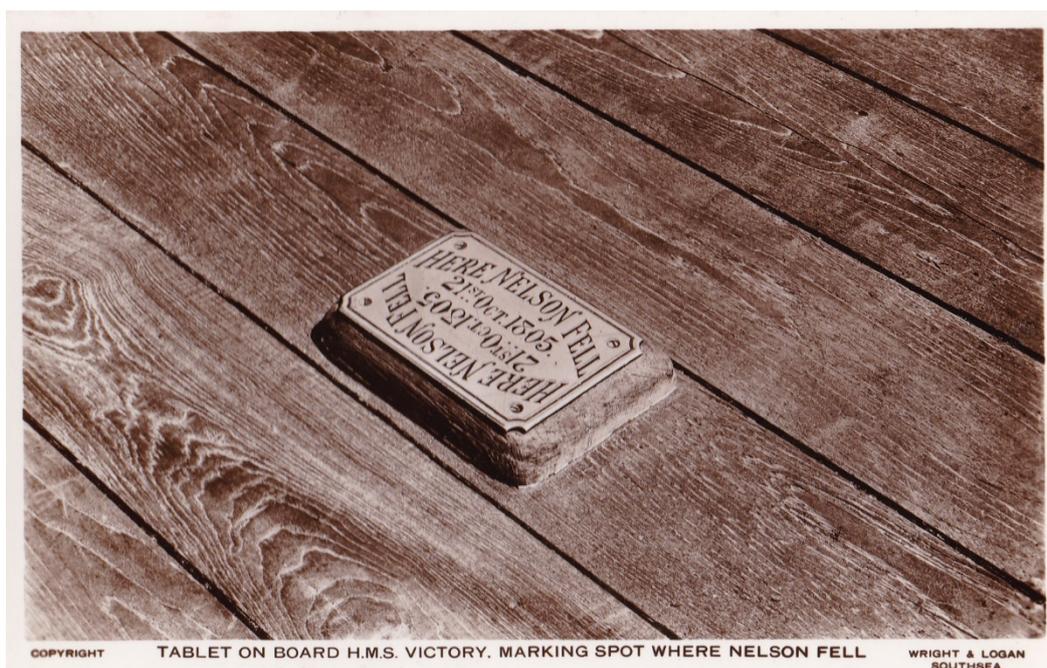


Figure 8 Wright & Logan, ‘Tablet On Board H.M.S. Victory. Marking Spot Where Nelson Fell’. Postcard, interwar period. Author’s own collection. Use of image courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

<sup>1104</sup> Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>1105</sup> Diagram of route for King George V’s visit to H.M.S. Victory, circa July 1928, SNR 7/16, SNR Records, NMM. Please note however that this document is presumed to have been disposed of during rationalisation of the SNR archive in 2017 (Susan Gentles, personal communication, 08 October 2019).

<sup>1106</sup> Lindsay Jones, ‘The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: A Reassessment of the Similitude between Tula, Hidalgo and Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Part I’, *History of Religions*, 32 (1993), 213-217.

<sup>1107</sup> Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, p. 185.

A pilgrimage to the *Victory* began with contemplating the site where Nelson had been fatally shot: the first stage of his death. After arrival through the entry port on the Middle Gun Deck, visitors were immediately channelled up two ladders onto the open air quarter deck: the site where, less than an hour and a half into the battle, Nelson had been hit in the shoulder by a musket ball that had collapsed his lung, and broken his spine.<sup>1108</sup> Here, in the middle of the deck, was a small plaque inscribed 'Here Nelson Fell' **[Figure 8]**. This plaque was deliberately unprepossessing. The Admiralty had wanted it to 'be enclosed by "Victory" oak curbing, stanchions and rails', until Admiral Sturdee had told them that to do so would be 'a desecration' of 'the revered spot'.<sup>1109</sup> This was not, in Sturdee's opinion, the place for ostentatious shrines, indeed to have one would be 'deafeating th[e] aim' of 'restor[ing] her to the condition in which she was... on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1805'.<sup>1110</sup>

Still, visitors were meant to notice the plaque. The guides made a point of showing it to their visitors.<sup>1111</sup> The guidebook listed it as the principle feature of the deck.<sup>1112</sup> And in 1923, Sturdee sent *The Times* a letter about a man who 'on reaching the quarter deck and beholding for the first time the place where Nelson fell... dropped upon his knees' and 'gave expression to prayer and thanksgiving that his pilgrimage had ended happily', while other visitors looked on, respectfully.<sup>1113</sup> This man was an unusual case, if a welcome one that was taken by Sturdee as 'very great tribute' to the SNR's work.<sup>1114</sup> Sturdee's letter illustrates, though, that contemplating the plaque was meant to be an affective experience – to provoke an emotional reaction. It shows, as well, that at least one visitor had been overcome by appropriate feelings of awe and veneration.

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<sup>1108</sup> Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, 9566-9573 & 9613-9620.

<sup>1109</sup> Memorandum, 'Officer in Charge, H.M.S. "Victory"', to Maintenance Captain, Portsmouth, 12 July 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM; Admiral Doveton Sturdee to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 26 August 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1110</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 26 August 1924.

<sup>1111</sup> 'International Visitors on the Victory's Deck', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 7 June 1929, p. 14.

<sup>1112</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 12.

<sup>1113</sup> Sturdee, 'Saving the Victory. To the Editor of the Times'.

<sup>1114</sup> *Ibid.*

Having taken part in this first small ritual, visitors were then channelled downwards through the ship's cabins and gun decks, where they were invited to imagine life, work, and battle in Nelson's navy. By the time they reached the orlop deck, four decks down, they were fully immersed in their surroundings. This was helped immeasurably by the fact that there were no portholes to the outside world on this deck (had the ship been at sea, it would have been below the waterline), and also no natural light. In theory, this immersion would have made visitors highly receptive to being given cues by the SNR about the 'sacred' nature of their destination.<sup>1115</sup> They would shortly arrive at the 'cockpit', which tradition named as the space within the orlop deck where Nelson had eventually died, several hours after being shot, and shortly before the climax of the battle.<sup>1116</sup> If visiting the *Victory* was a pilgrimage to the site of Nelson's death, then the cockpit was its inner shrine [Figure 9].<sup>1117</sup>



Figure 9 Wright & Logan, 'Where Nelson Died. H.M.S. Victory'. Postcard, interwar period. Author's own collection. Use of image courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

<sup>1115</sup> Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, pp. 188-189 & 204-205.

<sup>1116</sup> Diagram of route for King George V's visit to H.M.S. Victory, circa July 1928.

<sup>1117</sup> The 'inner shrine' of any pilgrimage, including a museum-pilgrimage, is the most sacred space within the journey. See: Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, p. 190.



Figure 10 Arthur William Devis, 'The Death of Nelson', oil on canvas, circa 1807, BHC2894, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Greenwich Hospital Collection.  
<http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/14367.html> [Accessed 27 April 2018].

Callender had very specific ideas about how he wanted visitors to interact with the cockpit. By 1928, Callender and the SNR had created a formal shrine centred around two objects. These were what Hansen-Glucklich describes as 'symbolic objects': artefacts which have particular meaning within the context of the museum-pilgrimage.<sup>1118</sup> Together, these two objects were meant to help visitors realise the 'sacred' nature of the cockpit as the site of Nelson's death [Figure 9].

The first was the wooden plank, known as a 'knee', against which Nelson was, by tradition, lying when he died. The cockpit, and 'Nelson' knee, had been an important feature on tours of the *Victory* even before it moved from Portsmouth Harbour into dry dock.<sup>1119</sup> At some point during

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<sup>1118</sup> Ibid. pp. 192-193 & 208-209.

<sup>1119</sup> Lavery, *Nelson's Victory*, pp. 162 & 169-173.

the nineteenth century, someone had painted the legend 'Here Nelson Died' onto this knee, and it had become tradition to decorate it with a laurel wreath.<sup>1120</sup> In 1927, the SNR added an additional element into the scene: a version of Arthur William Devis' painting 'The Death of Nelson', which depicted Nelson lying against the knee in question, surrounded by subordinates [Figure 10].<sup>1121</sup> And then in late 1928, they were gifted a second, freestanding, 'Here Nelson Died' knee from the British Sailors' Society, who insisted that theirs was the original [Figure 11].<sup>1122</sup>

'The history of how it came to be disposed of is somewhat vague', W. E. Goodenough, British Sailors' Society Chairman, admitted to Admiral Brock, Commander-in-Chief of Portsmouth.<sup>1123</sup> The knee had, he explained, been given to his society by King Edward VII, apparently from the royal collection at Windsor Castle. He speculated that it might have been removed from the ship during repair work following an accidental collision with H.M.S. *Neptune* in 1903.<sup>1124</sup> These facts may or may not have been correct, although it is worth noting that this second knee appears to have been removed from the ship at some point before, or during, a second round of restoration in the 1960s.<sup>1125</sup> But Goodenough certainly believed that the knee was a 'precious relic', that had genuinely been the place 'against which Lord Nelson lay when he died'.<sup>1126</sup> And, perhaps just as importantly, he had convinced King George V of this, who was now 'graciously pleased to say that he would welcome the return of the knee to the "Victory"'.<sup>1127</sup> It was duly installed in front of the first knee in October 1928, and become the new focus for the *Victory's* inner shrine.<sup>1128</sup>

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<sup>1120</sup> Ibid. p. 173.

<sup>1121</sup> George Hope to Geoffrey Callender, 4 April 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM; G. E. Suter to Geoffrey Callender, 28 March 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM; The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>1122</sup> W.E. Goodenough to the Commander in Chief, Portsmouth, 4 October 1928, ADM 179/62, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew pp. 255-256; L. C. McCausland to Captain Max Horton, 16 October 1928, ADM 179/62, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew p. 266.

<sup>1123</sup> W.E. Goodenough to the Commander in Chief, Portsmouth, 4 October 1928, p. 255.

<sup>1124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1125</sup> 'The Interior of the Famous H.M.S. Victory: The Redecoration and Restoration Shown Here for the First Time in Colour', *Illustrated London News*, 19 October 1963 1963, p. 36.

<sup>1126</sup> W.E. Goodenough to the Commander in Chief, Portsmouth, 4 October 1928, p. 255.

<sup>1127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1128</sup> 'Restoration of Nelson Relic to the "Victory"', Portsmouth General Orders no. 1251, 22nd October 1928 ADM 179/62, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew p. 268.



Figure 11 'Returning to the Victory the "Knee" Against Which Nelson Died', *Illustrated London News*, 27 October 1928, p. 19. Image © Illustrated London News Group / Mary Evans, and courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive and The British Library Board.  
<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0001578/19281027/093/0019?browse=False> [Accessed 18 September 2019].

Callender's personal vision for how visitors should interact with the painting, and the first, previously installed knee, can be recovered in detail from instructions that he wrote to Portsmouth Dockyard in 1927. On arrival, his visitors should find the knee, Nelson's 'death-place', 'faintly' lit by a period-appropriate lantern. The adjacent 'Death of Nelson' should not be 'illuminat[ed]... at all'.<sup>1129</sup> He wanted visitors 'to see the place first and the picture afterwards'.<sup>1130</sup>

Visitors were meant to study the knee. It was inscribed with 'Here Nelson Died', and decorated with laurel wreathes to celebrate victory: symbolic of the fact that Nelson's life had been taken at the moment of his greatest triumph. These additions did not, however, stop the knee itself from being small, unremarkable, and empty. This was intentional.<sup>1131</sup> Callender wanted

<sup>1129</sup> Geoffrey Callender to G.E. Suter, 4 April 1927, ADM 179/62, Admiralty Records, National Archives, Kew p. 179.

