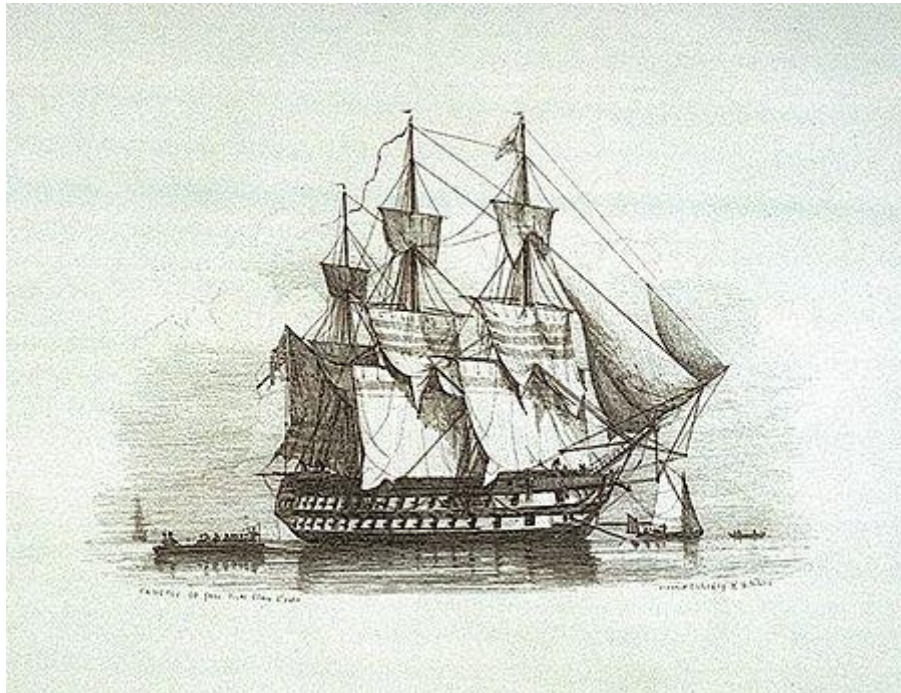


# Family History



*HMS Canopus 80 Guns First Class 2nd Rate*

**THE JOURNAL OF THE INSTITUTE OF HERALDIC AND GENEALOGICAL STUDIES**

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# THE INSTITUTE OF HERALDIC AND GENEALOGICAL STUDIES

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The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies [IHGS] is an independent educational charitable trust established to provide training and research in the study of the history and structure of the family. It was established in Northgate, Canterbury, in 1961.

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**Note from the Editor**

We invite contributions of articles for our journal, Family History. Articles should focus on genealogy or heraldry, whether comprising historical analyses, personal research journeys, or insights into family history and heraldic traditions. Experienced authors, graduates and students are all encouraged to contribute.

**Front cover:**

HMS Canopus 80 guns First class 2nd rate [Public Domain]

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## IHGS NEWS

### SARAH PETTYFER, DipGen, JOINS THE IHGS TUTORIAL TEAM

We are delighted to welcome Sarah Pettyfer as an IHGS Tutor.

Sarah is an experienced family, house, and local historian with a unique blend of legal and genealogical expertise. Originally holding an MA in Law, Sarah began her professional journey as a solicitor in civil litigation before specialising in family law. After over twenty years of researching her own family history she transitioned from law to history and graduated from the Institute with the Higher Certificate in 2020, and the Diploma a year later. Her legal background informs her historical research, with a particular focus on legal records such as deeds, manorial court records and Chancery court cases. While she no longer practices law, she remains a member of the Law Society and actively contributes to the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives (AGRA). Sarah's roots are in Yorkshire, but she has been based in Surrey since 2012 and is the author of *Tracing Your Surrey Ancestors* for the Pen and Sword 'guide for family historians' series due to be released in 2025.



We very much look forward to working with her and her sharing her expertise with the students and Tutorial Team.

\* \* \* \* \*

### NEW COURSE – DNA AND GENETIC GENEALOGY



We are excited to introduce our upcoming new course scheduled for Spring 2025.

This comprehensive six-module assessed distance learning course, written by specialist Dr Sophie Kay, will focus on DNA and its practical applications to genetic genealogy.

Whether you are an amateur or professional family historian, and whether you have prior experience of genetic genealogy or are new to this fascinating subject, this course is designed to help you acquire new skills and techniques in genetic genealogy, and put them into practice. Researchers with previous experience in this area may also find it useful for addressing any knowledge gaps. For more details and to register an interest please visit [www.ihgs.ac.uk/dna-and-genetic-genealogy-2032](http://www.ihgs.ac.uk/dna-and-genetic-genealogy-2032)

## PRESENTATION OF THE JULIAN BICKERSTETH MEMORIAL MEDAL

At our Awards Day in July we were pleased to announce that the Bickersteth Medal has been awarded to Chris Whitten and Wikitree.com.

Paul Fox, Chairman of the Trustees, presented Chris Whitten with the medal during the awards ceremony at the close of the Boston Congress in Boston Old South Church on Friday 27th September 2024.



