

**THE EXCEPTIONAL NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE 1793 AWARDED TO ROYAL MARINE ARTILLERY OFFICER, WHO AFTER SEEING EXTENSIVE SERVICE IN THE WEST INDIES AND SPAIN, WAS MENTIONED FOR HIS GALLANTRY DURING AN EXTREMELY BLOODY BOAT ACTION BEFORE SERVING WITH THE FIRST ROYAL MARINE BATTALION IN AMERICA IN 1813, SERVING IN THE CHESAPEAKE EXPEDITION UNDER SIR GEORGE COCKBURN, HE WAS ENGAGED IN THE ATTACK ON CRANEY ISLAND, THE SACKING OF HAMPTON AND THE BOAT ACTION OFF OCRACOCKE. HE LATER COMMANDED THE ROCKET DETACHMENT AT THE CAPTURE OF OSWEGO UNDER SIR JAMES YEO, FOR WHICH HE WAS MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES AND TOOK PART IN THE CAMPAIGN ON THE NIAGARA FRONTIER, INCLUDING THE SIEGE OF FORT ERIE WHERE HE WAS ALMOST DAILY UNDER FIRE AT THE BATTERIES FOR SIX WEEK. COMMENDED BY LORD EXMOUTH'S FOR HIS SERVICE ABOARD HIS FLAG SHIP QUEEN CHARLOTTE AT THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS. HE LATER SERVED AS SUPERINTENDENT OF THE MARINE ARTILLERY LABORATORY FOR MANY YEARS, RETIRING AS MAJOR-GENERAL IN 1850**



NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE 1793-1840, CLASP, ALGIERS 'JOHN H. STEVENS, 1ST LIEUT. R.M.A.'

*"Major-General John Harvey Stevens served in the West Indies, &c. in 1806 and 1807, during the expedition to Walcheren in 1809, and was engaged in several flotilla affairs on the Scheldt. Served also at the successful defence of Cadiz and of Tarifa in 1810 and 1811; was engaged in several detached operations, particularly in one of a severe character on the river Guadalquivir. In 1813 was employed on the coast of America, where he was engaged in an attack on Craney Island, and at the taking of Hampton and Ocracoke under Sir George*

Cockburn. Served in Canada at the taking of Oswego, on which occasion he was mentioned in Sir Gordon Drummond's despatches. Engaged during a six weeks' siege of Fort Erie, and was entrusted with the construction of a field-work for the defence of the right of the position on Chippewa Creek, which was menaced by a very superior force. In 1816 he was on board the Queen Charlotte at the attack on Algiers under Lord Exmouth by whom he was detached to fire carcasses at the enemy's vessels within the Mole. He was also present at the demonstrations before Algiers under Admiral Sir H. B. Neale. Has received the War Medal with one Clasp."



John Harvey Stevens was born in 1790, youngest of three sons of Commander John Stevens, Royal Navy. His brothers Thomas and Cornelius served in the Royal Marines, both becoming captains, whilst Cornelius was killed in action during the battle of Navarino in 1827. John Harvey Stevens joined the Royal Marines as 2nd lieutenant on 28 September 1805; 1st lieutenant, 2 September 1809; captain, 14 April 1832; major, 9 November 1846; lieutenant-colonel, 17 August 1848; colonel, 28 November 1854; major-general, 20 June 1855.

General Stevens Record of service is exceptionally detailed. As well as listing his service with dates, he added a very long and detailed narrative of his service. Much of this forms the basis of the following with, Stevens words copied in Bold Italic:

***“Whilst Lieutenant Stevens served in H.M.S. Fame, he was employed in the Western Ocean, West Indies and Coast of America - disembarked to join the (Royal Marine) Artillery and after pursuing mathematical studies and artillery instruction, embarked in the Princess of Orange and served during the whole of the Expedition to Walcheren in 1809, was disembarked in North Beveland, engaged in the flotilla and mortar brig Gallant with enemy’s battery in Clough passage, and was much exposed and health suffered from the Walcheren Fever or Ague. Was under the command of Commodore Owen in the Scheldt service. One months leave in 1810. During the period Lieut Stevens belonged to the mortar brig Fearless, by his proposition she was fitted in Cadiz Bay with a 68 p Car. at 45% elevation in place of a very light and ineffective 8 inch land service mortar with which she was furnished at Woolwich; by Lieut Stevens proposition the vessel became effective, and was then extensively employed in bombarding in the defence of Cadiz and of Tarifa. At Algeciras, at Rota & Chipperna”***