<sup>1130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1131</sup> In a comparable, but later example, empty space to signify loss is a common architectural feature of several holocaust memorial museums. See: Jackie Feldman, 'Between Yad Vashem and Mt. Herzl:

his visitors to contemplate this empty scene – and only then press a switch to turn on ‘a strong light directly over the Picture’, illustrating to them exactly what had been missing from the knee in front of them: Nelson’s body, and his mourners **[Figure 9]**.<sup>1132</sup> And so turning on a light became an act of ritual, a means for visitors to witness Nelson’s loss, and respond emotionally to it, despite the decades that separated them. And just as with the ‘Here Nelson Fell’ plaque, there is evidence that at least some visitors responded as Callender had intended. ‘This remarkable contemporary canvas’, the *Hampshire Telegraph and Post* reported in 1928, ‘helping visitors, as it does, to visualise the scene for themselves, has converted what was already a shrine into a shrine which compels the reverence of the most casual sightseer’.<sup>1133</sup>

Clearly, Callender would go to some lengths to make it clear to visitors that they were meant to be sombre in the cockpit. They were there for the express purpose of mourning Nelson. This was also true of the quarter deck. When Admiral Sturdee wrote his story to *The Times* about the man who prostrated himself in front of the ‘Here Nelson Fell’ plaque, he made a point of commenting on the respectful behaviour of the crowd, who ‘in a solemn hush... bent their heads and listened to him, while all the men present removed their hats.’<sup>1134</sup> Younger visitors were indulged in a certain amount of high-spirits, but were also ultimately held to this standard. In 1929 the *Portsmouth Evening News* reported on the ‘joyous scenes’ of 600 children visiting during ‘Children’s Week’: ‘they laughed and joked and shouted with glee as they entered the low doorway at the side of the vessel’.<sup>1135</sup> ‘But’, it noted, ‘as they viewed the ancient cannon, low decks, and lofty masts, and heard the fresh morning breeze whistle through the rigging, their

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Changing Inscriptions of Sacrifice on Jerusalem's "Mountain of Memory", *Anthropological Quarterly*, 80 (2007), 1157; Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, pp. 202-203.

<sup>1132</sup> Geoffrey Callender to G.E. Suter, 4 April 1927, p. 179.

<sup>1133</sup> 'Restoration of the Victory. Work of Experts. The Many Problems Overcome', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 20 July 1928, p. 16.

<sup>1134</sup> Sturdee, 'Saving the Victory. To the Editor of the Times'.

<sup>1135</sup> 'Children's Week. Winners of Portsmouth Competitions. Fun and Frolic. Gugnuncs Visit Victory', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 14 August 1929, p. 4.

youthful faces assumed varied expressions of awe'.<sup>1136</sup> These children may have been joking and shouting, but they had also been appropriately awe-struck at the expected moments.

By contrast, the young women who had upset Callender by 'giggling' and flirting' during their visit seven years earlier were too old to be excused this exuberant behaviour.<sup>1137</sup> Children could be 'joyous', but young people must be studious, and respectful.<sup>1138</sup> Local papers tended to highlight these qualities when they wrote about groups of young men who had visited the ship: a group of Argentinian naval cadets 'asked innumerable questions, examined everything that was to be seen, and continually commented on the marvellou[s] way in which the flagship had been restored to Trafalgar condition'.<sup>1139</sup> The 'boys of Fratton Council School' were similarly reported to have found their visit 'highly interesting and instructive'.<sup>1140</sup> These young women, by contrast, were subverting the expectation that they to act in a respectfully solemn manner. This was not to say that it was intentional – or even that these women were not actually interested in the ship; in fact, quite the opposite, as they were clearly enjoying their visit. Callender did not actually know how these women would behave when they encountered Nelson's inner shrine. He just feared the worst. One of the best ways to undermine solemn commemoration of male sacrifice was through female laughter.

## 6.2 Sacrifice, violence, and Nelson's body

The *Victory* was a shrine to Nelson, his sacrifice, and, in the words of SNR member and journalist Archibald Hurd, a lesson to 'Britons of succeeding generations how death can be swallowed up in victory'.<sup>1141</sup> Except that in reality, 'victory' had not 'swallowed up' Nelson's death. Rather, the ship was a shrine to Nelson *because* he had died violently on-board, and with great dramatic timing. So

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<sup>1136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1137</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1138</sup> 'Children's Week. Winners of Portsmouth Competitions. Fun and Frolic. Gugnuncs Visit Victory'.

<sup>1139</sup> 'On Board the Victory. Keeness and Knowledge of Our Naval Records', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 23 November 1928, p. 15.

<sup>1140</sup> 'Portsmouth News. School Visit to the Victory', *Portsmouth Evening News*, 01 December 1925, p. 2.

<sup>1141</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

when visitors were encouraged to worship at this shrine to male sacrifice, were they also encouraged to reflect on the role that death and violence had in making it?

Nelson's body was certainly important in this shrine. 'Relics' are objects which we believe provide us with tangible links to the past, and both of the *Victory's* most precious relics had been closely associated with Nelson's body.<sup>1142</sup> The 'Nelson' knee had supposedly had direct contact with his dying body, and bore the legend 'Here Nelson Died' to advertise this fact to visitors **[Figure 9]**. Its companion, Arthur William Devis' 'Death of Nelson' painting, had a similarly close connection **[Figure 10]**. 'It is said', the *Victory* guidebook emphasised, 'that the artist was allowed to make a study of the dead Admiral.'<sup>1143</sup> No other 'Death of Nelson' painting could boast this privilege. Thus when visitors looked at the 'Death of Nelson', they were reminded that they were looking at a drawing of Nelson's corpse, painted in the flesh. We have already seen that the painting was meant to help 'visitors... to visualise the scene for themselves'.<sup>1144</sup> Nelson's physical remains were actually interned at St Paul's Cathedral, but visitors were actively encouraged to imagine them in situ on the *Victory*.<sup>1145</sup>

The SNR valued Devis' 'Death of Nelson' for its supposed historical realism. It was, they told guide book readers, 'well executed': an accurate representation of the scene, since Devis had 'painted' it (in fact, he had just made sketches) on the voyage from Portsmouth to Chatham', and, further, because 'the figures are all portraits': Devis also sketched the crew during the voyage.<sup>1146</sup> They almost certainly based their reconstruction of the cockpit on the painting, absent the figures.

But when Devis had completed the painting, in 1807, its realism had made it unusual. It was one of several 'Death of Nelson' paintings completed just a few years after Nelson's death. The printer Josiah Boydell had offered a prize for the best 'Death of Nelson' painting suitable for

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<sup>1142</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 135; Semmel, 'Tangible Past', p. 10; Lowenthal, *Foreign Country*, pp. 389-395.

<sup>1143</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 20.

<sup>1144</sup> 'Restoration of the Victory. Work of Experts. The Many Problems Overcome'.

<sup>1145</sup> Hoock, 'Nelson Entombed', p. 116.

<sup>1146</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, pp. 19-20; Richard Walker, *The Nelson Portraits*. (Royal Naval Museum Publications, 1998), pp. 159-160.

reproducing in print form, and Devis had won. But other contemporary 'Death of Nelson's' were much more allegorical in style.<sup>1147</sup> Witness, for example, Scott Pierre Nicolas Legrand's attempt at this subject. Legrand's painting is set on the quarter deck of the *Victory*, rather than in the cockpit where Nelson had actually died. It does not show Nelson's corpse. Instead, he is shown in a state of apotheosis from mortal man to national hero, raised up towards heaven by Britannia, Poseidon, and several other figures drawn from the Greco-Roman pantheon [Figure 12]. This contrast between the two styles of painting neatly illustrates the SNR's contradiction. On the one hand they wanted to portray Nelson's death in a realistic fashion. But on the other, they also wanted celebrate his apotheosis, and the idea that 'death can be swallowed up in victory'.<sup>1148</sup> This meant focusing on acts of patriotic sacrifice rather than providing accurate depictions of the horrors of war.

This is especially evident in how the *Victory* guidebook described Nelson's death. In reality, he would have been in extreme pain. He had survived for three hours after being shot, and died slowly of internal bleeding.<sup>1149</sup> The guidebook, however, presents his death as peaceful, even hopeful: 'He opened his eyes and smiled' on hearing that twenty French and Spanish ships had been captured, and then received two 'affecting' kisses from Captain Hardy.<sup>1150</sup> Here, it implied, was a man who had anticipated, and indeed, welcomed death, and who 'gave up his life' willingly for the sake of duty.<sup>1151</sup> Described in this way, Nelson's death became characterised by his peaceful acceptance, and the pathos of it happening 'in the hour of victory', rather than by his trauma.<sup>1152</sup>

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<sup>1147</sup> Walker, *The Nelson Portraits*, p. 159.

<sup>1148</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

<sup>1149</sup> Knight, *Pursuit of Victory* 9613-9652.

<sup>1150</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 28.

<sup>1151</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>1152</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 12 Scott Pierre Nicolas Legrand, 'Apotheosis of Nelson'. Oil on canvas, circa 1805-18. BHC2906, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Caird Collection.  
<https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/14379.html> [Accessed 18 September 2019].

This did not, however, mean that the restorers intended to sanitise Nelson's death entirely. Visceral evidence was important. 'Do you know', A. E. Carlyle, Honorary Organiser of the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal had asked Callender in 1924, 'is there a sail in existence, on which Nelson died and does it bear blood stains?'<sup>1153</sup> Carlyle believed that such an object 'would be a fine thing... to attract people' to a stall selling 'Save the *Victory*' medals at the British Empire Exhibition.<sup>1154</sup>

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<sup>1153</sup> A. E. Carlyle to Geoffrey Callender 7 March 1924, SNR 7/5, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1154</sup> *Ibid.*

Nelson's blood had marketing power. Part of the problem with the two 'Nelson' knees was that neither bore any physical evidence that could prove that it had been the one to have contact with Nelson's body. 'Here Nelson Died' was no substitute for actual bloodstains. And so it was no coincidence that one of the nation's most treasured Nelson-relics was the uniform coat he had been wearing when he was shot, complete with visible bullet hole, on display at the Royal Naval Museum, Greenwich.<sup>1155</sup>

It is clear that there were strong contradictions around how visitors were encouraged to commemorate Nelson's death on board the *Victory*. It was bloody and violent, but it was also peaceful. The restorers aimed to depict it as realistically as possible, but they wanted their visitors to celebrate Nelson's hypothetical apotheosis more than reflect on the horrors of war. And these things speak to several contradictions in interwar British society around how war, death, and sacrifice were acknowledged and commemorated.

