

A RARE NGS 1793 TO AN OFFICER OF THE HEIC AND ROYAL NAVY WHO SERVED ON THE EAST INDIANMAN WARREN HASTINGS DURING THE BATTLE OF PULO AURA 1804, BEFORE JOINING THE ROYAL NAVY, SERVING AS SIGNAL MIDSHIPMAN OF THE COMMODORES SHIP DURING THE BATTLE OFF TAMATAVE 1811, HE LATER SERVED ON THE CANADIAN LAKES DURING THE 1812 WAR WITH AMERICA 1814-16



NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE 1793, CLASP OFF TAMATAVE 20 MAY 1811 'H (DOUGLA)S, MIDSHIPMAN

COMMANDER HENRY DOUGLAS'S OBITUARY

'DEATH of a VETERAN NAVAL OFFICER-

There recently died at Grove-Road Southsea, one of the oldest residents at the age of 96 years and three months, Henry Douglas, a retired Commander Royal Nay, was born in the year 1789, and going to sea at an early age, he took part in the stirring events of the great war with France. As a midshipman of the Honourable East India ship Warren Hastings, Captain Larkins, he assisted in the gallant defence made by the homeward bound fleet of Indiamen against the attack of the French Squadron under Command of Admiral Linois, in the Line of Battle ship Marengo and Belle Poule, frigate, when they succeeded in beating off the French squadron and bring home the tea laden fleet of ships to safety. For this service the senior Captain (Dance) was Knighted and the East India Company awarded the Officers and crews of the ships the sum of half a million of money. Later on, having joined the Royal Navy as a Midshipman on HMS Belleisle, he just missed being present at Trafalgar. In the action off Madagascar 20th May 1812, between the English frigates under the command of Captain Schomberg and the French frigates Clorinde, Renomme and Neride, he was signal Midshipman of the Astrea, the Commodore's ship, when after an action of some hours, two of the French frigates were captured. After this he served in the Lakes of Canada in Command of a gunboat till the peace of 1816, when he was placed on half-pay'

Born: 1789

Appointments:

HEIC Warren Hastings – date of joining unclear but was present on board during the battle of Pulo Aura in February 1804 - Midshipman

Belleisle 74 - October 1805 - 1st Class Volunteer

Northumberland 74 - 1807 - Midshipman

Astraea 42 - 3rd June 1811 - Midshipman and Masters Mate - 1st November 1813

Fylla 22 - 2nd November 1813 - Midshipman and Masters Mate - 6th April 1814

Lakes of Canada, Star (Lord Melville) 14 - 16th August 1814 - Masters Mate - 4th February 1815

Lakes of Canada, Star (Lord Melville) 14 - 4th Feb 1815 - Lieutenant - 28th November 1816

