AN EXTREMELY RARE CRIMEA 1854 MEDAL AWARDED TO THE FIRST LIEUTENANT OF THE FLAGSHIP, *H.M.S. BRITANNIA* WHO WAS THE FIRST OFFICER OF THE NAVAL BRIGADE TO BE KILLED DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR WHEN KILLED IN THE TRENCHES BEFORE SEBASTOPOL ON 20 OCTOBER 1854. HE WAS ONE OF 8 NAVAL BRIGADE OFFICERS KILLED OR DIED OF WOUNDS DURING THE WAR

CRIMEA 1854, CLASP, SEBASTOPOL 'G. H. H. GREATHED LIEUT. H.M.S. BRITANNIA'

George Herbert Harris Greathed was born in 1821 and entered the Royal Navy in 1832. He passed his examination on 16 May 1840, and served as Mate on the Mediterranean and Home Stations, in the *Indus, Queen, Formidable*, and *St. Vincent.* He obtained his commission on 7 February 1846 and then served in the Mediterranean in *H.M.S. Harlequin*. Appointed First Lieutenant in *H.M.S. Britannia,* Flag ship of Vice-Admiral James Whitley Deans Dundas, C.B in the Crimea.

Greathred served on shore in command *Britannia's* contingent of the Naval Brigade, under overall command of Captain's Lushington and Peel, which landed on the 1 October 1854. The

naval guns were then hauled to Sebastopol, which in itself was a mammoth task, fifty men being required to haul each gun. Once in position, the bombardment of Sebastopol started on 17 October 1854. On 20 October 1854, Lieutenant Greathed was killed in the trenches before Sebastopol, whilst in the process of laying (aiming) a 68 pounder gun. He lived but 30 minutes after receiving a terrible wound that carried away a great part of his side.

'An account of the artillery operations conducted by the Royal artillery and Royal naval brigade before Sebastopol in 1854 and 1855' by Reilly, notes under guns disabled, that on 20 October, *"A 68-pounder, 95cwt, was taken into position in the left of the first parallel, left attack, by the Royal Navy and placed in a new embrasure of a battery afterwards called No.V"* Of 50 guns landed with the naval brigade, their were just six large 68 pounders Lancaster guns so this may well have been the gun Greathed was in charge of when he was killed.

LIEUTENANT GREATHED

Lord Raglan's report to the Duke of Newcastle, dated 23 October 1854, states:

"The naval batteries have continued their exertions without intermission, and I regret to have to report the death of two gallant officers of the Royal Navy; the Non. Lieutenant Ruthven who has died of his wounds, and Lieutenant Greathed of Her Majesty's ship Britannia. Both are universally regretted. The latter received a mortal wound while laying a gun, after having, to use the language of Brigadier-General Eyre, who was then in charge of the trenches, "performed his duty in the batteries in a manner that excited the admiration of all".

The '*Hereford Times'* 18 November 1854, adds more details to exactly what happened to Greathed;

"DEATH OF LIEUTENANT GREATHED – One of the enemy's round shot struck the muzzle of a large 69-pounder, breaking it and killing and wounding by the fragments several who were around. Among the victims of this shot was Lieutenant Greathed, First Lieutenant of the Britannia, flag ship. He had been invalided home but returned to his duty and was on the eve of promotion. A great part of his side was carried away; but, in spite of the terrible wound, he was able to dictate his last wished in a letter to friends far away. He survived the injury upwards of half an hour. Two sailors and an artilleryman were killed by the same shot."

The '*Downpatrick Reporter'* 18 November 1854, simply stated;

"Lieutenant Greathed of the Britannia has been killed. He was engaged to be married to a young and beautiful lady at Malta."

In December 1855, a plaque was placed in Salisbury Cathedral to commemorate Greathed. According to the '*Westmoreland Gazette'* 15 December 1855;

"A very large and handsome monumental brass is about to be placed in Salisbury Cathedral in the memory of Lieutenant Greathed, one of the Crimean heroes. The following inscription; "Sacred to the memory of George Herbert Harris Greathed, son of Edward Greathed of Uddens , esq . First Lieutenant of H. M. S. Britannia ; who , selected to command the seamen of his ship engaged in the siege , fell gloriously in the trenches before Sebastopol, on 20th October, 1854. He received his mortal wound whilst in the act of laying a gun, after having (to use the words of his General) performed his duty in the batteries in a manner that excited the admiration of all. He died as he had lived, doing his duty to the upmost both towards God and man; aged 33. 'Dulce et decorum est pro patria moro'. This tablet is erected by those that loved him best."

Lieutenant Greathed was the first officer of the naval brigade to be killed during the Crimean war, Lieutenant Ruthren dying of wounds two days later. He was one of 8 naval brigade officers killed or died of wounds, during the war (7 killed, 1 died of wounds). Between 17 and 22 October 1854, the Naval Brigade suffered casualties of 18 Officers and men killed, 69 wounded.

A NAVAL GUN AND CREW IN THE TRENCHES AT SEBASTOPOL

THE MEDAL

Greathed's medal was officially engraved by Hunt & Roskell as would be expected for a Royal Navy casualty medal issued at this time (between mid November 1855 and the

beginning of January 1856); Greathed's medal noted on the roll as sent 26 November 1855. Interestingly, on page 73 of the outstanding work, *'By Order Of Her Majesty The Crimea Medal'* are photographs of the naming of a medal to Edward Hyson, which appears to have been engraved by the very same engraver at Hunt & Roskell. Hyson's medal was sent just 9 days before Greathed's, on 17 November 1855. Medal has a minor correction to 'THE' of surname, presumably the engraver correcting the spelling from 'Greathead', which is a different spelling of that surname

As the Sebastopol clasp was not authorised until October 1855, this was sent separately to be attached to the medal by the recipient. According to his roll entry, Greathed's clasp was sent on 8 February 1859 and has been attached to the medal since first sold by Jager in 2022.

Condition EF. An extremely fine and rare officially named medal to an Officer of the Naval Brigade. Sold with copy rolls, various obituary's, *'An account of the artillery operations conducted by the Royal artillery and Royal naval brigade before Sebastopol in 1854 and 1855.'* by W.E.M. Reilly and other research (digital)