

THE FINE 3 CLASP NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE MEDAL AWARDED TO AN OFFICER WHO TOOK PART IN THE EXPEDITION TO FERROL AND EGYPT, THE AMPHIBIOUS ATTACK ON THE HARBOUR AND FRENCH BATTERIES AT PORTO FERRAJO 1801, BEFORE BEING PRESENT AT ABOARD DONEGAL AT THE CAPTURE OF THE SPANISH THREE DECKER RAYO AFTER TRAFALGAR AND AT THE BATTLES OF ST. DOMINGO AND BASQUE ROADS. MENTIONED FOR HIS SERVICE AS FIRST LIEUTENANT IN COMMAND OF BOATS ARMED WITH CONGREVE'S ROCKETS AT THE ATTACK OF TWO FRENCH FRIGATES MOORED CLOSE UNDER THE BATTERIES OF LA HOGUE, 1810, BEFORE SERVING AS FIRST OF MAIDSTONE IN AMERICA 1812-13, SEEING A GREAT DEAL OF SERVICE ON THE CHESAPEAKE AND RAPPAHANNOCK RIVERS DURING THE EARLY PHASES OF THE WAR WITH AMERICA



NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE 1793-1840, 3 CLASPS, EGYPT, ST. DOMINGO, BASQUE ROADS 1809 'JOHN TAYLOR, MASTER'S MATE.'

Navy List entry:

"J. Taylor, Mid. of Gibraltar in the expedition, to Ferrol, 1800, and Egypt, and commanded her launch at the attack of the enemy's works at Elba 1801. Mate of Donegal during the important services of that ship after Trafalgar; and of same ship at St. Domingo, 1806. Lieut. of Donegal at the attack on Fr. frigate squadron destroyed at Sables d'Olonne; and upon the Fr. fleet in Aix Roads, 1809; and at attack upon two Fr. frigates moored close under the batteries of La Hogue, 1810. Lieut. of Maidstone at destruction of two American privateers in the bay of Fundy, 1812; and at capture of American Revenue cutter, and other vessels in the Chesapeake and Rappahannock, 1813."

John Taylor was born on 18 February 1781 and aged 13, entered the Royal Navy on 6 December 1794, as a Landsman on board the *Scorpion* gun-brig, stationed off Jersey, under Lieutenant-Commander Thomas Crocker. He removed, in September 1795, to the *Bravo* gun-brig, Captain Philip D'Auvergne, again stationed off Jersey. Given his young age and subsequent service, it is highly unlikely Taylor was anything but an Officer's servant (prospective officer) but was borne on the ships books with these ratings.

On 6 May 1796 he was appointed Midshipman of the Third Rate ship of the line, *Juste* (80), Captains Hon. Thomas Pakenham and William Hancock Kelly, the latter of whom, after having served in the Channel, he followed, in May and June 1797, into the Third Rate ships of the line, *Veteran* (64) and *Gibraltar* (80). In this latter ship, which was stationed off Cadiz and in the Mediterranean, he took part in the expedition to Ferrol in August 1800. Here the British attempted to capture the Spanish naval base and shipyard but both naval and land forces failed in the attempt. Taking part in the Egypt expedition, March 1801, *Gibraltar* was noted as cruising off Alexandria in late June that year (clasp).



Taylor was nominated Acting-Lieutenant on 29 August 1801 and commanded *Gibraltar*'s launch during 'the attack of the enemy's works at Elba'. This would have been the costly amphibious attack on the harbour and French batteries at Porto Ferrajo. Here *Gibraltar* formed part of Admiral Warren's squadron that landed 700 sailors and marines, along with 1000 Tuscan troops on 14 September 1801:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Porto_Ferrajo

On 7 March 1802, Taylor was superseded and placed, once more as Midshipman, on board the Third Rate ship of the line, *Foudroyant* (80), flagship of Lord Keith, with whom he returned shortly afterwards to England, and was paid off in July that year, the Peace being declared between Britain and France.

With War being declared again with France in May 1803, Taylor, who had passed his Lieutenant's exam in August 1802, was next employed in the Channel from 6 May 1803 until April 1804 as Midshipman in the frigate *Naiad* (38), Captain James Wallis. In April 1804, he was appointed Master's Mate in the First Rate ship of the line, *Royal Sovereign* (100), bearing the flag of Sir Richard Bickerton, serving in the Mediterranean.

