

**A RARE 3 CLASP NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE 1793 WITH THE CLASP 'POMPEE 17 JUNE 1809' (21 ISSUED) FOR THE 3 DAY RUNNING BATTLE RESULTING IN HMS POMPEE CAPTURING THE FRENCH 74 GUN SHIP D'HAUTPOULT. DURING THIS ACTION POMPEE HERSELF WAS MUCH DAMAGED, SUFFERING A LARGE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES, INCLUDING THE RECIPIENT OF THE MEDAL WHO WAS WOUNDED**



**NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE 1793, 3 CLASPS, MARTINIQUE, POMPEE 17 JUNE 1809, GUADALOUPE 'JAMES LAY'**

James Lay, an Ordinary Seaman, received a rare Naval General Service Medal with three clasps for his service aboard HMS Pompee on the West Indies Station between 1809 and 1810. He initially played a part in the invasion of Martinique on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1809, before taking part in the 3 day running battle resulting in HMS Pompee taking the French 74 gun ship D'Hautpoult on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1809; James Lay himself was wounded during this action and is believed to have been wounded again during a later action in September 1809. He further took part in the invasion of Guadeloupe on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1810, adding the final clasp to his medal. However given his 10 year service, its likely he served in many other actions that clasps were not awarded for.

A superb article on the NGS medals for the West Indies Campaign 1808-10 can be found on the OMSA website:

<http://www.omsa.org/ngs-1793-1840-the-west-indian-campaign-1808-10/>

The published medal rolls confirm James Lay as an Ordinary Seaman aboard the Pompee for all three actions, one of only 21 recipients recorded on the Admiralty roll for the clasp 'Pompee 17 June 1809'. London Gazette 23 May 1809 also notes James Lay was wounded during Pompee's action with the French 74 D'Hautpoult. One of Pompee's 30 Wounded during the action (a further 10 were killed).

## JAMES LAY, SEAMAN IN HM'S ROYAL NAVY 1805-1815

Greenwich Hospital rolls notes that James Lay, a labourer aged 73 from Berkshire, was admitted as a Pensioner on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1853. He was married in 1802 and had two children; one boy and one girl. He served in the Royal Navy for 10 years with his last ship being HMS President. Under wounded both '*Martinique & Guadeloupe*', another roll noting wounded in '*left leg*' whilst aboard '*Pompey*' and was in receipt of a medal. Yet another roll under '*If any General Action, what ship*', notes '*Martinique Hautpoult Pompee*'

4209 James Lay DD (Discharged Dead) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1856, at which age he would have been 76 or 77.

### Full Service:

Landsman - HMS Agincourt (64) 19 Aug 1805 to 5th March 1808

Landsman - HMS Pompee (80) 6 March 1808 to 23rd April 1808

Ordinary Seaman - HMS Pompee (80) 24th April 1808 to 4th October 1810

Ordinary Seaman - HMS Armada (74) 5th October 1810 to 28th September 1814

Ordinary Seaman - HMS President (38) 29th September 1814 to 4th September 1815

The NGS Medal database gives the following and notes it is believed James Lay was wounded in a separate incident on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1809, which is after the action with D'Hautpoult. This is quite possible, especially as one of Lay's Greenwich Hospital entries notes both '*Martinique & Guadeloupe*' under wounded; Pompee was operating on the West Indies Station at this time. However non Gazetted Admiralty despatches held in the National Archives, would have to be searched for this period to confirm as it was probably either a minor boat action or a disastrous action (or both), either of which were rarely Gazetted.



### NGS Medal database:

*'The published Naval General Service rolls confirm James Lay as an Ordinary Seaman aboard the 'Pompee' for all three actions, one of just 21 recipients of the 'Pompee 17 June 1809' clasp recorded on the Admiralty roll. 'Some small islets, called Saintes, near Guadeloupe being taken possession of on 14 April [1809] by Captain Beaver and a British Squadron, three French Line-of-Battle Ships, lying at anchor in the roads beneath, were*



*compelled to put to sea. They were chased by the Admiral's Flagship 'Neptune', 98, and 'Pompee', 74, which, however, were outsailed by three 18-gun Brigs. One of these, the 'Recruit', commanded by Captain Charles Napier (who had already earned distinction at Martinique), coming up with the 'D'Hautpoult', kept up a fire upon her with so much skill and gallantry as to delay her, so that by night the 'Pompee' arrived up. The French Captain fought his ship with obstinate courage, but was compelled to surrender to 'Pompee', which lost nine killed, and Captain Fahie, the First Lieutenant, and 28 Officers and men wounded.' ('Great Battles of the British Navy', by Lieutenant C.R. Low, R.N. refers). Ordinary Seaman James Lay is believed to have been wounded in a separate incident on 16.9.1809. M.I.D. Several edge bruises and very worn through polishing. 2004 Provenance: Ordinary Seaman James Lay was wounded in the action with the French National Ship D'Hautpoult on the morning of the 17th April 1809 (London Gazette 23 May 1809).'*