Half Pay from November 1816

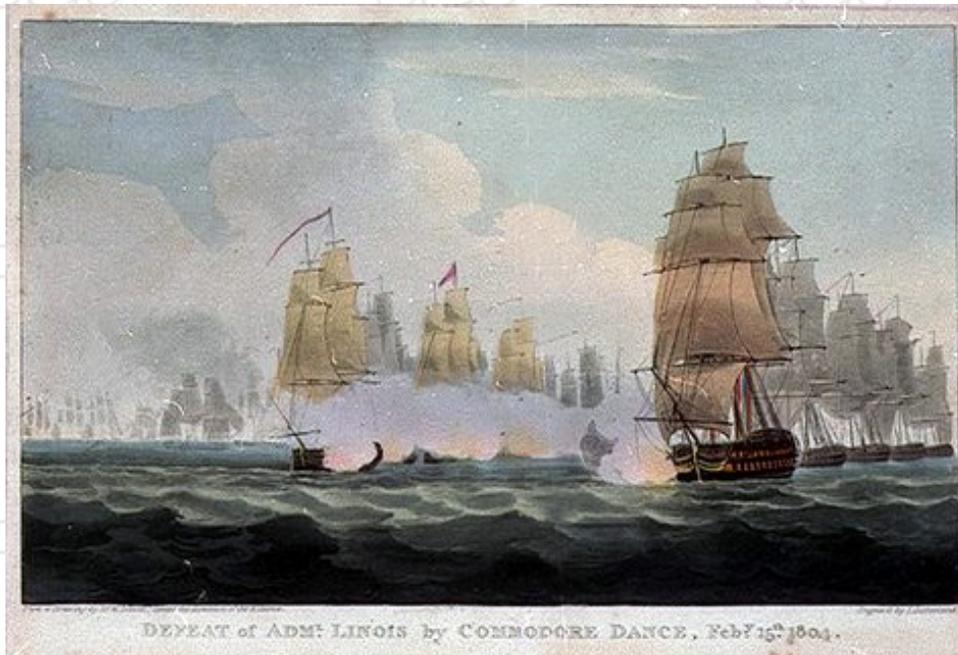
Retired Commander - 9th Feb 1860

Passed Lieutenants exam 31st August 1812

Died Southsea 1885 aged 96!

THE BATTLE OF PULO AURA

It is unknown when exactly Henry Douglas joined the HEIC Warren Hastings but since Captain Thomas Larkins sailed this 3 decker East Indiaman, for China, leaving The Downs on 6 April 1803 and arriving at Whampoa on 28 August, it must have been at least just prior to this. Larkins had left Britain during the Peace of Amiens so he did not apply for a Letter of Marque. However, the Peace broke down in May 1803. Larkins received a letter of marque on 16 September, while he was in China. Returning from China, the Warren Hastings was travelling in convoy with the fleet of East Indiamen, and under the command of Commodore Nathaniel Dance. On 14 February the China fleet encountered a powerful French squadron under Contre-Admiral Charles- Alexander Durand Linois. In what would be known as the Battle of Pulo Aura, the more numerous but far less powerful HEIC squadron engaged the French squadron. Although lightly armed, at a distance and as hoped, Dance's Indiamen were mistaken for Royal Navy ships of the line protecting the convoy and the French squadron withdrew, being pursued by Dance's squadron for two hours. It was an act of great bravery on the part of Dance for had the French squadron realised their error, they would easily have destroyed Dance's squadron.



During the action, the Warren Hastings was directly engaged and the Indiamen reached Malacca on 19 February and Penang on 1 March. Warren Hastings was at St Helena on 7 June and arrived at The Downs on 8 August 1804.

Nathaniel Dance and his fellow captains were highly praised in the aftermath of the battle: in saving the convoy they had prevented both the HEIC and Lloyd's of London from likely financial ruin, the repercussions of which would have had profound effects across the British Empire. The various commanders and their crews were presented with a £50,000 prize fund to be divided among them, and the Lloyd's Patriotic Fund and other national and mercantile institutions made a series of awards of ceremonial swords, silver plate and monetary gifts to individual officers. Lloyd's Patriotic Fund gave each captain a sword worth 50 pounds, and one worth 100 pounds to Nathaniel Dance.

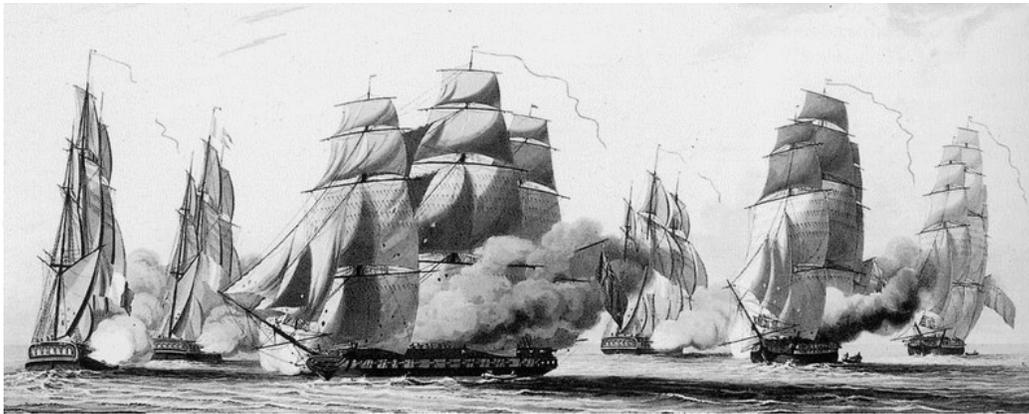
In October 1805, just after the battle of Trafalgar, Douglas joined HMS Belleisle (74). On 14 September 1806, Belleisle, Bellona and Melampus were some 35 miles off Cape Henry searching for Sir Richard Strachan's squadron when a line-of-battle ship under jury masts was sighted heading for the Chesapeake. They gave chase until the enemy took the ground and Capt. Hargood sent boats to take possession of her. She proved to be the French Impetueux (74) one of Rear Ad. Willeaumez's squadron which had been damaged in a storm. Capt. Poyntz of Melampus took off the crew and set fire to her. Joining the Northumberland (74) in 1807, he subsequently joined Astraea (36), Capt. Charles Marsh Schomberg, on 3rd of June 1811