Glenn Wilkinson's study of Edwardian war reporting highlights the use of metaphor to avoid graphic depictions of death and injuries: soldiers might have 'fallen', be 'lost', or even be 'slaughtered', but the realistic detail of agonising death would always be glossed over.<sup>1156</sup> This was war as 'indescribable', which acknowledged its horrors but spared readers the detail.<sup>1157</sup> The aim, he argued, was to allow readers to continue to see war in a positive light, despite the extreme loss of human life.<sup>1158</sup> Callender and his colleagues appear to have been motivated by a similar aim when they attempted to persuade their visitors that 'death can be swallowed up in victory'.<sup>1159</sup>

In fact, there are obvious parallels between Wilkinson's comments and how the *Victory* guidebook described not just Nelson's death, but also the surgical procedures which would have been happening around him on the orlop deck. The guidebook hinted at the nature of operations

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<sup>1155</sup> Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, p. 12; Quintin Colville and James Davey, eds., *Nelson Navy & Nation: The Royal Navy & the British People 1688-1815* (London: Conway, 2013), p. 14.

<sup>1156</sup> Glenn R. Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers 1899-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 115-116, 123.

<sup>1157</sup> *Ibid.* p. 118.

<sup>1158</sup> *Ibid.* p. 124.

<sup>1159</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

by describing the instruments used: 'the wounded man given a strong tot of rum, the knife sterilized by being heated, the limb bound with lint, and covered with hot pitch to stop the bleeding.'<sup>1160</sup> It did not describe the wounds, pain, or the horror of the patients. Instead, visitors were to use their imaginations. The 'scene on this deck in action', it admitted, 'must have been indescribable'.<sup>1161</sup> The restorers were not trying to hide the horrors of early nineteenth century naval warfare, exactly. But they were sparing visitors from the graphic details.

Equally though, speaking in metaphor did not mean that contemporary Britons were unaware of the true horrors of war.<sup>1162</sup> Many visitors to the *Victory* in the 1920s would have had personal experience, whether as combatants, or as the thousands of nurses, doctors, and other medical personnel who would have had first-hand experience of the injuries and casualties. Many visitors would have been recently bereaved, or caring for someone with war-related injuries, illnesses, and trauma. This was also true of the restorers themselves.<sup>1163</sup> Such people would not have found it difficult to imagine conditions in the surgeon's station on the *Victory*.

It is worth remembering, as well, that the end of the Great War had brought a fashion for memorials which were understood to symbolise loss and mourning instead of horror: Edwin Lutyen's famously abstract Cenotaph, for example.<sup>1164</sup> There are also obvious parallels between how the *Victory* was promoted as a memorial to male sacrifice in the 1920s, and with contemporary war memorials to the dead of the Great War.<sup>1165</sup> The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal had credited the ship with having provided patriotic inspiration to the 'thousands of Reservists & new

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<sup>1160</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 20.

<sup>1161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1162</sup> Heather Jones, 'The Great War: How 1914–18 Changed the Relationship between War and Civilians', *The RUSI Journal*, 159 (2014); Marian Eide, 'Witnessing and Trophy Hunting: Writing Violence from the Great War Trenches', *Criticism*, 49 (2008).

<sup>1163</sup> Two of W.L. Wyllie's sons had been killed on active service in the war. Harold Wyllie, also actively involved in the *Victory's* restoration, had seen combat with the Royal Flying Corps. Admiral Doveton Sturdee had commanded the British fleet at the Battle of the Falklands in 1914. George Hope, meanwhile, had captained H.M.S. *Queen Elizabeth* in the Mediterranean in 1914-1915. See: Grundy, pp. 11, 16 & 18; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, p. 209 & 219.

<sup>1164</sup> King, *Memorials of the Great War*, pp. 115-116; James F. Wurtz, 'Representing the Great War: Violence, Memory, and Comic Form', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 44 (2009), 205.

<sup>1165</sup> Leggett, 'Restoring Victory', p. 60 & 65.

recruits' who had passed through the *depôt* at Portsmouth 'during the last war'.<sup>1166</sup> And it also compared the sacrifice of these men to Nelson's own.<sup>1167</sup> And so, when the *Victory's* custodians chose to promote Nelson's worthy apotheosis to visitors, rather than dwell on the horror of his death, they followed a wider memorial trend, perhaps consciously, and perhaps not. We can also speculate, but not prove, that Callender's outrage at the laughing young women who seemed to be undermining the solemnity of his shrine to white male sacrifice was exacerbated by his mental association of the ship with the dead of the recent war.

But regardless: Callender and his colleagues did not so much attempt to sanitise eighteenth-century naval warfare, as they did promote a message that war was horrific, but that true British men persisted regardless. Male sacrifice was all the more worthy because of the suffering they endured. And this message extended, we shall see, into how the ship was interpreted as not just a battleship, but as a domestic space.

### 6.3 Emma Hamilton and sacrilegious talk

Laughing female visitors had threatened to upset the reverential tone of the *Victory* as a shrine, and celebration, of the heroic sacrifices of white men. Twentieth century women were far from Callender's only problem in this regard, however. To ensure the solemn worship of Nelson as the epitome of male heroism, how the guides told the stories of the women of the Trafalgar, and in particular Nelson's fiancée Emma, Lady Hamilton, had to be strictly monitored.

Nelson had first met Emma Hamilton in Naples in 1793, where she lived with her husband William Hamilton, who was the British ambassador to the Neapolitan court.<sup>1168</sup> Emma cut a remarkable figure within this court. She was a former domestic servant, artists' model, and

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<sup>1166</sup> Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'The *Victory* and What It Means to the Empire', circa 1922.

<sup>1167</sup> A E Carlyle, speech notes, 'First *Victory* dates back to 1560', circa January -May 1923.

<sup>1168</sup> Kate Williams, *England's Mistress: The Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton*. (London: Arrow Books, 2006; 2007), p. 183.

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teenage sex worker.<sup>1169</sup> She had arrived in Naples because her lover, Charles Greville, had tired of her, and hoped to persuade Hamilton, his uncle, to adopt her as his own mistress.<sup>1170</sup> But then, in a very unexpected and unprecedented set of twists, Emma married Hamilton; became a close friend and confidant of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples; and in this capacity became the key (if unofficial) agent between the Neapolitan court and the British navy under Nelson.<sup>1171</sup>

In 1798, Emma had used her contacts to re-provision the British fleet in Syracuse. Her actions allowed Nelson to follow the French fleet to Egypt, and win a much-celebrated victory at the Battle of Aboukir Bay.<sup>1172</sup> They began a relationship early the following year.<sup>1173</sup> By 1801, Nelson was estranged from his wife Frances, and living with the Hamiltons back in Britain.<sup>1174</sup> In 1801, Emma gave birth to a daughter, Horatia, who would be her and Nelson's only surviving child.<sup>1175</sup> The evening before Trafalgar, Nelson had famously added a codicil to his will which reminded the British government of Emma's service in Naples, and requested financial assistance for her and Horatia in the event of his death.<sup>1176</sup> His request would be ignored.<sup>1177</sup> Emma would die in poverty in Calais in 1815, just ten years later.<sup>1178</sup> And so Emma Hamilton's story was intimately tied up with the story of Trafalgar, even if she had not actually been physically present for the battle itself.

By the interwar period, Emma had been firmly established in popular culture as the romantic heroine to Nelson's tragic hero.<sup>1179</sup> Callender's incognito visit to the ship in 1922 convinced him, however, that this might be to the detriment of the ship's shrine-like status:

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<sup>1169</sup> Ibid. pp. 34-66.

<sup>1170</sup> Ibid. pp. 108-113.

<sup>1171</sup> Ibid. pp. 196-217.

<sup>1172</sup> Ibid. p. 203.

<sup>1173</sup> Ibid. p. 222.

<sup>1174</sup> Ibid. p. 257 & 276.

<sup>1175</sup> Ibid. p. 260.

<sup>1176</sup> This codicil featured in popular retellings of Nelson's death, for example: Southey, *The Life of Nelson*, pp. 304-305.

<sup>1177</sup> Hannah Greig, 'Decline and Fall: Social Insecurity and Financial Ruin', in *Emma Hamilton: Seduction and Celebrity*, ed. by Quintin Colville and Kate Williams (London: Thames & Hudson / Royal Museums Greenwich, 2016), pp. 200-227 pp. 215-217).

<sup>1178</sup> Ibid. p. 201.

<sup>1179</sup> Williams, 'Emma Hamilton in Fiction and Film'; Williams, 'Nelson and Women'.

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How shocked I was at the flippancy of the young Marine guides. "Yuss! This is where Nelson & Lady Hamilton sat canoodling ... (shrieks of laughter) .. Go on, of course they did. Lady Hamilton was always on board when Nelson was. You bet. Not 'arf.'"<sup>1180</sup>

There is no evidence that Emma ever set foot on the *Victory*, but Callender's 'shock' was not just because the guides had given out inaccurate information.<sup>1181</sup> He claimed that the conversation had made him 'almost physically sick': this was moral outrage.<sup>1182</sup> The guides were meant to be promoting the ship as a shrine to Nelson's sacrifice. But instead, they were sharing sexually suggestive anecdotes about him with visitors. It is quite likely, as well, that the 'flippan[t]' guides' audience were the 'giggling' young women whom Callender had complained about in the same letter, and just lines earlier. Both historical 'canoodling', and modern 'flirting' were sacrilege when they took place 'in Nelson's own cabin!'<sup>1183</sup>

Callender would not have been the first historian to have viewed Nelson's relationship with Emma as incompatible with his commemoration as a Christian hero. Mid-nineteenth century biographers preferred to characterise their heroes as men whose great public acts were equally matched by their inner moral purity. As such they tended to feature Emma as Nelson's devoted platonic friend; a foster mother to his illegitimate daughter, and nothing more. This was despite increasing evidence to the contrary, including the publication of their love letters. And even in the 1890s, when Emma and Nelson's true relationship had become widely known and accepted, Nelson's biographers continued to manipulate the facts to make Nelson look as good as possible. And so Emma was cast, variously, as Nelson's moral corruptor, or else a symbol, along with Horatia, of his sense of personal duty, namely his willingness to take responsibility for the mother of his illegitimate child.<sup>1184</sup>

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<sup>1180</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1184</sup> Hamilton, 'Naval Hagiography', pp. 392-394.

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If mention of Emma made Callender 'almost physically sick', then it would be natural to assume that he found her morally repulsive, and therefore had banned her from the *Victory* narrative entirely. This is certainly the reaction that some *Victory* supporters had to Emma. In 1929, Beatrice Suckling, a distant descendent of Nelson, wrote Callender a very long letter listing her various objections to current trends in how her fellow Britons were commemorating Nelson. She was particularly outraged about a recent Hollywood film, *The Divine Lady*, in which Emma had been cast as the romantic heroine to Nelson's tragic hero.<sup>1185</sup> Suckling considered the film to be 'a libel on Nelson' and 'only fit for the back woods of America', where, we can infer, she believed moral standards to be looser.<sup>1186</sup>

Suckling's moral outrage regarding Emma Hamilton was not, however, true of all Britons. Emma was actually a very popular figure within the Nelson myth. On Trafalgar Day 1926 for example, newspapers reported on the 'romantic anonymous bunch of flowers' which had been left at Nelson's tomb in St Paul's Cathedral 'in memory of Emma Hamilton'.<sup>1187</sup> An attached note declared Emma to be 'best beloved of Nelson, sharer of his joys and griefs, his weaknesses and sins, willed by him to the nation which she helped him to save, and left to starve by an ungrateful and hypocritical country.'<sup>1188</sup> This was a cinematic reading of Emma as a brave and patriotic woman whose work in Naples had helped Nelson to 'save' the nation; and also a tragic heroine who, in addition to suffering the personal heartbreak of losing her lover, had been failed by her nation in an act of moral hypocrisy. *The Divine Lady* was just the latest of a series of recent films which celebrated Emma as the 'new' woman, in scripts which, Kate Williams argues, 'dramatized feminine romance and independence', and 'fudged the adultery'.<sup>1189</sup> This heroic reading of Emma did not completely condone the adulterous nature of her relationship with Nelson, but it did hold both of them equally responsible. And Emma's newfound popularity meant that it was only

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<sup>1185</sup> Williams, 'Emma Hamilton in Fiction and Film', pp. 263-264.