Condition; edge bruising and heavily polished, fair to fine. The carriage and clasps better, original section of ribbon and medal is 100% as issued. Ex DNW 2004 Sold with copy original medal and Greenwich Hospital Rolls, discharge papers, casualty confirmation and other research both paper and digital. A rare medal

#### **POMPEE vs D'HAUTPOULT taken from James**

*'.. on the 12th of April, a small British squadron, under the orders of Captain Philip Beaver of the 40-gun frigate **Acasta**, accompanied by a fleet of transports, having on board from 2000 to 3000 men commanded by Major-general Frederic Maitland, sailed from Fort-Royal bay, Martinique, and on the next day arrived off the Saintes. On the 14th the troops were landed with a, very slight loss ; and on the same afternoon possessed themselves, with some difficulty, of a mountain 800 feet high, called Morne-Russel, and which completely overlooked the ships in the harbour. Upon these two 8-inch howitzers were presently brought to bear with such effect, that at 8 p.m. the three line-of-battle ships began to get under way, and at 9 h. 30 m. p.m. sailed out through the windward passage ; but, although favoured by an unusually dark night, not unseen by the British in-shore squadron of sloops and brigs, under the orders of Captain Hugh Cameron, of the 18-gun ship-sloop **Hazard** ; and who immediately made the preconcerted signal to the admiral outside.*

*At this time the **Neptune** was off the south-west passage at some distance, and the **Pompée** about a mile and a half to the westward of Terre d'en Bas, or the Lower Sainte. In a very few minutes the **Pompée** discovered the three French ships bearing down under a press of canvass, followed by the **Hazard** and other vessels belonging to the in-shore squadron. At 10 p.m. the **Pompée** closed with the sternmost French ship, and endeavoured to stop her by the discharge of two broadsides ; but, having a strong breeze in her favour, the latter continued her course to the west-south-west without returning a shot. At 10 h. 15 m. p.m. the 18-gun brig-sloop **Recruit**, Captain Charles Napier, got up and opened her fire at the enemy's sternmost ship. At 11 p.m. the **Neptune** joined in the chase, and at 30 minutes past midnight crossed so near to the same ship, that the latter fired into her and killed one and wounded four of her men.*

*On the 15th, at 4 a.m., the **Recruit**, by her superior sailing, again got near enough to discharge a broadside at the **d'Hautpoult**, now the rearmost French ship ; and the **Pompée** was very soon in a situation to open a distant fire from her bow-chasers ; all three French ships as they steered in line abreast, returning the fire with their stern-chasers. At 10 h. 30 m. a.m. Captain Napier had his sergeant of marines wounded by a shot from one of the French ships ; but the **Recruit** still persisted to harass them with her attacks. So annoying were those attacks, that at 10 h. 45 m. a.m. the **d'Hautpoult** broached to and discharged her main and quarter deck guns, cutting away two of the brig's fore shrouds on the larboard side and doing other damage to her rigging, but fortunately, wounding no one. Even this did not*

intimidate Captain Napier; for, no sooner had the **d'Hauptoult** resumed her course before the wind, than the **Recruit** ran across her stern, and poured in one or two broadsides, receiving in return a fire from the 74's stern-chasers. The **Pompée** also joined occasionally in the running fight ; and thus the day passed. At 8 p.m. the French ships separated, the **d'Hauptoult** altering her course to west-north-west, while her two consorts continued steering west-south-west. The **Pompée** immediately hauled up after the **d'Hauptoult** and was at this time about three miles to the eastward of the latter, full five miles to the east-north-east of the **Courageux** and **Polonais**, and about the same distance ahead of the **Neptune** ; who, since the forenoon, had detached the **Hazard** and **Supérieure**, and was now in company with only the **Hawk** brig. At midnight the **Pompée** could no longer see the two French ships in the west-south-west, but still kept sight of the **d'Hauptoult**.



On the 16th, at daylight, the wind still from the eastward, the **d'Hauptoult** was about three miles north-west half-west, and the **Neptune** about nine miles south-east half-east, of the **Pompée**. The **Recruit**, having dropped astern, on account probably of her damaged rigging, was not now in sight. In the course of the forenoon the British 38-gun frigate **Latona**, Captain Hugh Pigot, and 12-pounder 32-gun frigate **Castor**, Captain William Roberts, made their appearance in the north-east, and soon joined in the chase. At 5 p.m. the **Neptune** was no longer visible from the **Pompée's** mast-head ; and the latter ship and the **d'Hauptoult** sailed so nearly alike, that no apparent alteration had taken place in the distance between them since the preceding day. At 5 h. 30 m. p.m. the high land of Porto-Rico was seen from the **Pompée** bearing north-north-east, about nine leagues distant. The night shut in extremely dark, and the ships, as they approached the land, were baffled with light and variable winds from the northward and westward. By midnight the **Castor** had got so far ahead as to be on the starboard bow of the **Pompée** but the **Latona** had not been able to advance beyond the latter's starboard quarter.

