

A VERY FINE GROUP TO AN OFFICER OF THE INDIAN NAVY WHO AFTER SERVING IN OPERATIONS AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND CHINA WAR IN 1856-7, WAS MENTIONED IN DESPACHES DURING THE INDIAN MUTINY FOR HIS SERVICES WITH THE INDIAN NAVAL BRIGADE IN THE ACTION AT JEHENABAD ON 22 AUGUST 1857 AFTER WHICH HE WAS ATTACHED TO THE SHANNON BRIGADE. HE WAS LATER SPECIALLY THANKED FOR HIS SERVICES IN THE EXPEDITION AGAINST THE WAGHERS AT DWARKA IN SEPTEMBER 1859, DURING THE COURSE OF WHICH ACTION HE RECEIVED A WOUND, BUT CONTINUING TO DIRECT HIS MEN, A SECOND BULLET SMASHING THE HILT OF HIS SWORD. TAKING PART IN THE FINAL OPERATIONS AGAINST DWARKA FORT WITH THE NAVAL BRIGADE. IN 1860, HE TOOK PART IN THE EXPEDITION TO CHINA WHICH RESULTED IN THE TAKING OF PEKIN



BALTIC 1854, UNNAMED AS ISSUED, INDIAN MUTINY 1857, NO CLASP 'MIDN. G, C, PARKER, IN. NL. BDE. H.M.P.V. CALCUTTA', CHINA 1857, CLASP, PEKIN 1860 'AG. LIEUT. G. C. PARKER H.M.S. ZENOBIA. I N.' OFFICIALLY IMPRESSED NAMING

George Charles Parker was born in Havant, Hampshire, on 19 February 1836, the son of a Captain in the Royal Marines, and was educated at the New Cross Royal Naval School. He was appointed a Midshipman in the Indian Navy on 3 April 1853 and after serving on a number of ships, was appointed to *Auckland* on 1 August 1855 and served under Admiral Sir Michael Seymour's command in Chinese waters from August 1856.

Initially under orders of Captain Sir William Hoste, *Auckland* was tasked with keeping down piracy off the coast of Borneo and protection of the British settlement of Labuan. In December 1856, *Auckland* was ordered to Hong Kong to reinforce the squadron under

Admiral Seymour. Here they were in action against piratical and Mandarin junks, destroying five and burning and destroying two batteries mounting thirty guns at Lanato. Soon after, *Auckland* was engaged against a fleet of eighty Mandarin junks at Second Bar Creek on the Canton River, sinking a number of them. Taking part in several other actions, including the cutting out of a junk and the destruction of a battery protecting it on the Bay of Tung Chung, in April 1857, *Auckland* soon after departed for Hong Kong, H.M.S. *Inflexible* having arrived and taken her place. Arriving in Singapore in May that year, *Auckland* was recalled to Calcutta on the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny. Here all available crew, including Midshipman Parker, were sent up country in a newly formed Naval Brigade.

On the outbreak of the Great Sepoy Mutiny, Parker was assigned to No. 3 Indian Naval Brigade under Lieutenant Batt, who had commanded *Zenobia* at the time of the outbreak. The Brigade, which consisted of Lieutenant Batt and 100 men, along with four guns, from *Auckland* under Midshipman's Parker, along with Midshipman Hanay and Scamp, departed up-country from Calcutta in the small river steamer *Jumna* in July 1857. Tasked with delaying entry into the Goruckpore District by mutineers, they were present in the action at Jehenabad, above Allahabad, on 22 August 1857, where Midshipman Parker was sent in command of a boat to cut out and destroy some boats laden with captured Government stores. The enemy, however, were present in great numbers, lining the banks and in occupation of a thick wood close by the river, and opened a fire so fierce that Midshipman Parker received the signal to retire. The *Jumna* and her boats now advanced to the attack and, after engaging the enemy for six hours, succeeded in shelling the enemy out of their positions and destroying their boats. For his services during the Mutiny Parker was Mentioned in Despatches.



GUN TEAM OF THE INDIAN NAVAL BRIGADE

Lieutenant Batt and his command shortly after returned to Allahabad, where Captain Peel attached them to the Shannon Brigade, with the intention of taking them with him up to Lucknow. This was not sanctioned by the government and *Zumna*, was ordered to Buxar. However it seems either at this point or shortly after, Midshipman Parker was attached to the Shannon Brigade, the *History of the Indian Navy*, *United Service Magazine*, Vol 145, 1877, noting that soon after the auction of the 22 August 1857;

"Soon after Mr. Parker was temporarily attached to the Shannon Naval Brigade, and arrived at Bombay in charge of wounded soldiers and seamen on 11th July, 1858"

How long Parker was attached to the Shannon Brigade is as yet unknown but there seems to be a considerable gap between August 1857 and him arriving in Bombay in July 1858. The lack of clasps to his Mutiny medal suggests that he would more likely have been attached to that portion of Shannon Brigade that did not take part in the Lucknow operations.