<sup>1186</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 30 June 1929.

<sup>1187</sup> 'Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar', 21 October 1926; 'Trafalgar Day. At Nelson's Tomb: A Tribute to Lady Hamilton', *Western Times*, 22 October 1926, p. 12.

<sup>1188</sup> 'Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar', 21 October 1926.

<sup>1189</sup> Williams, 'Emma Hamilton in Fiction and Film', p. 263.

natural that visitors to the *Victory* would ask their guides questions about her, whether Callender liked it or not.

In reality though, even Geoffrey Callender was not actually quite as hostile to Emma Hamilton as his exaggerated disgust at the guide's story might suggest. His footnotes to Southey's *Life of Nelson*, re-printed in 1922, describe the British government's refusal to grant Emma and Horatia a pension as 'a matter for deep and lasting regret', and also represented Emma as a woman who had been failed by her 'ungrateful native land' after her service in Naples.<sup>1190</sup> In so doing, he responded to, and reinforced, popular commemoration of Emma as a tragic figure who had ultimately been failed by her nation. Some years later, when Callender was the first Director of the National Maritime Museum, he would actively collect Emma Hamilton portraits and relics for display, and persisted in doing so despite the strong disapproval of the museum's chair of trustees, Lord Stanhope.<sup>1191</sup> And so, if Callender was happy to acknowledge, and even celebrate Emma's role in the Nelson story in certain contexts, then why was he so appalled when a *Victory* guide - admittedly inaccurately - described her as 'always on board when Nelson was'?<sup>1192</sup>

Margarette Lincoln's research into how Emma was satirised by print makers within her lifetime provides valuable insight into Callender's apparent hypocrisy in the 1920s and 1930s. Take James Gillray's 1801 print 'Dido in Despair', for example. The title draws a satirical parallel between Emma and Dido, Queen of Carthage: the abandoned lover of the Trojan hero Aeneas, who had been a pawn in the goddess Juno's plan to delay Aeneas's quest to found Rome. The print itself depicts Emma as a grotesque, weeping figure who cannot control her grief on Nelson's departure from her (and her husband's) bed, necessitated by national duty **[Figure 13]**.<sup>1193</sup> Lincoln argues that this caricature of Emma was a judgement on the relatively public nature of her and Nelson's relationship, and her lower class origins. Aristocratic women were allowed to have extra-

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<sup>1190</sup> Southey, *The Life of Nelson*, pp. 304-305.

<sup>1191</sup> Roger Quarm, 'Buying Nelson: Sir James Caird's Gifts to the National Maritime Museum', *The Mariner's Mirror*, 91 (2005), 379-380.

<sup>1192</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1193</sup> Lincoln, 'Emma Hamilton', p. 136.

marital affairs provided that they were discreet about it.<sup>1194</sup> Lower class women were meant to be stoical when waving their male loved ones off to sea.<sup>1195</sup> Emma failed to meet the expected standards of womanly behaviour for either class, and this had rendered 'her patriotism... dubious'.<sup>1196</sup>



Figure 13 James Gillray and Hannah Humphrey, 'Dido in Despair'. Hand coloured etching, 1801. PAF3874, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/128009.html> [Accessed 27 April 2018].

Lincoln also argues that Nelson's absence from the 'Dido in Despair' scene paints him in rather more generous tones than Emma: the duty-bound commander who chooses national duty over his lover.<sup>1197</sup> The print is principally a satire on Emma, her marriage, and her infidelity. But, as Lincoln comments, by casting Emma in the role of 'Dido', it also points to a certain amount of tension around the threat Emma posed as a sexual and emotional distraction to Nelson in his role

<sup>1194</sup> Ibid. pp. 142-143.

<sup>1195</sup> Begiato (Bailey), 'Tears and the Manly Sailor', pp. 122-123.

<sup>1196</sup> Lincoln, 'Emma Hamilton', p. 143.

<sup>1197</sup> Ibid. p. 140.

as the commander of a naval fleet. Just as Dido had kept Aeneas from his duty, Nelson (and his fleet) had remained with her in Naples far longer than could be justified on military grounds – and this had not gone unnoticed by contemporaries.<sup>1198</sup> As such, this print illustrates the likely possibility that Callender found the *Victory* guide's anecdote about Emma to be particularly 'sickening' because, by insinuating that Emma and Nelson had sex on board the *Victory* itself, it made no clear distinction between Nelson at home, free to indulge himself, and at sea, the responsible commander and dutiful hero.<sup>1199</sup> And this might put Nelson's *own* sense of duty under scrutiny – which would not do at all on board the *Victory*, the shrine to his death and sacrifice.

It is worth noting, however, that although Callender had banned the guides from speculating about Emma and Nelson's sex life, he did not ban all mention of Emma from the *Victory* outright. She is admittedly not mentioned in the guidebook. We should not, however, read too much into this, as it is almost entirely silent about Nelson's biography, or any of the context of the battle of Trafalgar, including the naval campaign leading up to it, and the politics.<sup>1200</sup> This was a guidebook interested in Nelson's death, not his life. Instead, Callender let Emma be featured, albeit in a passive, and easily overlooked way, through objects on display.

In his preface to the 1929 edition of the *Story of H.M.S. Victory*, Callender noted his intention to make 'replicas' of 'portrait[s] of the two beings [Nelson] loved best', Emma and Horatia, and 'place' them 'above his Bureau', in order 'to give the cabin the aspect it wore on the eve of Trafalgar'.<sup>1201</sup> The originals were 'now too precious for any custody but a safe'.<sup>1202</sup> A similar logic determined his thinking regarding set of embroidered hangings which, according to tradition, had adorned Nelson's sleeping cot on the *Victory*. Tradition also claimed that these had been a gift to Nelson from Emma, and worked by her (although modern research has now shown that they were actually professional work, and has also disproved the idea that Nelson slept in a

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<sup>1198</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 138-139.

<sup>1199</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1200</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*.

<sup>1201</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 15.

<sup>1202</sup> *Ibid.*

cot).<sup>1203</sup> The original hangings had also been deemed too fragile to display, and so replicas were made by a 'ladies committee' headed by Mrs 'Kenneth' Foster, sister-in-law of *Victory* Technical Committee member R. Lionel Foster.<sup>1204</sup> It is likely that guides would have pointed out these specially-commissioned replicas to visitors, and explained the connection to Emma Hamilton. But even if they did not, these objects were still evocative of the fact that Nelson also had a private, domestic life beyond his duties as an admiral.

It is worth noting, as well, that the SNR's decision to outsource these replica hangings to a 'ladies committee' was strangely indicative of their views about women, including Emma, in the *Victory* narrative.<sup>1205</sup> Whether sailors or restorers, the *Victory* was male territory. A supportive naval heroine was not meant to be 'canoodling' with her hero on board his warship.<sup>1206</sup> If the ship was a shrine to masculine stoicism and sacrifice, then Emma Hamilton needed to be represented as firmly absent from the ship. And if this was true for Nelson and Emma, then it was also true for the other men and women whose domestic lives were represented by the *Victory*.

#### 6.4 Domestic space, masculinity, and female absence

HMS *Victory* was a warship, and therefore a site of violence and of death, and a stage for imperialist sacrifice. This was, however, only a small aspect of its working life. It was also a home, and a workplace, and served these mundane functions far more often than it did any other. How did the SNR reconcile the ship's domestic spaces with their wider narrative about Nelson's sacrifice? We have already seen, through Callender's discomfort with Emma Hamilton, that sailors were expected to keep their home and professional lives firmly separate. Dutiful officers who showed 'courage and duty and endurance' were expected to be prepared to be uncomfortable.<sup>1207</sup>

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<sup>1203</sup> Prentice, *The Authentic Nelson*, p. 158; The National Museum of the Royal Navy, *HMS Victory*. (Stroud: Pitkin Publishing, 2017), p. 9.

<sup>1204</sup> R. Lionel Foster to George Hope, 14 May 1927; R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender, 31 October 1927.

<sup>1205</sup> R. Lionel Foster to George Hope, 14 May 1927; R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender, 31 October 1927.

<sup>1206</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1207</sup> 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

The SNR heavily reinforced this point through the guidebook. Cabins for Nelson's senior officers were 'not luxurious as the guns remained in position!!'.<sup>1208</sup> The junior officers' communal space, known as the 'gunroom', could, by the guidebook's estimation, 'hardly have been a "haven of rest" with the great tiller working ceaselessly, to and fro, day and night.'<sup>1209</sup> Readers were not meant to infer that these men had no need of domestic comforts. Instead the guidebook implied that they were prepared to endure without them for the sake of national duty. Thus even the domestic space of Nelson's crew had something to add to the SNR's narrative about stoicism, duty and sacrifice.

The restorers had limited evidence as to how the interiors of the *Victory* would have looked in Nelson's day. Inevitably then, how they chose to decorate and dress the interiors was guided as much by their own expectations of naval masculinity and domestic spaces, as it was by evidence. The antiquarian R. Lionel Foster, for example, believed he had found evidence that Nelson's day cabins might have been painted green. He suggested that the restorers test out 'several shades' to see how they looked, and drew Callender's attention to 'the green in the Adm<sup>l</sup> Superintendent's office' in Portsmouth Dockyard, as 'I always think it extremely nice'.<sup>1210</sup> Modern taste had a role in interpreting historical evidence.

This was not merely about personal taste, however. How the *Victory's* interiors were decorated mattered because, as with other interior furnishings, this was an obvious signifier of rank, class and gender on board the ship.<sup>1211</sup> We can see this in notes provided to the restorers by C.N. Robinson, and SNR member, and a retired naval officer.<sup>1212</sup> Lacking evidence of Georgian paint schemes, the restorers had asked Robinson for his memories of how cabins in the Victorian sailing ships he had sailed in as a young man had been decorated.

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<sup>1208</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 14.

<sup>1209</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>1210</sup> R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender 5 January 1927, SNR 7/9, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1211</sup> Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity'.

<sup>1212</sup> C.N. Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 12 January 1927.

## Chapter 6

In H.M.S. *Liverpool*, Robinson told the restorers, the walls of the gunroom were 'painted white', meaning that 'we had to keep... [them] spick and span with soap and water'.<sup>1213</sup> This paintwork was a source of rivalry between the occupants and the neighbouring engineers' mess, which 'was painted a buff... we used to chaff them and say they got the paint from the engineers' stores'.<sup>1214</sup> The neighbouring engineers were warrant officers: often men who had begun their naval career as ordinary sailors. Robinson, by contrast, was a Lieutenant, a commissioned officer. Most commissioned officers were from upper middle class backgrounds, and who had entered the navy via officer training at a naval college.<sup>1215</sup> Quintin Colville points out that upper middle class officers of this period did not, as a rule, like to be seen to have too much technical expertise of their own. It reminded them too much of 'trade, industry', and worse, 'manual work'.<sup>1216</sup> So when the *Liverpool's* lieutenants had joked about the engineers' painting their mess with industrial paint, we can also see an undercurrent of their own sense of social superiority.