**MENTIONED FOR HIS ZEAL AND BRAVERY DURING A VERY SEVERE BOAT ATTACK ATTENDED BY GREAT LOSS OF LIFE**

***“Lieut Stevens was engaged in a very severe boat attack attended by great loss of life. He also served a short time with the Spanish Army under General Zayas at Huelva. After the siege of Cadiz was raised Lieutenant Stevens returned to England, his health having again suffered from the nature of his two years service in a mortar vessel of only 180 tons. Two weeks leave in 1812 and 1 months leave in 1813.”***

The location of the boat attack is revealed in Steven’s Army List entry, noting the action took place on the river Guadalquiver. It was indeed a bloody affair, during which the Commander of Steven’s ship (Fearless); Lieutenant Le Blanc, was killed. Rather surprisingly given his detailed record of service, Steven’s omits to mention he was singled out for his gallantry during the action. Steven’s name is spelt Stephens in error, something noted a number of times in references when researching his service. The Following despatch describes:

*“Flotilla, off the Guadalquiver, July 8, 1811.*

*Sir,— I have the honor to acquaint you, that on the 5th last, when reconnoitring Rota, with part of the division of flotilla under my command, I received information of a French armed schooner having left Seville, and anchored at San Lucar, with property on board to a considerable amount, belonging to the French army, which I deemed an object of sufficient importance to authorise my attempting her destruction. I therefore proceeded with gun-boat No. 20, and the crew of gun-boat No. 5, commanded by Lieutenants Style and Wrottesley, off the Guadalquiver, where I was met by the Fearless gun-brig, Lieutenant Le Blanc, who volunteered to accompany me on this service; and, indeed, from whom I received the information.*

*“I anchored the gun-boats a short distance from the bar, and proceeded with the small boats, at midnight, and succeeded in getting up with a schooner, which was conceived to have been the object, but proved to be an American. This greatly detained us; and the wind unfortunately setting in strong from the S.W. with a heavy sea, the boats were hardly able to keep their ground, notwithstanding the utmost exertions were made use of.*

*“The enemy at this time were alarmed in all quarters; a strong guard of soldiers was put on board the schooner, the batteries opened, a fire of musketry was poured into the boats, which*

was productive of considerable loss on our part, and mortally wounded Lieutenant Le Blanc and 4 men in my own 6-oared gig. Notwithstanding almost every man on the larboard side of the boats commanded by Lieutenants Style and Wrottesley, were either killed or wounded, they still persevered in endeavouring to board; but the wind increasing to a gale, and the loss sustained in killed and wounded, induced me, however painful to my feelings to leave the French flag flying, to order the boats to relinquish their object, and gain the opposite side of the river, which, from the wind and tide, we with difficulty accomplished. This arduous service, in which we have been employed, has therefore been unattended with success; but nothing was wanting on the part of the flotilla-men; their conduct was admirable, and I beg leave particularly to notice the anxious zeal and distinguished gallantry of Lieutenants Style and Wrottesley. I am also particularly indebted to Lieutenant Stephens, R.M. for his zeal and bravery. I herewith enclose a list of 20 killed and wounded, and have the honor to be, &c.

(Signed)“FREDERICK J. THOMAS, Commr.”



#### **MUCH SERVICE IN AMERICA AND CANADA DURING THE 1812 WAR**

In February 1813, Stevens was sent to Woolwich for instruction in Rocket Service and in March that year embarked on Mariner rocket ship for service in America. Once in America, Stevens, Commanding a rocket detachment, was attached to the artillery company, commanded by Captain's Burton and Montgomery, which formed a part of the First Marine Battalion. On 3 July 1813, Stevens, in command of his rocket detachment, embarked, along with elements of the First and Second Marine Battalion and of the 102nd Foot, on board Rear Admiral Cockburn's squadron which was to form the expedition up the River Chesapeake.