Note. Her Majesty's Pendant Vessel Calcutta which is the designation most often found on Indian Naval Brigade medals, was a small vessel (a cutter) used for administration purposes for the Naval Brigades, the men being borne on books of this vessel. As such, when tracing the service of the various Brigades, it is the Brigade number, not H.M.P.V Calcutta that should be looked at.

14 Indian Naval Brigades were eventually formed but only 3, 4 and 7 Brigades qualified for the Mutiny medal, these Brigades having seen a fair amount of action. 18 Officers appear on the roll for H.M.P.V Calcutta.

POST MUTINY OPERATIONS, WOUNDED AND MENTIONED AGAIN

In 1859, the Indian Navy assisted in operations undertaken for the suppression of the Waghers, a piratical race who, from time immemorial, had made their haunts in the Peninsula of Okhamundel, on the coast of Kattywar. In September 1859, as Second Lieutenant of the *Zenobia*, which ship he was appointed to in October 1858, Parker was present with the expedition against the Waghers who were in occupation of the strong fort at Dwarka in the Island of Beyt. At the attack on the fort, Parker commanded the field-piece party from his ship which landed with the troops and was conspicuous for his gallantry, during which he was wounded:

"Where all behaved well it is, perhaps, invidious to particularize; but we should fail in our duties were we to omit all mention of the conspicuous gallantry displayed by the 2nd Lieutenant of the 'Zeuobia'. Mr. G. C. Parker, commanded on the occasion the field - piece party from his ship, and landed with the troops. The enemy's fire was very heavy, and Lieut. Parker received a wound, but continuing to direct his men, a second bullet smashed the hilt of his sword. He was specially thanked by Colonel Donovan, in a Despatch addressed to Captain Cruttenden, and the latter officer wrote:

'The gallantry and coolness with which Mr. Parker worked his gun, under a heavy and very destructive fire, was the most conspicuous, and excited the admiration of all, and, moreover, was most useful in covering the withdrawal of the troops after the first fruitless attempt to take the place by escalade.'

Recovering from his wound, Lieutenant Parker superintended the landing of the heavy guns during the final operations against Dwarka from 18 October 1859. He subsequently;

"Participated in the operations on shore, with the force of blue jackets forming the Naval Brigade, under Lieutenant Sedley, which consisted of 150 petty officers and seaman, their presence being necessary, owing to the military force not being large enough to invest such a large place."

The Naval Brigade heavily engaged during the siege until the fort, the enemy garrison attempting to break out on a number of occasions. They were finally successful in this enterprise on the night of the 31 October, when they cut through a picket of the 28th Foot, wounding an Officer and several men.

The *'History of the Indian Navy'* gives a good account of the campaign against the Waghers and concludes *'It was a great shame the Government refused the mutiny medal for Beyt, for it*

was well known that many of the rebels were there aiding and abetting the Waghers, who were the very devils to fight'.

BACK TO CHINA AND LATER SERVICE

In Mid February 1860 an Naval expedition was sent from India to bring to terms the Emperor of China, who's forts on the Peiho had inflicted terrible loss on a British squadron of gunboats which was proceeding up the river in terms of the treaty concluded at Tientsin. *Zenobia*, with Parker on board was part of this force, part of which proceeded to King-Tang, the rest joining and the fleet proceeded to Tailen-wan, where a large fleet had formed, carrying 14,000 men under Sir J Hope Grant. On 31 July, the first troops were landed from launches, towed by gunboats of the flotilla and on 21 August the Takoo Forts were either stormed or surrendered. In October 1860, troops entered Pekin (Beijing) and the Convention of Pekin was signed, which put an end to the Second Opium War. *Zenobia's* Naval Brigade, was present at the actions of Chang-kai-Wan on 18 September 1860 and Pa-li-Chian on 21 September, and was part of the small Naval Brigade that entered Pekin on 13 October 1860. During the latter phase of the expedition, boats from *Zenobia*, along with an H.M. Gunboat, attacked Chinese forces at Swatow, to obtain the release by force of member of the crew of H.M. gunboat *Weasel*. The object was accomplished without loss



Note; China Medals to the Navy were issued un-named, the only exception being those medals awarded to the Indian Navy, late of the H.E.I.C. service. As the *Zenobia* was the only Indian Navy ship to receive this clasp, it provides the only named medals with clasp Pekin 1860 awarded to the Navy as a whole.

On the abolition of the Indian Navy in 1863 and his transfer to the Indian Marine, Parker was appointed Assistant-Superintendent and Post Officer at Carwar. In June 1873 he took over the office of Master-Attendant at Karachi, and rendered valuable service, which was duly acknowledged by the Government, in aiding the transport of troops and baggage animals in connection with the Second Afghan and Sudanese Wars.