H.M.S. DONEGAL AND FIRST LIEUTENANT

Between June 1806 and March 1811, Taylor served in the Third Rate ship of the line, *Donegal* (74), under Captain Pulteney Malcolm. In that ship, of which he was appointed Lieutenant on 2 April 1806, serving as First Lieutenant from at least 1810 (effectively 2nd in command), he would see a good deal of active service, not least in the days after the battle of Trafalgar, when *Donegal* captured the Spanish three-decker, *Rayo*. *Rayo* had been dismantled as a result of damage sustained at Trafalgar. A few days later, *Rayo* went to sea in an attempt to recapture prizes taken by the Royal Navy. During this effort, she was captured by *Donegal*. With a British prize crew aboard, she ran aground in the storm of 26 October and was wrecked. Her broken hull was burnt by Royal Navy sailors on 31 October. Of the 107 officers and men put on board by the *Donegal* as prize crew, 25 were drowned, the remainder were made prisoners by the Spaniards.

On 6 February 1806, *Donegal* formed part of Vice Admiral Sir John Duckworth's squadron that defeated a French squadron off St Domingo (clasp):



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_battle_at_the_Battle_of_San_Domingo

In 1808, *Donegal* was part of the escorted that took Sir Arthur Wellesley's army from Cork to Portugal and on 24 February 1809, Taylor witnessed the destruction of three French frigates under the batteries of Sable d'Olonne;

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Les_Sables-d%27Olonne

Present, in April, at Lord Cochrane's destruction of the enemy's shipping in Basque Roads (Clasp) in April 1809. In 1810, Taylor shared in an unsuccessful attempt made by Captain Charles Grant of the *Diana* to destroy the two French frigates *Amazon* and *Eliza*, protected by the fire of several strong batteries near Cherbourg. The latter affair took place on the afternoon of 15 November 1810: during the night, Taylor, then First of the *Donegal*, was sent with two boats belonging to his own ship and the *Revenge* 74 to essay the effect of Congreve's rockets on the enemy, and at daybreak on the 16th it was observed that one of the frigates was on her beam-ends and the other had run aground. Taylor was mentioned in despatches for his actions with the rockets. Captain Malcolms despatch:

"Donegal, at St. Helen's, November 17, 1810. On the 14th instant, being near to Barfleur, Captain Loring, of the Niobe, informed me that two large French frigates had sailed from Havre on the night of the 12th, and had been chased into La Hogue by the Diana and Niobe.

Next morning, in company with the Revenge, I joined the Diana off La Hogue, and observed one of the enemy's frigates aground near to St. Vaast (the day before she had been driven from her anchors in the gale from the southward), the other was anchored very near to the shore, between the forts of La Hogue and Tatilion; it was impossible to approach her but under the fire of her guns, and those of the two batteries, which are very considerable.

We tacked three times near to her, firing our broadsides whilst going about; the Revenge, Diana, and Niobe did the same; and it is with pleasure I inform you, that the ships were manoeuvred with the greatest precision, although the shot and shells fell in abundance around them, and the guns could only be brought to bear when head to wind.

At one o'clock the tide of ebb drifting us to leeward, obliged us to desist from the attack, and we anchored out of gun-shot. Some of our rigging is cut, and a shot in the head of the main-top-mast, but otherwise our damages are not very material. The Donegal had three men wounded, and Revenge seven, two of whom are since dead.

Having on board some of Colonel Congreve's rockets, in the night I sent the boats under the command of Mr. Taylor, first lieutenant of the Donegal, who fired several in the direction of the frigate.

Whether from their effect or from the effects of our cannonade, I know not, but at day-light we observed her nearer to the shore, and aground; the other was on her beam ends, and nearly dry at low water.

As they were now perfectly protected by the batteries, it did not appear to me that any further attempt could be made to destroy them; I therefore resumed my station with the Revenge, leaving the Diana and Niobe to watch the port of La Hogue,

Captain Grant will have detailed to you the particulars respecting his own ship and the Niobe; I have only to say, that the conduct of both, whilst acting with me, was such as was to be expected from well-appointed English frigates.

One of the frigates I consider to be lost; she was first on her starboard beam ends, and when raised by the tide, fell over on it, leaving her on her Jarboard side; the other must have suffered very considerably from our shot, and where she is aground, is exposed to the east winds.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_of_15_November_1810



After he left the *Donegal*, Taylor was successively appointed Senior, 13 August 1811 of the Third Rate ships of the line *Royal Oak* (74), Captain P. Malcolm and 3 March 1812, of the *Hannibal* (74), Captains Samuel Pym and Sir Michael Seymour, both in the Channel. Further details of *Donegal* and therefore Taylor's service can be found in the naval biography of the then Admiral Malcolm:

https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Naval_Biography_of_Great_Britain/XBIEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=%22El+Rayo+%22+donegal&pg=PA358&printsec=frontcover

H.M.S. MAIDSTONE IN NORTH AMERICA 1812-13

On 13 June 1812, Taylor was appointed First Lieutenant of the frigate *Maidstone* (36), commanded Captains George Burdett. Serving off the coast of America, *Maidstone* was one of a relatively few number of ships serving on this station during the early stages of the 1812 war with America (War declared on 18 June 1812). Consequently, the crew of *Maidstone* saw a great deal of action on the Chesapeake and Rappahannock rivers during the next 17 months. Captain Burdett commanding the squadron until the appointment of Rear Admiral Cockburn.