*“In 1813, Lieutenant Stevens was selected for the Rocket Service and attached to a rocket company under Lieutenant Balchild and after receiving instruction in the Rocket Service (then a novel one) embarked in the Mariner rocket ship and joined the expedition under Sir J. B. Warren in the River Chesapeake; was engaged in the attack on Craney Island, at the capture of Hampton under Sir George Cockburn and Ocracoke, and taking of the Anaconda Brig and Atlas Schooner, at Hart Island &c.”*

Taking part in the battle of Craney Island (eastern Virginia) on 22 June 1813, during which a British amphibious attack was repulsed with much loss, Stevens further took part in the sacking of the town of Hampton two days later. The outrages committed during the latter would serve as a rally call for the American's during the rest of the campaign.

<https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/VA-news/VA-Pilot/issues/1995/vp951001/09290198.htm>

The following month Stevens and his detachment served on the boats covering the assault on and the taking of the Anaconda Brig and Atlas Schooner off Ocracoke. The attack led by Lieutenant Westphal:

[https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The\\_Naval\\_War\\_of\\_1812\\_1813/SFGmsM0LNgUC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=capture+anaconda+brig+1813+WESTPHAL&pg=PA186&printsec=frontcover](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Naval_War_of_1812_1813/SFGmsM0LNgUC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=capture+anaconda+brig+1813+WESTPHAL&pg=PA186&printsec=frontcover)

After the Chesapeake campaign, the Second Marine Battalion was sent for service in Canada

***“Disembarked at Quebec in Oct 1813 for service in Canada, then invaded by the Americans, was detached to the Upper Province in command of a part of the Rocket Detachment, served in a Winter Expedition on the ice to Four Corners. Commanded the marine artillery at the capture of Oswego and was mentioned in the public despatches of Lieutenant-General Sir Gordon Drummond published in the Gazette”***

In November 1813, lieutenant Stevens with 2 six-pounders proceeded to Coteau du Lac, on lake St. Francis but by April 1814, it seems Steven's had joined the Second Marine Battalion. In 3 May, Stevens with his rocket detachment, with a mixed force of approximately 1100 men; soldiers, marines and seaman, embarked aboard Sir James Yeo's squadron which was tasked with raiding Fort Ontario at Oswego (New York). For his service during the attack, Stevens was mentioned in despatches in *“the strongest terms, the zealous and able assistance he has experienced on this, and on every other occasion”*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Fort\\_Oswego\\_\(1814\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Fort_Oswego_(1814))



***“employed in constructing a field work in the Bay of Quinte. During the attack and siege of the enemy’s army in their fortified position on the Niagara Frontier, of which Fort Erie formed a part, Lieutenant Stevens was almost daily under fire at the batteries for six weeks”***

After Oswego, the Marine Battalions were broken up, the Marines being assigned to the Royal Navy flotilla’s and the Royal Marine Artillery were to be assigned to various fortifications. Lieutenant Stevens was sent in Command of a detachment Royal Marine Artillery to Fort Erie and served there during siege of that place between 4 August and 21 September 1814. During the siege, the British attempted to assault the fort on 13 August but were repulsed, suffering an extremely number of casualties. On 17 September, the Americans made a large scale sortie from the Fort to attack the British artillery works, during which both sides lost heavily.