'Spick and span' white cabins were more than just a marker of rank and class, however.<sup>1217</sup> During the 1890s, a period of intense imperialist and military competition with other European nations, British navalists had insisted that the strength of Britain's navy partially lay in the 'rugged' masculinity of its ordinary sailors. 'Rugged' masculinity emphasised qualities such as orderliness and cleanliness alongside established imperialist virtues such as physical strength, courage, endurance, and devotion to duty.<sup>1218</sup> And so even though Robinson and his colleagues tried to distance themselves from lower status sailors through their decorative choices, they had also adopted certain elements of this 'rugged' manly ideal, and applied it to themselves. A junior officer's social space should be 'spick and span', reflecting the cleanliness and discipline of its occupants.<sup>1219</sup> The right paint scheme could be a sign that Britain's sailors, irrespective of rank,

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<sup>1213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1215</sup> Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity', p. 501.

<sup>1216</sup> Ibid. p. 509.

<sup>1217</sup> C.N. Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 12 January 1927.

<sup>1218</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 141-147.

<sup>1219</sup> C.N. Robinson to Geoffrey Callender, 12 January 1927.

were a disciplined force who were mentally and physically ready to defend their empire when called.

So: a simple, white, 'spick and span' cabin was neat, orderly and masculine.<sup>1220</sup> By contrast, Robinson believed that more fashionably-decorated cabins were fussy and overly feminine. 'Our gunnery lieutenant in the Liverpool had his cabin done in French grey, kind of dove colour, picked out round the panels with crimson'.<sup>1221</sup> He could not 'remember the colours' of the Captain's cabin, 'but it was certainly not white, or if white, had some other colour on the panels and round the windows'.<sup>1222</sup> Both of these fashionable cabins, Robinson concluded with a faintly dismissive air, functioned as 'a kind of show place when ladies came on board'.<sup>1223</sup>

A defining principle of twentieth century naval masculinities was that women were totally absent from life at sea, even though they were actually a common presence on-board when ships were in port.<sup>1224</sup> Naval culture and regulations promoted what Quintin Colville refers to as 'corporate' domesticity within naval living spaces: in which the furnishings of officers' communal areas were remarkably uniform across ships, and heavily reminiscent of other all-male, upper-middle class intuitions, such as public schools and gentlemen's clubs.<sup>1225</sup> Officers who reached a sufficiently high rank to be permitted their own cabin, however, were granted the privilege of furnishing it somewhat according to their own tastes – and, if married, to recruit their wives as 'expert' advisors in such matters.<sup>1226</sup> Colville argues that the rules and expectations around naval domestic furnishing were features of a culture designed to train young men to put their institutional allegiance to the Royal Navy above personal allegiance to home, and family.<sup>1227</sup> And so, in the eyes of twentieth century sailors, how ships' living spaces were furnished was closely

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<sup>1220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1224</sup> Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity', pp. 511-513.

<sup>1225</sup> Ibid. pp. 499, 501, 504-505, 512.

<sup>1226</sup> Ibid. p. 513.

<sup>1227</sup> Ibid. pp. 506 & 511-512.

related to the influence that women were perceived to hold (or not hold) over the men who lived there.

The same tension had surfaced around Emma Hamilton when Callender had realised that at least one guide had been telling stories about her 'canoodling' with Nelson on the *Victory*.<sup>1228</sup> On the one hand, mementoes of Emma and Horatia in Nelson's cabin were valuable. They could help to remind visitors of Nelson's personal sacrifices, his willingness to put nation over family, and a reminder, as well, that a desire to protect loved ones could motivate great acts of patriotism.<sup>1229</sup> But family duty could also compete with military duty, and so the actual physical presence of women on board was disruptive to the 'masculine' order of the ship.<sup>1230</sup> Several of the *Victory's* restorers had first-hand experience of living and working in naval establishments, and so it is no surprise to find these men projecting modern ideas about naval masculinities, including 'corporate domesticity' onto how they recreated, and interpreted, the ship's interiors.<sup>1231</sup>

Take their recreation of Nelson's cabins, for example. These, as we know, were allowed a small number of mementoes of 'the two beings [Nelson] loved best', Emma and Horatia.<sup>1232</sup> Nonetheless, the guidebook took pains to emphasise Nelson's isolation from his loved ones. 'It was in these cabins', it announced, 'that Lord Nelson passed two years less ten days' between 1803 and 1805, 'without once setting his feet onshore'.<sup>1233</sup> This, of course, was yet another sacrifice which he could be celebrated for making on behalf of nation. Yet having said that, Nelson's cabins also displayed several signs that he lived in relative comfort, albeit an appropriately masculine comfort. His dining cabin, for one, was decorated with wooden panels and had a simple chequer pattern on the floor. In it were displayed a finely-made mahogany

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<sup>1228</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1229</sup> Begiato (Bailey), 'Tears and the Manly Sailor', pp. 122 & 127-129.

<sup>1230</sup> Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity', pp. 513-516.

<sup>1231</sup> SNR Chairman George Hope for example, had been a serving naval officer, and was now Admiral President of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, where Callender also worked as Professor of History: Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, pp. 216 & 219-220.

<sup>1232</sup> Callender, *HMS Victory*, p. 15.

<sup>1233</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 13.

dining table, sideboard, and wine cooler, which clearly signalled to visitors that even if Nelson was isolated from shore and loved ones, he still regularly enjoyed the companionship of his fellow male officers [Figure 14]. A similar scene met visitors to the officers' ward room, this time with a tea urn (featuring a tap for green tea and a tap for black) that had supposedly been used in that space during the Trafalgar campaign.<sup>1234</sup> Both spaces were the picture of 'corporate' domesticity, in which enthusiastic socialising between commissioned officers was strongly encouraged, and held up as a model of proper manly behaviour for men of their rank.<sup>1235</sup>



Figure 14 Wright & Logan, 'Nelson's Dining Room, Showing Original Furniture'. Postcard, interwar period. Author's own collection. Use of image courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

An important feature of naval 'corporate' domesticity was that both domestic comforts and personal mementoes were a privilege of rank, age, and class.<sup>1236</sup> Older, more experienced, and more elevated men were allowed to show a small amount of sentimentality for their families, albeit with the firm expectation that this must not undermine their commitment to naval duty.<sup>1237</sup>

<sup>1234</sup> S. J. Kaye, to the Curator, R.U.S.I. Museum, 29 May 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1235</sup> Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity', pp. 508-509.

<sup>1236</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 503-504.

<sup>1237</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 513-516.

Accordingly, visitors found very little signs of comfort or personal mementoes on the gun decks, the communal living and working area of the ordinary sailors, in comparison to within Nelson's cabins. Within the former, an assortment of living and fighting implements clustered around the guns: mess tables and a galley stove alongside tomahawks, boarding pikes, and fire buckets.<sup>1238</sup> This was partly because most of the objects that the SNR were offered for display on the *Victory* were associated with famous crewmembers like Nelson and Captain Hardy, rather than its ordinary sailors.<sup>1239</sup> But it also allowed the SNR to suggest to visitors that the ordinary sailor of Nelson's day displayed a particular kind of masculine heroism that was distinctly related to their rank and class.

All of the men of the *Victory* were meant to be emblems of endurance and stoicism. But the *Victory* guidebook particularly encouraged its visitors to read this quality into the living and working conditions of the ship's working class ordinary sailors. Their daily food ration, the guidebook told visitors, may have been 'sufficient' in quantity but in 'quality often left much to be desired.'<sup>1240</sup> The cabins of lower class warrant officers like the Boatswain and Carpenter 'must have been the reverse of comfortable, deficient in every amenity of modern life, with the intolerable smell of stale bilge water' – some contrast to the refined dining space of the commissioned officers' wardroom, or of Nelson's cabins.<sup>1241</sup> The guidebook also stressed the harshness of naval work: the fire engine and water pumps 'were the only mechanical contrivances in a ship of Nelson's day'; and 'the labour of " man handling " the guns... [was] tremendous.'<sup>1242</sup> The guidebook also repeatedly characterised the ordinary sailor of Nelson's navy as 'smart', and disciplined, whether in dress or in their coordination at reloading the guns.<sup>1243</sup> 'Rugged'

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<sup>1238</sup> 'Restoring the Victory: Progress of the Work', 13 April 1925; Geoffrey Callender to B. Jewell, 27 June 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM; Geoffrey Callender to G. E. Suter, 23 January 1928, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM; V. W. Baddeley to Geoffrey Callender, 24 October 1927, SNR 7/11, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1239</sup> 'Permanent Loan Lists H.M.S. "Victory" (Ship) Museum', 1937, 1998/6 Box 10 Folder Details of 'Relics, Ship + R.N. Museum', H.M.S. Victory Records, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth.

<sup>1240</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 23.

<sup>1241</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>1242</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16 & 26.

<sup>1243</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16 & 23.

masculinity, we know, combined physical courage and strength with 'cleanliness' as a moral and physical virtue. It was particularly associated with the late Victorian 'bluejacket', or ordinary sailor.<sup>1244</sup> But on the *Victory* we see 'rugged' masculinity being applied onto the Georgian 'Jack Tar' in a way that would not have been immediately obvious to the Victorians themselves.

The problem was that the *Victory* offered a celebration of the 'rugged' moral virtues of British sailors, and of the important role which these virtues had supposedly played in building, and defending, the British Empire. Georgian popular culture had represented the 'Jack Tar', the ordinary sailor of Nelson's navy, as a man of simple passions: great physical courage at sea, an innately cheerful disposition, and with a fondness for alcohol, and for sex workers. These were, however, also tempered by more sentimental images, which featured the 'Jack Tar' as a devoted family man.<sup>1245</sup> But by the later nineteenth century, Britons had come to characterise 'Jack Tar' in a much less nuanced way: as disruptive and uneducated, although admittedly brave. These late Victorians told themselves that their own 'Bluejacket' was, by contrast, highly trained, professional, and a family man: an exemplar of working class moral virtue, dutiful white masculinity, and the essential role that all of these qualities played in both imperial manhood in general, and in modernising the navy to meet new imperial challenges in particular.<sup>1246</sup> To be an effective imperialist icon, the *Victory* had to represent the ordinary Georgian sailor as the ideal imperialist man – and this meant having to carefully adapt the popular characteristics of the 'Jack Tar' to fit.

Physical courage was something that both the 'Jack Tar' and 'Bluejacket' caricatures shared, and so this was naturally at the forefront of how the SNR celebrated the ship as not just a memorial to Nelson, but to all British sailors, including those 'who vindicated our freedom of

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<sup>1244</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 141-147.

<sup>1245</sup> Margarette Lincoln, 'Naval Personnel in Popular Culture', in *Nelson Navy & Nation: The Royal Navy & the British People 1688-1815*, ed. by Quintin Colville and James Davey (London: Conway, 2013), pp. 114-133 pp. 125-130). Joanne Begiato suggests that we might see these different faces of Jack Tar as representing different life stages: Begiato (Bailey), 'Tears and the Manly Sailor', p. 121.