On the North American station. Among other services of a similar character, he commanded the boats of the *Maidstone* and *Spartan* frigates at the destruction of the *Morning Star* and *Polly*, American privateers of 1 gun, 4 swivels, and 50 men each, in the Bay of Fundy on 1 August 1812; and two days later at the capture, in the same neighbourhood, of a well-armed custom-house cutter and four merchantmen. The following is some of *Maidstone*'s selected service in brief whilst Taylor was First Lieutenant:

“*Maidstone* and her boats were very active at the beginning of August. On the 1st. the boats of *Maidstone*, and *Spartan* captured two American schooners, *The Polly* of 1 gun, 4 swivels and 40 men

and the Morning Star of 1 gun, 4 swivels and 50 men were burnt in a creek called Baily's Mistake in the Bay of Fundy.

The revenue cutter Commodore Barry of 6 guns and the schooners Madison, Olive and Spence, all armed with 2 guns, were attacked in Little River on the 3rd. and they were brought out by the boats. Most of their crews escaped ashore.

On the afternoon of 17 October, on the St. George's Bank some 250 miles south of Nova Scotia, Maidstone, with Spartan in company, captured the American privateer brig Rapid. She had been armed with twelve carronades of various sizes and two long sixes but eight of the guns were thrown overboard during the nine hour chase. With a crew of 84 men she was three days out of Portland and had been provisioned for a three month's cruise off the Azores, Madeira, Cape Verde Is., Cayenne and Bermuda.

The armed schooner Lottery of 6 guns and 28 men and a cargo of coffee, sugar and logwood was taken on 9 February 1813 and sent off to Bermuda with a convoy of captured vessels.

Maidstone, with the boats of the squadron made another valuable capture on the 14th. She was the letter of marque Cora of 8 guns and 40 men. She was reckoned to be the fastest schooner out of Baltimore and was returning from Bordeaux on her maiden trip with a cargo of brandy, wine, silks and flints.

When armed American vessels were seen at the mouth of the Rappahannock on 3 April Admiral Warren ordered Maidstone, Statira, and the Fantome and Mohawk brigs, to chase them into the river. When the wind dropped the boats were manned and they went in under Lieut. Puckinghorne of the San Domingo and carried four armed schooners. The Dolphin of 12 guns and 98 men was boarded by Lieut. Bishop in Statira's cutter and Lieut. Liddon in Maidstone's launch.



ADMIRAL COCKBURN'S FORCES PLUNDERING HARVE-DE GRACE

In order to cut off American supplies and to destroy foundries and public works in the rivers at the head of the Chesapeake, Admiral Warren directed Rear Admiral Cockburn to take Maidstone, Fantome, Mohawk, High Flyer and three of the prize schooners under his orders.

He sent 180 seamen and 200 marines under Lieut. Westphall of Marlborough up the Elk River on 28 April where they destroyed flour and military stores at French Town and burnt 5 vessels.

On 5 May Maidstone was anchored off the Sasafra River and boats were sent up stream to Georgetown and Frederickstown.

At the end of the year Maidstone, with more than 100 other vessels, was driven on shore and damaged during a hurricane which hit Halifax."

In November 1813, Taylor was witness at the Court Martial of the Master of *Maidstone* at Halifax but shortly after, on 13 November 1813, he was appointed to the frigate *Romulus* (36), George William Henry Knight, with which he served at Halifax and Bermuda until March 1814. On 17 May 1815 (after 14 months of half-pay) he was appointed to the *Falmouth* 20, also commanded by Captain Knight, off Boulogne, remaining in the *Falmouth* until 1 November 1815, when he went onto half-pay again. Taylor was placed on the list of Retired Commanders on 23 July 1839. Commander Taylor died in Brighton on 17 December 1852, aged 72 years.



Confirmed on the rolls as Midshipman of H.M.S. Gibraltar at Egypt; and as Master's Mate and Lieutenant of H.M.S. Donegal at St. Domingo and Basque Roads. Taylor is shown in the Navy List for 1850 as being in receipt of a medal with three clasps.



Condition GVF, original ribbon with brooch clasp, contained in a fine quality contemporary fitted case. Clasps show signs of having been refixed to left side. Sold with copies of his service record, medal rolls and other digital research.

A unique named/ranked Medal to a naval officer with a superb service