***“Afterwards at the defensive position at Chippewa, Lieutenant Stevens was entrusted with the construction of a field work for the defence of the right of the position at Wishoun’s point, in close presence and under occasional fire of the enemy; at the conclusion of the war Lieutenant Stevens returned to England in command of some men to be discharged. In the performance of arduous duties and trying exposures during the Niagara Campaign, Lieutenant Stevens’ health once more suffered (as a consequence) from typhus or camp fever. In 1815 two months and two weeks leave”***

After the siege of Fort Erie was lifted on 21 September 1814, the British withdrew to the Chippewa river and here began to throw up defensives. It was here Stevens would be posted (at Wishoun’s point) for the next month or so. Stevens movements during the war after this date are unknown



### **THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS**

In 1816, Stevens would serve aboard Lord Exmouth’s Flag ship Queen Charlotte at the battle of Algiers. According to Steven, during the battle, he initially served on the Poop deck, near Lord Exmouth himself, before being detached to destroy damaged enemy ships. The History or the Royal Marines noting:

*“About 3 P.M. lieutenant J. H. Stevens of the marine artillery was detached from the Queen Charlotte, in a boat mounting a 68-pounder carronade, and, lashed to a stern warp from the Leander, was employed in firing carcasses at the dismantled frigates and vessels in the mole.”*

During this extremely hard fought battle, Queen Charlotte would suffer 128 Officers and seaman, killed or wounded and Stevens would be commended for his services in a letter by Lord Exmouth.

*“In July 1816 Lieutenant Stevens was again selected for service and was present at the battle of Algiers on the Poop of the Queen Charlotte near the person of Lord Exmouth. Lieutenant Stevens was employed in firing 3pr rockets into the embrasures of the enemy’s batteries and afterwards detached by Lord Exmouth to fire 8-inch carcasses at the hulls of several frigates laid up in the mole, some of which by these means were burnt. Captain Stevens possesses a document from Lord Exmouth in which His Lordship is pleased to express his sense of Lieutenant Stevens’ humble exertions in the following sentence, “your indefatigable zeal on that day fell under my immediate observation and very deservedly excites my admiration and applause.”*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombardment\\_of\\_Algers\\_\(1816\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombardment_of_Algers_(1816))



*“In 1817 four months leave. In 1818 no leave. In May 1818 Lieut Stevens was ordered to attend at the Admiralty to receive a description from Sir William Congreve of his new Gem sights then proposed for the Navy; and with which Lieut Stevens was directed to experiment in a Squadron under Sir B Hallowel, especially in the Venger, and to report on the result. Four weeks leave in 1819. Three months in 1820”*

Bar any details below in Bold Italics, the following years of service, up until his retirement are mostly extracted from his record of service but not exactly as written.

*“In 1824 Lieutenant Stevens was a third time selected for service, on this occasion to take charge of a new description of Sea 11.5 inch mortar in the Infernal bomb, invented by Sir*

*William Congreve, destined for service at Algiers under Sir H. B. Neale; there was a demonstration before the city but no other military operations on this occasion.”*

#### **SUPERINTENDENT OF THE MARINE ARTILLERY LABORATORY AT PORTSMOUTH**

In July 1825 Stevens was appointed superintendent of the Marine Artillery Laboratory at Portsmouth, which establishment originated in his proposition and was organised by him. Stevens was, at various times over the course of the following ten years, employed on the Continent and directed to communicate with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, including visits to the Port of Brest, Vienna, Black Sea, Constantinople, Denmark, Sweden, Paris, and the principal military forts of France and Holland. These visits were conducted over short periods in order that he might not unnecessarily be absent from the laboratory too long at one period. Since Captain Stevens has been superintendent of the laboratory the instructions of the establishment have been extended to the whole of the officers and seamen gunners of the Excellent, as well as to other officers of the naval college, including captains, commanders and lieutenants.

Retiring, on promotion to lieutenant-colonel, from the direction of the laboratory, Lieutenant-Colonel Stevens received the approbation of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty (Vide D.A.G's letter of 28 August 1848). He afterwards visited Schemforde in Schleswig to ascertain and report on the causes that led to the destruction of the Danish 84 gun ship Christian VIII and capture of the Geffion of 42 guns by the Holstein batteries manned by Russian artillery. Major-General Stevens died on 25 February 1866, aged 76, and is buried in Highland Road Cemetery, Portsmouth.



Condition GVF. Sold with copied research including Stevens exceptionally detailed record of service. An outstanding Royal Marine Artillery Officers medal