Promoted Captain in 1883, Parker returned to England on sick-leave in the British India Company's steamer *Kerbela* in October 1890, but sadly did not live to reach England, his death occurring at sea on 15 November 1890. Last seen by the crew entering the saloon about

9:00 p.m., the following morning he was found to be missing, and the whole ship was searched throughout without success. He had been in excellent spirits during the evening, and his death therefore was a complete mystery.

CAPTAIN PARKER'S OBITUARY

“Captain GEORGE CHARLES PARKER was born at Havant, Hampshire, on the 19th of February, 1836. His father was a captain in the Royal Marines, and his three brothers served in the Royal Navy. After receiving his education at the Kew Cross Royal Naval School, he was appointed on the 3rd of April, 1853, as a midshipman in the Indian Navy, in which he served until its abolition on the 30th of April, 1863, when he was retired as a lieutenant and transferred to the Indian Marine, in which, in 1883, he was granted the title of captain. While in the Indian Navy, Captain Parker saw much service in the two China Wars of 1856-7, and 1860. He was in the Naval Brigade during the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58, and was mentioned in despatches. He took part in the expedition against the Wagheers in 1859, in which, at the assault and capture of Beyt, he was wounded, and his sword-hilt smashed by a bullet. The gallantry and coolness with which he commanded the “Zenobia’s” field-piece party, and worked his gun under a heavy and destructive fire, were specially mentioned in despatches, which also spoke favourably of his services in the Naval Brigade at the siege and occupation of Dwarka, in the same expedition. He received the China war medal (with clasp for Peking), and the Indian Mutiny medal.



Soon after his transfer to the Indian Marine in 1863, Captain Parker was appointed Port Officer and Superintendent of the Government timber depot at Carwar, when he surveyed the harbour, and received the thanks of the Hydrographer of the Admiralty for the chart which he prepared. He was also thanked by the Conservator of Forests for his able management of the timber depot. He took fifteen months' sick leave to England in 1868-9, and was transferred in August, 1873, to the charge of the rising port of Karachi as Master Attendant (afterwards called Port Officer). He entered upon this office at a time when the improvements of the harbour (on the plans of the late Mr. James Walker), which had been for several years in progress, had reached a stage at which his professional skill and zeal proved of great advantage to the Government and to the trade of the port, in fully utilizing the advantages so far gained for navigation, and in supporting the engineering proposals for the continuance and further development of the works. The growing importance of the place, which resulted

from these undertakings, led to the establishment in 1880 of a Harbour Board, which in 1887 merged into the present Port Trust, and in the arrangements and working of both Captain Parker bore a prominent and most laborious part, not only as executive officer, but as member and vice-chairman of the respective boards. He also rendered valuable service, which was duly acknowledged by Government, in aiding the transport of troops and baggage animals, via Karachi, in connection with the Afghan and Soudan wars, and in the fitting out and despatch of troops for the Malta Expedition in 1878, during one of the short periods in which he acted as Port Officer at Bombay. Latterly, also, he raised and formed the Kardchi Brigade of Naval Volunteers, in which H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught took much interest, during his inspection of the Kardchi defences in 1890.

He received the thanks of Government for his personal exertions and prompt measures in saving life and property in wrecks at or near Karachi on four different occasions. All these labours, with heavy responsibility, in a trying climate, told on Captain Parker's health, and he reluctantly took sick-leave in October, 1890; but unhappily did not live to reach England, his death having occurred at sea on the 15th of November, 1890.

The Karachi Port Trust Board placed on record their high appreciation of Captain Parker's services and advice, their deep regret for his loss, and sympathy with his wife and children, in a resolution dated 20th November, 1890, in which reference was also made to the feelings of all those who had been associated in work with him, or had served under him. Captain Parker was careful of the welfare of his subordinates, not merely as a matter of official duty, but as one who took a warm interest in the education of their children, and in their social gatherings and amusements.

In private life his sociable character will be long held in kind remembrance by a large circle of friends, who heartily sympathize with his family for the loss of one who may be truly characterized as a brave and skilful sailor, an able administrator, and a kindly and honourable man. Captain Parker was elected an Associate on 2nd of December, 1884. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical and Royal Astronomical Societies, and a Member of the Royal Asiatic Society. “



Condition a little edge bruising and light contact marks, generally VF. Sold with copied research, paper and on CD. Provenance: Captain K. J. Douglas-Morris Collection, DNW October 1996. A very fine and scarce group awarded to an Indian Naval Officer who saw a good deal of action, in particular with Naval Brigades

Note; although this group has been known as it is since at least 1996, there is nothing to suggest the recipient's entitlement to the Baltic Medal and it may be that the medal was one of his brothers who served in the Royal Navy. As such, this group can be purchased without the Baltic medal for £170 less than the overall asking price