

NATION HONOURS SEA HEROES

News of Drake once more centres interest in Plymouth Sound, whose waters saw the birth of a tradition of freedom at sea. A tradition which the world might well bear in mind, in the troubled waters of today.

The spirit of Drake is never far distant from the soil of the land beloved. On Plymouth Hoe, where once he bowled, seamen still match their skill. The murals which depict that historic game are part of the Festival Year display of Devon's ancient port. A gesture of pride by a city whose name is eternally linked with the Armada - the River Plate - the Amethyst.

Buckland Abbey is where Drake made his home. Now is it to house his relics in a naval museum. To restore its time-worn walls, the Pilgrim Trust gave help. And now, to its doors, comes another great sailor - Earl Mountbatten. For the Lord Mayor of Plymouth it is a proud moment. For Lady Astor, a dream come true, as the man who led our ships against Japan honours the memory of the man who saved us from the power of Spain. Here, under one roof, the simple trophies of a great seaman have for the first time been brought together.

The message of Drake's drum can still be heard by those with ears to hear. It is a message implicit in the life of the man who captained the Golden Hind.

Nelson's flagship "Victory" inherited a tradition - and a name - from the ships which fought the Armada. It is fitting that, at a time when Plymouth honours Drake, the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth marches at the head of his citizens to pay tribute to Nelson.

Tradition lives on, as Admiral Sir Arthur Power (C-in-C Portsmouth) inspects a guard of honour whose esp-ribbons bear the name of Nelson's ship. They parade for the unveiling of a statue presented by Dr. H. J. Aldous to the city to which Nelson brought fame.

So, a seaman of today honours a seaman of the past, and the traditions of courage and initiative which Nelson handed down. It is a statue to a man whose last simple prayer asked that humanity after victory should characterise the British Fleet.

And now, boys from H.M.S. St. Vincent bring wreaths which bear the names of 25 ships in which Nelson served. To them passes a duty - a duty they understand....To safeguard the freedom of all who go down to the sea in ships.

There she lies ... Old heart of oak! Ships have changed much since her days - but not the spirit of the stock of Drake and Nelson. One tradition alone they serve - whether afloat or aloft - a tradition of selfless service in the common cause. Their ships too, inherit traditions. A Vanguard sailed against the Armada. It is upon the Navy, under the good providence of God, that the wealth, safety and strength of the Kingdom do still chiefly depend.