<sup>1246</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 2-3 & 125-132.

thought, speech, and action, as well as our ideals, in the Great War'.<sup>1247</sup> But the idea of the ordinary sailor as 'smart' was something which was distinctly modern – and once again something which was distinctly *male*, as we shall see.

The surprising thing about the *Victory* guidebook is that even though it wrote Emma Hamilton out of the Trafalgar story, it also acknowledged that *some* women had, in fact, sailed on the *Victory* – and working class women at that. The 'cockpit', the guidebook told its readers, had acquired this name amongst 'the seamen... in jest' because of the 'terrible fights' that 'sometimes took place' amongst the women 'who were berthed in this place', this being 'in the days when women were carried onboard [sic.] some of H.M. Ships'.<sup>1248</sup> And so once again, the *Victory* restorers constructed the 'smartness' and discipline of male sailors against disorderly women.

Presumably the authors thought that this anecdote was funny. But again, we can also see a certain amount of underlying anxiety about the presence of women in this supposedly male environment. The anecdote talked about 'the days' of women being allowed to travel on Royal Navy vessels as though this was in the distant past, but it was actually very recent.<sup>1249</sup> During the Great War, members of the Women's Royal Naval Service had been integrated into Royal Navy bases, and sometimes also into their auxiliary ships – but not without a certain amount of anxiety from both organisations about the possibilities of, variously, 'impropriety', sexual harassment, unplanned pregnancy, the spread of venereal disease, and of the impact which all of these might have on service discipline.<sup>1250</sup> The guidebook's image of Georgian women fighting each other in the *Victory's* 'cockpit' reinforced all the worst stereotypes of women at sea, and especially because readers were left to infer for themselves what, exactly, these women had been doing on-board.<sup>1251</sup> And so, like the young women who were 'flirting in Nelson's own cabin!', and the idea

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<sup>1247</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

<sup>1248</sup> The Society for Nautical Research, *Guide to H.M.S. Victory*, p. 19.

<sup>1249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1250</sup> Stuart Mason, *Britannia's Daughters*, pp. 12-13 & 15-18.

<sup>1251</sup> In fact, most of the women who sailed on Georgian naval ships were the wives of officers, including working class warrant officers. There is evidence as well to suggest that women in less formalised

of Emma Hamilton inciting Nelson to 'canoodling' in the same place, this was an anecdote which underscored the idea that women on board were dangerous because they were objects of sexual temptation: and as such, a direct threat to male discipline, sacrifice, and commitment to duty.<sup>1252</sup>

Why, then, did Callender endorse one story but condemn the other? Margarette Lincoln argues that Emma's affair with Nelson had been particularly upsetting for her contemporaries, because as a lower class woman who had married into the aristocracy she had also transgressed class boundaries. Contemporary prints treated lower class female sex workers with more respect than they sometimes treated Emma, Lady Hamilton.<sup>1253</sup> The difference, she concludes, was in their impact. If Nelson were to be distracted by his lover, then the whole nation might suffer.<sup>1254</sup>

The same principles still applied. The restorers were happy to joke about lower-class women fighting in the cockpit because this distraction carried no consequences for the fleet, or for Britain. Emma Hamilton's ability to distract Nelson was far more dangerous. And it seems likely, as well, that the former anecdote appealed to the restorers because it proved their wider point: that women were a disruptive presence on-board naval ships, a hindrance to masculine duty, stoicism, and patriotic sacrifice. The *Victory* was a 'shrine of manly virtues', and this 'shrine' was reinforced by a subtle narrative about female absence.<sup>1255</sup> And this was yet another reason why the 'giggling girls' found themselves under just as much scrutiny, if not more, than the 'young Marine guides' who were showing them around in a light-hearted fashion.<sup>1256</sup>

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relationships were sometimes able to travel with commissioned officers. Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>1252</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

<sup>1253</sup> Lincoln, 'Emma Hamilton', pp. 142-143.

<sup>1254</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 138-140.

<sup>1255</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923. Quintin Colville has identified the same process at work on contemporary naval ships: Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity', p. 500. And as he notes, historians of masculinities have long emphasised the relational nature between these and ideas about femininities. See: Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 2; Francis, 'Domestication of the Male', p. 638 & 652.

<sup>1256</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Admiral Doveton Sturdee, 10 September 1922.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The group of young women who unknowingly aggravated Geoffrey Callender on board the *Victory* in September 1922 were guilty of a number of offences in his eyes. Firstly, they were ‘giggling’, and so he presumed that they had wilfully chosen to ignore cues that the ship was a shrine to Nelson’s death, sacrifice, and apotheosis, and that visitors should therefore should behave with respect. Secondly, they were ‘flirting’, and quite probably with the ‘irreverent’ marine guides, who were also subject to Callender’s ire. As such, these young women were distracting the current generation of sailors from fulfilling their duty. They were examples of the very kind of disruptive feminine influence that Callender wanted to discourage from being associated with Nelson. It did not help that these guides were also sharing sexually suggestive stories about Emma Hamilton at the same time.

When the *Victory*’s restorers referred to the ship as a ‘shrine of manly virtues’, what they meant, specifically, was that it was a monument to male stoicism, endurance and personal sacrifice.<sup>1257</sup> The horrors of war, death, and injury were partially acknowledged, and used to emphasise the heroism of the men who were prepared to suffer them for the sake of God, nation, and empire. Visitors to the *Victory* were likewise encouraged to read these qualities into the harsh living conditions endured by the ship’s Georgian sailors. And this space was characterised, as well, by the *absence* of their female loved ones, who the restorers implied were far more useful to male patriotic endeavour when they offered support from afar, rather than in person.

This narrative was not created in isolation. Commemoration of white male sacrifice resonated with Great War memorial culture. The subtle but regular reminders that the *Victory* had been, by default, an exclusively male space reflected contemporary naval anxieties. And the emphasis on the ‘smartness’, and discipline of naval men (in contrast to women) was especially significant, because such men were held to represent the strength of the Royal Navy, and the

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<sup>1257</sup> 'H.M.S. Victory. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

strength of the British Empire more generally. And, as this thesis has shown, Callender and his colleagues had every reason to want to reassure themselves about white British 'smartness', discipline, and naval strength, because to them, these things seemed to be under threat from all sides.<sup>1258</sup> By the early 1920s, their world had shifted, and rapidly. Almost all working class men, and many women, could now vote. Popular socialism was on the rise, state education had expanded, and the Labour party had become a serious threat to the Conservatives in parliament. The Royal Navy faced severe budget cuts, and politicians of all parties had begun to look to the League of Nations to help arbitrate future international disputes. The supremacy of white Britons within their empire also seemed to be under threat, at least to them. And, in this rapidly shifting world, these men clung to the *Victory* as a symbol of not just naval strength, but also of *masculine* strength, white racial supremacy, and imperial might. And they hoped, as well, that these things might inspire the working class to show more appreciation of the virtues of 'duty' and respect for strong leadership in everyday life.

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<sup>1258</sup> Don Leggett has made a similar, although more narrowly focussed point: namely that the ship offered reassurance at a time of great uncertainty for the future of the Royal Navy, because it was a symbol of Trafalgar, and therefore of Britain's historical naval power. See: Leggett, 'Restoring Victory', pp. 64-65.

## Conclusion

On Monday, 19 March 1928, Amanullah Khan and Soraya Tarzi, the King and Queen of Afghanistan, arrived at Portsmouth Dockyard. 'In anticipation of the Royal visit', the Hampshire Telegraph and Post reported, 'the ships in harbour and at Spithead were dressed in their gala attire... and flew the Afghan flag at their mainmasts.'<sup>1259</sup> All morning there had been 'an air of animation and festivity' amongst the crowd gathered at Portsea Hard, 'and as noon approached people lined the route to the main entrance to the Dockyard in anticipation of catching a passing glimpse of the Monarch from the Middle East and his beautiful Queen.'<sup>1260</sup> The royals' first visit of the day was to the newly-restored H.M.S. *Victory*, where 'His Majesty appeared to be very interested in all the historical associations with Lord Nelson, and particularly in the spot where the Admiral received his fatal wound.'<sup>1261</sup> This was public spectacle, and it provided an opportunity for a series of different parties, including both Amanullah and Soraya themselves, and the British press, to project meaning onto the *Victory*. And so this small episode compellingly illustrates the narratives surrounding the *Victory* in wider British society: narratives which its restorers had successfully tapped into, but also reinforced.

There were several layers to Amanullah and Soraya's visit. They were in the middle of a European tour: ostensibly a fact-finding mission, but also a carefully considered publicity exercise. They were twin-figureheads of a movement to project Afghanistan, internally and externally, as a modern middle-eastern nation: strong in its middle-eastern alliances and firmly independent of Britain, who had only withdrawn its claim to Afghanistan nine years earlier.<sup>1262</sup> They were, they

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<sup>1259</sup> 'Royal Visitors. King and Queen of Afghanistan. Naval Greetings', *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*, 23 March 1928, p. 16.

<sup>1260</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1262</sup> Holly Edwards, 'Photography and Afghan Diplomacy in the Early Twentieth Century', *Ars Orientalis*, 43 (2013), 50-51 & 60-61.

## Conclusion

knew, on display. Photo-journalists captured every stage – and in Britain, readers of publications like the *Illustrated London News* followed their movements with eagerness.<sup>1263</sup>

The British press were particularly fascinated with Soraya: her reputation as a feminist activist, her fashionable, Western outfits ('the Queen was in a Lido blue velvet coat, trimmed with fur, and a brown hat', reported the *Hampshire Telegraph and Post*), her 'beautiful' looks, and, most jarringly, her skin tone.<sup>1264</sup> 'Hope the Af: King & his dusky Queen will enjoy their visit to Portsmouth & the Victory!' R. Lionel Foster, *Victory* Technical Committee member, scrawled in a note to Callender on the day of the visit.<sup>1265</sup> Soraya was orientalist and fetishized, but at the same time hugely embraced by the British press, who liked to imagine her as a formerly oppressed woman who had transformed, via her contact with the West, into one of their own: a modern 'cosmopolitan celebrity', to use Holly Edwards' words.<sup>1266</sup>

And so, despite all this enthusiasm for the Afghan royal couple's visit, British press coverage also contained a strong undercurrent of imperialist superiority.<sup>1267</sup> The *Hampshire Telegraph and Post* reported with satisfaction on the 'at once picturesque and imposing' nature of the Dockyard welcome, and that Amanullah had been 'obviously impressed' with the 'spectacle'.<sup>1268</sup> The *Victory* 'formed a majestic background for the Eastern monarch's introduction to the Royal Navy'.<sup>1269</sup> They were proud that the Afghan royals had made 'their first intimate acquaintance with naval ways and customs' at Portsmouth (Afghanistan itself being landlocked).<sup>1270</sup> And part of this introduction was to British naval firepower, albeit dressed up in the spirit of diplomacy: Amanullah's visit ended with a journey on the submarine L22, where he was invited to fire torpedoes.<sup>1271</sup> British press coverage of Amanullah and Soraya's tour as a whole, in fact, used their

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<sup>1263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1264</sup> 'Royal Visitors. King and Queen of Afghanistan. Naval Greetings'; Edwards, 'Photography and Afghan Diplomacy', pp. 55-56.