THE BATTLE OFF TAMATAVE

On the morning of 20 May 1811 he gave orders to Phoebe, Galatea and Racehorse to chase after three French frigates, with troops on board, which had been sighted off Foul Point, Madagascar. The enemy managed to keep to windward all day and when they opened fire at long range in the evening the French produced a calm to leeward that rendered the British squadron unmanageable for three hours. The enemy van and centre ships, preserving a light air, managed to round the quarters of Phoebe and Galatea raking them for a considerable time. When a light breeze sprang up Galatea, after losing her mizzen and fore-top-masts, was unable to put her head towards the enemy, so Astraea, the already damaged Phoebe and Racehorse wore and headed for the enemy. After 25 minutes in which she attempted to lay Astraea athwart hawse under a heavy fire of grape and musketry, the commodore's frigate, the Renommee, struck and Lieuts, Royer and Drury (RM) of Astraea with five men were put aboard her. Another frigate, the Clorinde, first made a signal that she was striking but then tried to escape. The British ships in their disabled state were unable to catch her. The third frigate, the Nereide, much damaged by Phoebe, escaped to Tamatave where she surrendered, with the port and the garrison to Capt. Schomberg on 25 May together with the late garrison, a detachment of the 22nd regiment who had been held prisoner.

Astraea lost seamen John Williams and Richard Wharton, killed and Mr John Baldwin, the first lieutenant, 11 seamen, 3 marines and 1 boy wounded. Medals were awarded to all four ships in 1849. The French frigates were carrying 200 troops on board. Renommee lost 145 killed and wounded and Nereide 130. Clorinde escaped to France, arriving in Brest on 24 September. Her commander was sentenced to three years imprisonment; Napoleon would have shot him but he was tried by naval officers.

On 2nd November 1813, Douglas joined Fylla (22) Capt. William Sheppard, on the Guernsey station. In January 1814 he captured the French privateer lugger Inconnu from St. Malo. The enemy had six men killed and four wounded out of the one hundred on board. In Fylla her first lieutenant, William Henry PEARSON and one marine were slightly wounded



SERVICE ON LAKES OF CANADA

In August 1814, Douglas arrived in Canada. According to O'Bryne, during Douglas service on the Lakes he was under orders of Sir James Lucas Yeo and Sir Edward W C R Owen. A contingent of Naval Officers were sent for from England and did arrive about the time Douglas did, so presumably he was one of the Officers sent for. Douglas's record of service States his service as 'Lakes of Canada' and 'Star' and that he was confirmed Lieutenant on 4th February 1815. The Star (14) was launched 22nd July 1813 at Kingston and originally named Lord Melville but renamed Star in 1814. 1814 Lieutenant Charles Anthony and Commander Alexander Dobbs. Took US 3 gun Schooners Ohio and Somers Aug 1814. In 1815 under Lieutenant Massey Herbert Star served on Lake Ontario for entire service. Douglas's service during the 1812 War needs further research.

THE MEDAL

Douglas's medal has been partially re engraved over parts of the name only. The Rank 'MIDSHIPMAN' has been left alone and is impressed as issued bar the feet of the first three letters. The Initial 'H' is pretty much untouched, as is the 'S'. The 'O', 'G' and 'A' have been touched up to larger degree but enough is visible of the original impressed letters to see they are a match and even the 'D' shows signs it may have just been touched up. So it seems on receiving the medal, Douglas found a spelling error between the letters 'DOUGL'. Such spelling errors are not particularly unusual on NGS medals but clearly Douglas wanted his medal corrected.