On the 17th, at 2 h. 45 m. a.m., the **Castor** shortened sail ; and at 3 A. M., when within little more than half a mile of the **d'Hauptoult's** starboard quarter, commenced a fire with her larboard guns. In this way the action was maintained between an English 12-pounder frigate and a French 74 until 4 a.m. ; when, owing to the latter having had frequently to yaw to bring her guns to bear the **Pompée** got up. Passing between the **Castor** and her opponent, the **Pompée** engaged the **d'Hauptoult** within musket-shot distance, gradually closing until 5 h. 15 m. a.m. ; when the **d'Hauptoult** ranged ahead, steering before the wind, and became again engaged with the **Castor**. Before many shot had been exchanged between these unequal antagonists, the **Pompée** putting her helm a-port, fired her bow guns at, and was preparing with her broadside to rake, the **d'Hauptoult** ; when the French ship, now a complete wreck in rigging and sails, lowered her topsails, hove to, and hauled down her colours. This was a measure which could no longer have been delayed ; for the opening daylight discovered the **Neptune**, **York**, and **Captain**, with the sloops **Hazard**, **Ringdove**, and **Hawk**, about nine miles to the eastward, and the **Polyphemus**, **Ethalion** frigate, and sloops **Tweed** and **Recruit**, within less than that distance to the westward ; all, under a press of canvass, standing for the **Pompée**, **Castor**, and their prize, and whom the **Latona** was now also in the act of joining. Thus terminated a running fight, which had commenced to the southward of Vieux-Fort, Guadaloupe, at 10 p.m. on the 14th of April, and had ended within eight leagues north-east by north of Cape Roxo, Porto-Rico, at 5 h. 15 m. a.m. on the 17th.





The *Pompée* was nearly in as disabled a state, especially in rigging and sails, as the *d'Hautpoul* herself, and had her gaff ; mizenmast, main yard, and bowsprit badly wounded, besides having received a number of shot in her hull. The *Pompée*'s loss consisted of her boatswain (Edward Casey), seven seamen, and one marine killed, her captain, first lieutenant (William Bone), one lieutenant of marines (Charles Edward Atkins), 22 seamen, and five private marines wounded. The damages of the *Castor* were comparatively trifling, and her loss amounted to only one seaman killed and six wounded. The loss of these two ships, added to that of the *Neptune* and *Recruit* already stated, makes the total loss on the British side, 10 killed, and 35 wounded. The hull of the *d'Hautpoul*, as is usually the case against British opponents, had suffered more than the appearance of her sails and rigging indicated ; and the French ship lost, out of a crew of 680 men and boys, between 80 and 90 in killed and wounded, including several officers.

In this case there was nothing that could cast the slightest imputation upon the French ship : the *d'Hautpoul* retreated from a superior force, manoeuvred skilfully, and, when at last overtaken, fought bravely. There were periods, probably, when Commodore Troude might have shortened sail and engaged to advantage ; but, doubtless, he considered that, long before he could bring the contest to a favourable issue, Rear-admiral Cochrane and his squadron would be close at his heels ; not merely to retake his prize (admitting the French commodore to have taken the *Pompée*), but to capture one or more of his ships, disabled as, in all likelihood, they would have been. The conduct of the *Pompée* was such as was expected of her, and the *Castor* gave proofs of a commendable zeal in closing with so powerful an antagonist ; but what shall we say of the *Recruit* ? Her behaviour was gallant in the extreme, and was well calculated to efface the stain which, not many weeks before, nor many degrees from the same spot, the *Driver's* conduct had, seemingly, put upon the sloop-class. \* Next to the pleasure of recording acts of intrepidity like that performed by the *Recruit*, is the pleasure of being able to announce that they were appreciated in the quarter possessing the power to

reward them. Sir Alexander Cochrane, with feelings highly honourable to him, appointed Captain Napier to the command of the **d'Hauptoult**. The admiral did this on the spot, and then detached the **York** and **Captain**, with two frigates and a sloop of war, in quest of M. Troude ; but who evaded all his pursuers and reached Europe in safety, anchoring, about the middle of May, in the road of Cherbourg. The **d'Hauptoult** was a tolerably fine ship of 1871 tons, and, under the name of **Abercromby**, cruised for three or four years in the British service.'