<sup>1265</sup> R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender 19 March 1928, SNR 7/15, SNR Records, NMM.

<sup>1266</sup> Edwards, 'Photography and Afghan Diplomacy', pp. 56-57.

<sup>1267</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>1268</sup> 'Royal Visitors. King and Queen of Afghanistan. Naval Greetings'.

<sup>1269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1271</sup> Ibid.

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movements within Britain to celebrate Britain's own military and technological prowess, and this episode fully conformed to this wider trend.<sup>1272</sup> British modernity felt all the more satisfying for being imagined through foreign eyes.

H.M.S. *Victory* was the stage for this narrative about British imperial superiority, but it also had its own important role to play. When the Afghan royals were introduced to 'naval ways and customs', it was important that this had been a mixture of 'old and new'.<sup>1273</sup> The fact that King Amanullah had been 'very interested' in the modest 'Here Nelson Fell' plaque on the *Victory's* quarter deck was a particular source of satisfaction.<sup>1274</sup> When the British press used the visit to celebrate Britain's imperial modernity, this was a celebration in which naval heritage also mattered deeply.<sup>1275</sup>

The 'Save the *Victory*' appeal had set out to promote H.M.S. *Victory* as a monument to the might of the British Empire, and Royal Navy, and, in so doing, create a 'stimulus to patriotism'.<sup>1276</sup> And the British response to Amanullah and Soraya's visit to Portsmouth reveals how much the appeal organisers' messages had resonated. In part, this was because their work promoting the *Victory* tapped into existing popular narratives, including that of the Royal Navy as the defender of British 'freedoms', Britons as an 'island race', and the hero-cult of Nelson himself.<sup>1277</sup> The ship was preserved for the future because several different parties, including the Admiralty, the Society for Nautical Research, and also donors within and outside the British Empire, agreed that it had *meaning*: it carried significance beyond its purely utilitarian uses. Admittedly, different

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<sup>1272</sup> Edwards, 'Photography and Afghan Diplomacy', p. 52.

<sup>1273</sup> 'Royal Visitors. King and Queen of Afghanistan. Naval Greetings'; 'Old and New. The Victory and a Modern Battleship. Afghan King', *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 19 March 1928, p. 1.

<sup>1274</sup> 'Royal Visitors. King and Queen of Afghanistan. Naval Greetings'. Several other reports also mentioned that Amanullah had been shown the plaque: 'Old and New. The Victory and a Modern Battleship. Afghan King'; 'A King's Trip in Submarine. Afghan Rulers with the Navy', *Western Morning News and Mercury*, 20 March 1928, p. 7.

<sup>1275</sup> See also Astrid Swenson on the role of heritage in promoting imperial modernity: Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, pp. 312-313.

<sup>1276</sup> 'Saving H.M.S Victory. Gift of £50,000. Anonymous Reader's Generosity', circa March 1923.

<sup>1277</sup> Conley, *Jack Tar to Union Jack*, pp. 123-125; Colley, *Britons*, p. 5; Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 87-88.

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observers can read monuments in different ways.<sup>1278</sup> But it is safe to say that the vast majority of people who engaged with the *Victory* in some manner in the 1920s, including as donors and visitors, understood it to have meaning as the site of Horatio Nelson's death, and apotheosis; and as a symbol of Britain as an imperial, maritime power.

There was more to this though, than just national pride – at least for the restorers themselves. 'Round her', Archibald Hurd wrote in a column supporting the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal in 1923, 'cluster memories of many victories in peace and war, victories of order over chaos, discipline over licence'.<sup>1279</sup> For Conservative men like Archibald Hurd, and also for the SNR's own Admiral Sturdee and Geoffrey Callender, the *Victory* offered a reassuring symbol of continuity in a rapidly changing world. It symbolised the strength of white British men - and particularly of white British sailors - and their ability to build and maintain an empire that seemed to now be under threat, both from outside, and from within.

This was not just about perceived threats to Britain's naval strength – although clearly, and as Don Leggett has suggested, this played an important part.<sup>1280</sup> It was also about the restorers' fears about British citizens themselves. How would they respond to the vast social and political shifts of the early 1920s, not least the rise of Labour at home, and Communist Russia abroad? The restorers wanted young people to show proper reverence for national icons of the past. They also wanted young people to subscribe to the idea that they had a patriotic duty to be responsible citizens, workers, and voters, and also to perceive these things to be an imperialist duty. And so far as these men were concerned, the *Victory* offered an active solution to these problems. Their 'Save the *Victory*' appeal set out to revitalise patriotism amongst British children, and in so doing, inhibit the spread of 'foreign' left-wing ideas.

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<sup>1278</sup> King, *Memorials of the Great War*, p. 11.

<sup>1279</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

<sup>1280</sup> Leggett, 'Restoring Victory', pp. 64-65.

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What, then, does this thesis have to add to our understanding of H.M.S *Victory*? A small number of existing publications have shown interest in the navalist, imperialist, and Conservative politics that drove the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal, but this thesis takes these subjects and explores them in real depth for the first time.<sup>1281</sup> And by doing this, it is also able to demonstrate something previously overlooked, namely that Sturdee and Callender's navalist politics were very closely intertwined with their overwhelming paranoia about Communist Russia, and about socialist agents at home, and that *both* causes, rather than navalism alone, were the impetus for the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal. We cannot truly understand the logic of their propagandist tactics without this perspective.

As such, this thesis also provides a fresh perspective on the history of anti-socialism and popular commemoration of the British Empire. It argues that we can only fully understand how the *Victory's* restorers believed that the ship could defend the British Empire against socialism if we understand the racial ideologies lying behind their thinking. 'Save the *Victory*' publicity material never made explicitly anti-socialist statements, and even Admiral Sturdee mostly managed to keep his thoughts to himself in the public lectures he delivered on behalf of the appeal.<sup>1282</sup> Sybil Thorndike, the prominent Labour activist, pacifist, and actress, even agreed to sit as a member of the *Victory* appeal's honorary organising committee.<sup>1283</sup> So how was it that Sturdee and Callender were so convinced that the *Victory* appeal would further their anti-socialist, anti-Labour cause?

The key to solving this contradiction is that Sturdee and Callender were themselves convinced that socialism was inherently alien to the British character. They believed, as well, that white Britons, and especially white British men, had inherited an affinity for particular moral virtues from their 'Anglo-Saxon' ancestors – and that Nelson exemplified these virtues. He was a

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<sup>1281</sup> *Ibid.*; Littlewood and Butler, *Of Ships and Stars*, pp. 31-40; Murphy and Oddy, *Mirror of the Seas*, pp. 22-46.

<sup>1282</sup> The exception, of course, being: Admiral Doveton Sturdee, manuscript, 'the British Empire', circa 1923.

<sup>1283</sup> Archibald Spens to Geoffrey Callender, 26 January 1923 ; Jonathan Croall, *Sybil Thorndike: A Star of Life*. (London: Haus Publishing, 2008), pp. 283-284 & 507.

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model of patriotic duty and self-sacrifice, as well as a reminder of the mutual responsibilities between leaders and followers. And so by Sturdee and Callender's logic, if they could use Nelson and the *Victory's* example to revitalise these qualities within the 'Anglo-Saxon' race, then they would open their fellow Britons' eyes to the dangers of socialist persuasion.<sup>1284</sup> Race is a subject that has received limited attention in previous and otherwise valuable research into anti-socialism and empire.<sup>1285</sup> The findings of this thesis indicate that this inattention has led us to miss the true extent of anti-socialist ideology and propaganda in British life, especially when it was more subtly expressed, and the important role that national heritage sites had to play in this. We should pay closer attention going forward.

Callender and Sturdee's plan to use Nelson and the *Victory* to revitalise the 'Anglo-Saxon' race was not just a response to the rise of the Left, however. It was also linked to the racial ideology, politics, and economic structures of the British Empire. The appeal presented a history of empire centred on the white Dominions, and also looked to these as a source of donations. It all-but ignored other colonies, even at the expense of being able to present empire as a 'civilising mission', which claimed that white rule was for the benefit of colonised peoples.<sup>1286</sup> It also celebrated Trafalgar as an example of the heroic virtues of white British sailors, and ignored the well-documented presence of sailors of colour, European, and American sailors on board the ship at Trafalgar. With Dominion independence from Britain about to become political reality, imperial unity seemed all the more dependent on boosting white 'Anglo-Saxon' identity around the empire.<sup>1287</sup> Heritage had an important part to play in this.<sup>1288</sup>

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<sup>1284</sup> My approach has been indebted to the work of Peter Yeandle, who established the importance of racial ideology in the teaching of 'enlightened patriotism' to working class schoolchildren in this period. See: Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*. 'Enlightened patriotism' placed great emphasis on encouraging these children to value their own humble role within Britain's existing social hierarchy, and to see fulfilling this role as a civic and imperial duty. See: *ibid.* pp. 119-130.

<sup>1285</sup> For example English, 'Empire Day'.

<sup>1286</sup> On history teaching and the 'civilising mission', see: Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire*, pp. 105-112 & 162.

<sup>1287</sup> Darwin, 'Third British Empire', pp. 71-72.

<sup>1288</sup> Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, pp. 94-95.

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It is significant, as well, that over two-thirds of the *Victory* fund was donated by James Caird, owner of the Scottish Shire Line: a firm which profited from employing merchant sailors of colour under discriminatory 'Lascar' articles, even when these sailors had the right, as British citizens, to be employed under the same contract as their white British counterparts. The *Victory* appeal promoted white superiority. And we can see this, as well, in how the British press described Amanullah and Soraya's 'introduction to the Royal Navy', and especially in the racialised and sexualised language by which *Victory* restorer R. Lionel Foster described Soraya herself.<sup>1289</sup> By presenting the *Victory* as a monument exclusively to the white sailors of empire, Sturdee and Callender were responding to this wider racist culture, and also, in their own, smaller way, adding to it.

There has been a glaring lack of reference to race in previous work on H.M.S. *Victory*'s 1920s restoration, and this is especially shocking, given that the ship was explicitly restored as a monument to the role of white men in building, and maintaining the British Empire. And so this thesis offers a much-needed investigation into the racial ideology of *how* the ship functioned as an imperialist monument. And in so doing, it offers up H.M.S. *Victory* as another example of Britain's heavily whitewashed memorial culture at the end of the Great War, and makes a small contribution to the important work of uncovering the very real impact that Britain's racialised power structures, and economics, had (and continue to have) on public culture, and vice versa.<sup>1290</sup>

Of course, the 'Save the *Victory*' appeal did not just promote the ship as an emblem to the imperialist endeavours of white Britons. It specifically promoted it as a 'shrine of manly virtues', a memorial to Nelson as a heroic exemplar for white imperialist men.<sup>1291</sup> H.M.S. *Victory* was (and still is) understood by contemporaries through a heavily gendered lens, but this thesis offers the first comprehensive study of the role of gender ideologies in shaping any aspect of the ship's

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<sup>1289</sup> 'Royal Visitors. King and Queen of Afghanistan. Naval Greetings'; R. Lionel Foster to Geoffrey Callender 19 March 1928.

<sup>1290</sup> Siblon, 'Negotiating Hierarchy and Memory'; Tabili, 'Construction of Racial Difference'.