Bar the change to letters in the surname, the Medal has not been tampered with. The clasp and suspension are as issued.

To add to the above and not taking into account the clasp, a process of elimination shows that this medal can only be the one issued to Commander Henry Douglas;

- a) Medal is certainly a Midshipman's as this impressing as issued
- b) Recipient certainly had the initial 'H' and surname ended with an 'S'
- c) After the 'H' is a fully stop and after the 'S' a comma, both impressed and untouched. This leaves spacing for seven letters in the surname
- d) The above means the recipient's forename began with an 'H', Surname has seven letters ending with an 'S'

Checking the medal roll using the above and discounting a couple of medals known in collections or past sales, we are left with the following:

Henry Douglas, Midshipman, Clasp Off Tamatave
Henry Downes, Midshipman, Clasp Curacoa
Henry Edwards, Midshipman, Clasp Growler 22 May 1812

If we then take into account that this medal has parts of the impressed letters 'O', 'G' and 'A' visible, it is again clear this medal indeed was original issued to Henry Douglas.

OBITUARIES

DEATH OF A VETERAN NAVAL OFFICER.— There recently died at Grove-road, Southsea, one of its oldest residents at the age of 96 years and three months. Henry Douglas, a Retired Commander Royal Navy, was born in the year 1789, and going to sea at an early age, he took part in the stirring events of our great war with France. As a midshipman of the Honourable East India ship Warren Hastings, Captain Larkins, he assisted in the gallant defence made by the homeward bound fleet of Indiamen against the attack of the French Squadron, under command of Admiral Lincolin, in the line-of-battle ship Marengo and Belle Poule, frigate, when they succeeded in beating off the French Squadron and bringing home the tea-laden fleet of ships in safety. For this service the senior captain (Danco) was knighted, and the East India Company awarded the officers and crews of the ships the sum of half a million of money. Later on, having joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman of H.M.S. Belleisle, he just missed being present at Trafalgar. In the action off Madagascar 20th May, 1812, between the English frigates under the command of Captain Schomberg, and the French frigates Clerinde, Renommee, and Nereide, he was signal midshipman of the Astrea, the Commodore's ship, when, after an action of some hours, two of the French frigates were captured. After this he served in the Lakes of Canada in command of a gunboat till the peace of 1816, when he was placed on half-pay.

Commander H. Douglas, R.N.—One of the last surviving veteran officers who entered the Navy in the year of Trafalgar has passed away in Commander Henry Douglas, R.N., who died last week at Southsea, at the great age of 96 years. The deceased had joined the Service as a first-class volunteer in October, 1805, on board the *Belleisle*, commanded by the late Admiral Sir William Hargood, with whom he witnessed the destruction of the French 74-gun ship *L'Impétueux*, off Cape Henry, 14th September, 1806. In 1810, after service in the West Indies and Mediterranean, he joined the *Astræa*, of 42 guns and 271 men, commanded by Captain C. M. Schomberg, and on 20th May, 1811, contributed (while cruising off Madagascar in company with the *Phæbe* and *Galatea*, frigates about equal in force to the *Astræa* and 18-gun brig *Racchorse*) to the capture of the *Renommée*, French 40-gun frigate, after a long and trying action, in which two other French frigates joined. Five days later he was further present at the surrender of the *Nereide*, which had shared in the previous action, and of the settlement of Tamatave. For this service, in which the late Sir James Hillyar, father of the present admiral, shared as captain of the *Phæbe*, he received the naval medal with clasp, to mark a very gallant action. His lieutenant's commission was awarded in February, 1815. He also saw service on the lakes of Canada during our last war with America, and did not subsequently serve afloat.

Condition, bar the issued with naming, the medal is in VF or better condition. Sold with some research including record of service on CD. Douglas had a very interesting service, especially in the HEIC and Canada during the 1812 War. Priced around 40% than had the naming not been corrected.