

COUNCIL OF THE ISLES OF SCILLY	POLICY AND RESOURCES	17/04/07	PART 1 DECISION URGENT ITEM
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Title: **Tricentenary of the Wreck of the Association**  
Author: Chief Executive

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 2007 marks the three hundredth anniversary of the wreck of the Association and part of her fleet.
- 1.2 The immediate past Chairman, Cllr Dudley Mumford, during his period of office initiated planning to ensure that the importance of this major event in the Isles history be properly commemorated.
- 1.3 The significance of the loss of the Association, three other ships and at least 1,500 men, including Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovel, is great in itself and also as the inspiration for a solution to the calculation of longitude at sea. Attached as Appendix One is the preface for a commemorative booklet which sets the event in its world changing context.

## **2 Information**

- 2.1 A number of commemorative events are now in hand, including:
  - ° a visit by a ship of the Royal Navy to lay wreaths near the sites of the wrecks, weather permitting
  - ° to host a reception on board
  - ° visits by notable authorities including the Astronomer Royal, Sir Arnold Wolfendale, and Dava Sobel, the best selling author
  - ° the production of a commemorative booklet
  - ° an exhibition of photographs and artefacts
  - ° the display of the stern board of the Association back on the Isles of Scilly.
- 2.2 The opportunity now arises to have the Stern board returned to Scilly permanently. It is clearly a very important piece of marine carving.



- 2.3 To recover the item to Scilly, English Heritage insists that approved conservators are employed to remove it from its current position, stabilise and conserve it, and re-install it in its new position within the Council Chamber.

### **3 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The majority of the events and activities either have no direct cost to the Council or are contained in the existing budgets.
- 3.2 The retrieval of the stern board and its conservation may cost up to £20,000.
- 3.3 A review of the Outturn 2006/07 Demographic Representation and Management budget indicates a projected underspend against Members allowances and expenses of £22,027. Any underspend will be transferred to General Fund Reserve when the 2007/07 year is closed down. In order to fund the conservation costs, £20,000 of this underspend could be taken from General Fund in 2007/08 and set up within the Democratic Representation and Management budget.

### **4 Legal Opinion**

- 4.1 No legal opinion is required on this item.

### **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 That a sum of £20,000 be set up within the 2007/08 Democratic Representation and Management budget under the premises section headed 'Coat of Arms' to fund the return and conservation of the stern board of the Association funded from General Fund Reserves.

Implications	Environmental Impact	None as a result of this report
	Community Health Implications	None as a result of this report
	Crime and Disorder Reductions	None as a result of this report
	Best Value Implications	None as a result of this report
	Financial Implications	See Paragraph 3
	Legal opinion Required/ Date	No: See Paragraph 4

Today the Isles of Scilly evoke a sense of peace and security. An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty the Isles attracts tens of thousands of visitors each year to relax in the tranquillity and enjoy the pristine environment. It is difficult 300 years from the wreck of the *Association* and part of her fleet to conceive of the enormity of the tragedy of the 22 October 1707. At least 1500 men lost their lives and many more mothers, wives and children their loved ones. A great admiral; until then lauded for his personal bravery, leadership and success in battle was ignominiously brought down and killed not at the hand of the many enemies he had faced in his career, but by the most basic of elements; sea, wind and rock and the limits of navigational knowledge and technology.

Somehow the islands coped with the aftermath of the wreck, burying broken and bruised bodies and trying to make some use of the wreckage washing around the islands.

As so often with the human spirit, out of adversity came triumph. The wreck of the *Association* was a consequence not of arrogance or stupidity, but because of the inability to calculate longitude at sea. Admiral Cloudesley Shovell, his captains and sailing masters could readily and accurately determine their latitude, but not their longitude so sailed by the aptly named custom of dead reckoning. In truth dead reckoning was little more than guess work. Away from a recognisable shore a navigator could calculate his ship's latitude and by compass know his ship's bearing and by log his approximate speed, but had no real sense of his longitude and could stray wildly from his intended position. Exacerbated by rough weather, this deficiency was the undoing of the HMS *Association* and part of her fleet, the *Eagle*, *Romney* and *Firebrand*

So great was the shock of loss of a great admiral and important ships of the line that Queen Anne and her Government determined to promote a viable solution to the problem of calculating longitude at sea. A board of longitude was established to judge potential solutions and the then huge prize of £20,000 offered for a successful means of calculating longitude. Astronomers, clockmakers, charlatans and occasionally the deranged would proffer solutions. In the end after the best part of a lifetime of commitment a humble and untrained clockmaker of remarkable intelligence and stamina, John Harrison, produced a chronometer accurate enough to allow safe calculation of longitude and to allow navigation to become a science rather than a vague intent.

From tragic National and individual losses came the triumph of the chronometer that saved huge numbers of lives and many thousands of ships from the same fate as the *Association* and gave the British Navy and Merchant Marine and then the whole world great advance in communication.

This booklet succinctly succeeds in telling the remarkable story of triumph coming from disaster. Its authors and editor tell the story vividly and in its true historical context. It is particularly apt that Richard Larn has contributed to and edited the booklet and that Roy Graham has contributed to it as it was they that were the driving force behind the Naval Air Command Sub Aqua Club that discovered the wreck site in 1967 and brought back to life the extraordinary events of the wreck of the *Association* and a quest for the calculation of the longitude.

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