<sup>1291</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

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history. And, by applying this approach to the ship's restoration and curation, the thesis also highlights how Geoffrey Callender's presumptions around gendered behaviour, including emotional expression, patriotic gestures, antique collecting, and visitor conduct subtly but fundamentally shaped the ship's transformation from historically significant naval vessel into twentieth century public monument. And in doing so, it also offers fresh insights into how 1920s Britons collectively engaged with these gendered behavioural expectations around patriotism, empire, and heritage on a practical level.

As the *Victory's* de-facto curator, Geoffrey Callender's presumptions and biases around gender are naturally at the heart of this work. Callender had strong expectations about how the *Victory's* visitors should commemorate Nelson. In Callender's mind the ship was a shrine to Nelson's sacrifice, death, and martyrdom, and a monument to white male sacrifice in general. He and his colleagues carefully planned the route which visitors would take through the ship to emphasise this. They made sure, as well, that the recreated interiors appeared to be appropriately 'masculine', at least by their own standards of modern naval furnishing.

Callender did believe that white women had a place in this historical narrative. But it was firmly offstage. Emma Hamilton could be a powerful symbol of Nelson's personal sacrifices on behalf of nation – but an Emma who visited Nelson on board the *Victory* was a dangerous and distracting force. In Callender's eyes the guide who made jokes about the latter was guilty of far worse than a small historical inaccuracy. And if white women were off stage, then women of colour were nowhere to be seen. Queen Soraya was, indeed, the only woman of colour whose existence was ever acknowledged by the *Victory* restorers, and even then was referred to by her skin colour, not by her name.

Callender's problem was that not all Britons shared his faintly pious attitude towards Emma Hamilton, or his insistence that visitors treat the ship as though it were a sacred pilgrimage site. Just as audiences flocked to the cinema to see films celebrating Emma as the 'new' woman, so too

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did real-life 'new' women join the crowds lining up to visit the *Victory*.<sup>1292</sup> Some of them even had the nerve to be visibly enjoying themselves. Even if the 'shrine of manly virtues' was built on popular narratives around race, masculinity, and heroism, Callender did not ultimately have a monopoly on these ideas, or total control over how his visitors applied them to their visit, for all that he tried.<sup>1293</sup>

He struggled, too, with women who tried to make some kind of claim on his shrine to heroic masculinity. Beatrice Suckling was politely dismissed when she attempted to use her distant genealogical relationship to Nelson, and her spiritual relationship, to demand an explanation regarding the rumoured sale of the ship and its furniture.<sup>1294</sup> Emily Nevill Jackson, a writer, scholar, and lace expert who approached Callender about relic sales was a 'tiresome woman', dismissed by Callender as an avaricious irritation, 'in commerce', and so out for her own interests.<sup>1295</sup> Her fellow collector Mrs Benfield-Harbottle was pronounced 'a commission agent' who was profiting from her 'fashionable friends'.<sup>1296</sup> And Callender's dismissive attitude towards these women was reflected in the team of men who he gathered around him. The women who worked on the *Victory* appeal and subsequent restoration were always in supporting roles, and almost always uncredited, even when their workload had been considerable.

In theory, Callender held male and female supporters to the same standards: they were to express their sentiments towards the ship 'rationally', and should, as well, be 'humble' in their ambitions for their involvement in the project. They should be 'ethical' collectors who donated relics to the ship wherever possible, and only asked for a token fee if they faced extenuating circumstances. But in practice, Callender placed his female correspondents under far more scrutiny than the male. And thus he ignored Beatrice Suckling, even though she was perfectly correct about the commercial aspirations of Lawrence Feuerherd, whom Callender would later,

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<sup>1292</sup> Williams, 'Emma Hamilton in Fiction and Film', p. 263.

<sup>1293</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

<sup>1294</sup> Beatrice Suckling to Geoffrey Callender, 25 June 1928.

<sup>1295</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930.

<sup>1296</sup> Geoffrey Callender to B. Jewell, 25 February 1929.

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in hindsight, accuse of 'attempt[ing] to exploit the *Victory*' by trying to sell his relics for an 'exorbitant' profit.<sup>1297</sup> And Callender's gendered judgements about the moral behaviour of these men and women influenced which objects he chose to display on, or alongside the *Victory*, and which he did not. Clearly then, the *Victory* was restored as a 'shrine of manly virtues' in more than just name only.<sup>1298</sup>

Geoffrey Callender's 1920s curation of H.M.S. *Victory* therefore offers a powerful reminder to those of us engaged in museum research and practice: namely, that museum collections are things that have been shaped by the gendered decision-making of their curators. This fact matters because (as this thesis argues) all objects that enter national museums are enshrined as being authentic 'relics' – albeit to varying degrees, and not always intentionally. It is our responsibility as researchers and practitioners to reassess and reframe these national 'relics' for a modern audience. To be successful in this, all work to uncover the conscious agendas and unconscious presumptions inherent to the *processes* of museum collecting – including gender, race, and class – are vital.

It should be noted, however, that this thesis has always been limited in scope *because* of its choice to focus on the archive of the Society for Nautical Research, and therefore on the opinions of a small group of white, middle class, anti-socialist British men. The archive does provide glimpses of alternative views, and ways of engaging with the *Victory*, in the form of letters from some of the many men and women who chose to support the restoration project. But ultimately, these correspondents were also a self-selecting group of people, because they felt strongly enough to write (even if what they had to say was not always positive). They cannot tell us whether the average member of the public, including the average casual visitor to the ship itself, felt the same way. Perhaps an even bigger limitation of the SNR's archive is that it has very little to say about how the wider British Empire responded to the SNR's attempts to promote the

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<sup>1297</sup> Geoffrey Callender to Rear Admiral Chetwode, 19 May 1930.

<sup>1298</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Restoration Work Started at Portsmouth', 1 June 1923.

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*Victory* as an imperial monument – other than the occasional letter of support from white residents of British Dominions. How other imperial citizens, and particularly men and women of colour engaged with, and reinterpreted the SNR's messages about the *Victory*, whether through fundraising appeal or by visiting in person, would be a particularly valuable area for further research.

This thesis does, however, have one final meaningful contribution to make: namely in our understanding of the history of British heritage preservation practice. Preserving the *Victory* came with significant logistical and financial challenges. It is telling that the SNR insisted on restoring the ship back to its presumed Trafalgar appearance, despite limited records and very high expenditure. Preserving the ship with its late nineteenth-century modifications still in place would have been far cheaper – but it would not have fulfilled the SNR's vision of the 'shrine of manly virtues'.<sup>1299</sup> Restoration, they claimed, would make the heavily-modified *Victory* more aesthetically pleasing, and a more accurate example of Georgian naval architecture. It helped transform the *Victory* from an underwhelming antiquated ship to an awe-inspiring monument which felt as though it came 'out of the past'.<sup>1300</sup> It transformed the *Victory* into the ship 'that Nelson knew', and gave visitors a sense of tangible connection to the hero both in his life, and at the moment of his death.<sup>1301</sup> In so doing, restoration more than any other kind of preservation would allow the ship to become a visually, and emotionally satisfying monument to Nelson, Navy and Empire – and therefore all the more effective as a 'stimulus to patriotism'.<sup>1302</sup>

It is significant, also, that the SNR's restoration scheme seems to have been widely accepted by their contemporaries. Previous research into the contemporary British preservation sector has overwhelmingly focussed on its anti-restoration movement which developed in the late

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<sup>1299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1300</sup> Screen titles, 'The Immortal Story of H.M.S. *Victory*', circa 1923.

<sup>1301</sup> 'H.M.S. *Victory*. Progress of the Work on the Famous Old Ship'.

<sup>1302</sup> 'Saving H.M.S *Victory*. Gift of £50,000. Anonymous Reader's Generosity', circa March 1923.

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nineteenth-century.<sup>1303</sup> But this is not the complete picture. As such, this thesis has begun to sketch out some of the nuances of British preservation practice, and also exceptions to the anti-restoration stance of some preservationists. It argues that interwar Britons believed that restoration was an acceptable part of preservation practice under certain conditions. Mitigating factors included age, prior preservation work, and, most importantly, how the preserved site was to be used in the present.

The thesis argues, as well, that the choice to restore the *Victory* would have seemed logical to contemporaries, because restoration was already a well-established practice for preserving historic ships in Britain at this time. And in so doing it highlights the fact that we have so far failed to incorporate maritime heritage into wider histories of the British preservation sector. The result is that we have built an incomplete picture of the history of our heritage preservation practice. If we are to properly understand Britain's preservation history we need a different, more holistic approach going forward: one that directly compares preservation practice regarding designated 'ancient monuments' with that of maritime and industrial heritage, and indeed, with private buildings.

So: the *Victory* was restored back to its presumed 'Trafalgar' appearance in the 1920s as a monument to white 'Anglo-Saxon' masculinity, which was, in itself, a symbol of the 'strength' of the Royal Navy, and of the might of the British Empire. Its restorers were white, middle class, Conservative men who, faced with rising socialism, naval fleet reductions, and a series of other challenges to the status quo, turned to the *Victory* as an icon of 'order against chaos': a reassuring symbol of tradition, naval and imperial strength, and of conservative moral virtues (particularly devotion to duty, self-sacrifice, and respect for leadership) as innate to the white 'Anglo-Saxon' race.<sup>1304</sup> These ideas informed their conscious use of the ship as subtle anti-socialist and navalist propaganda. And they also influenced several of the unconscious assumptions that they made

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<sup>1303</sup> Pevsner, 'Scrape and Anti-Scrape'; Miele, 'The First Conservation Militants: William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings'; Swenson, *Rise of Heritage*, pp. 78-86.

<sup>1304</sup> Hurd, 'The Cathedral of the Navy'.

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during the project – for example Geoffrey Callender’s innate distrust of women ‘in commerce’.<sup>1305</sup> And in so doing, the restorers not only responded to these wider narratives about race, empire, and masculinity in Britain, but they reinforced them amongst the many Britons who engaged with ‘Save the *Victory*’ propaganda, and who visited the ship in person.

Meanings of monuments develop over time – but modern meanings have always been influenced by what has come before.<sup>1306</sup> The popular narratives that surround the *Victory* today no longer celebrate the ship as a monument to the racial superiority of white ‘Anglo-Saxons’ (at least, not in mainstream narratives). But in some ways, Callender and his colleagues succeeded in creating a monument for the future. The ship is still a powerful focus for national nostalgia: for Nelson and his ‘manly virtues’, and for the former might of Britain’s sailing navy. The remnants of imperialist sentiment remain, even if the political message itself has been removed.

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<sup>1305</sup> Geoffrey Callender to George Hope, 24 May 1930.

<sup>1306</sup> King, *Memorials of the Great War*, p. 11.



## Appendix A: Additional Images

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Figure 15 Detail, William Bond, Nelson bureau lock, photograph, November 1928. SNR 7/13, SNR Records. Image courtesy of the Society for Nautical Research, and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

Image removed for copyright reasons.

Figure 16 Diagram of route for King George V's visit to H.M.S. Victory, circa July 1928, SNR 7/16, SNR Records. Image courtesy of the Society for Nautical Research, and the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. Please note however that this document is presumed to have been disposed of during rationalisation of the SNR archive in 2017 (Susan Gentles, personal communication, 08 October 2019).

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