Wikitree is a sister website to Wikipedia. Established fifteen years ago by Chris Whitten and his colleagues, it is totally free and supported by a volunteer community. It has 1 million members, 39 million profiles, and 12 million profiles with DNA connections. It has amazing search functionality to determine whether you are related to other people - famous, infamous, extended family or friends. Unlike other ancestry websites you can write profiles of ancestors like Wikipedia pages, with text, photographs etc. It is open content, so others can add to your work, with a high emphasis on integrity through its honour code, and correct referencing. In order to edit pre-1500 profiles it is necessary to take a series of free training courses. The establishment of this vast database is very much in accordance with the founding principles of the IHGS.

\* \* \* \* \*

## HIGHER CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION RESULTS AUTUMN 2024

We are very pleased to confirm our examination results for this. Many congratulations to them on their achievements.

Deborah Brambill  
Sarah Cook  
Sheila Herd  
Jananne Rahman  
Sonja Sarantis  
Angela Smith

\* \* \* \* \*

# COMMANDER THOMAS CONSITT RN

## Rachel Stakes, DipGen

### PREFACE

The piece was originally part of Rachel's Diploma submission in 2022, and it went on to win the RQG Prize. The restraints caused by publishing in the journal has meant that there are some small alterations to the text and formatting.

### INTRODUCTION

References to a Commander Thomas Consitt of the Royal Navy were found whilst researching the Consitt family of Yorkshire. Although there seemed to be no immediate connection between him and the Consitt line under investigation, it was thought that researching the life and career of a naval officer would make an interesting project, be good experience and also potentially provide insight into a distant line of the Consitt family. What could not have been predicted was that Thomas Consitt would have led such a fascinating life of travel and adventure, leaving a varied trail of naval and international records in his wake.

This submission demonstrates how a full picture of a naval officer's career and life can be built from the magnificent resource of the naval records held at The National Archives (TNA). In addition, it has been seen that when an individual has emigrated, genealogical records and other sources from around the world can be found online.

### Published Sources

Biographical publications on naval officers were consulted firstly online, then at TNA. References to Thomas Consitt were found in O'Byrne<sup>1</sup> and the Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy.<sup>2</sup>

#### *The Entry for Thomas Consitt in A Naval Biographical Dictionary William R O'Byrne*

CONSITT. (RETIRED COMMANDER, 1844. F-P., 16; H-P., 38.)

THOMAS CONSITT entered the Navy, in Aug. 1793, as Midshipman, on board the DEFENCE 74, Capts. Jas. Gambier, Thos. Wells, Wm. Brown and John Peyton; in which ship we find him bearing a part in Lord Howe's action of 1 June, 1794, and afterwards, as Master's Mate, in the battle of the Nile, 1 Aug. 1798. On the latter occasion he was successively placed on board Le Conquérant and Le Franklin two of the captured 74's; and, on the last-mentioned ship being added to the British Navy as CANOPUS, and commissioned by Capt. Bartholomew James, was appointed 22 Oct. following, to an Acting-Lieutenancy in her. Having been confirmed into the BONETTA 18, Capt. Henry Vansittart, 7 Sept. 1799, Mr Consitt next joined, in Feb. and May, the BRILLIANT and POMONE frigates, Capts. Hon. Chas. Paget and Robt. Carthew Reynolds, on the Lisbon and Home stations. He invalided in Jan. 1801; subsequently held an appointment in the Impress service at Sunderland, from 28 April, 1803, until July, 1810; became a Retired Commander on the lower list, 4 Nov. 1830; and was promoted, 16 March, 1844, to the list of 1816. He is married and has issue.

No references to Consitt were found in Marshall's Naval Biographies<sup>3</sup>. An overview of Thomas Consitt's naval career as described in the published sources is detailed in the table 1.

<sup>1</sup> O'Byrne, William R. *A Naval Biographical Dictionary Vol. 1*. 1849. Page 224.

<sup>2</sup> *Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy, 1660-1815*. Original Data: Bonner-Smith, D. (Ed). The Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy, 1660-1815. Vol. I, Page 191. National Maritime Museum. 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, John. *Royal Navy Biography. Vols 1-4 & Supps*. Longman, London. 1823-1835.

**Table 1: Naval Career of Thomas Consitt based on Published Sources Alone**

Date	Event
Aug 1793	Entered Royal Navy as a midshipman on HMS Defence
1 Jun 1794	Took part in Lord Howe's action also known as the Glorious First of June
1 Aug 1798	Master's mate at Battle of the Nile and boarded captured ships Le Conquerant and Le Franklin
22 Oct 1798	Appointed as Acting Lieutenant on HMS Canopus (formerly Le Franklin)
7 Sep 1799	Confirmed as Lieutenant on HMS Bonetta
Feb 1800	On board HMS Brilliant
May 1800	On board HMS Pomone
Jan 1801	Invalided
28 Apr 1803	With Impress Service in Sunderland
Jul 1810	Ceased to be in Impress Service
1816	Full pay
4 Nov 1830	Became a Retired Commander on the Lower List
1838	Half pay
16 Mar 1844	Promoted to Retired Commander of List of 1816, full pay
1849	Alive, was married and had issue

The information above was then used as a framework when searching for further documentation for Consitt. Consitt's active service occurred during the time of the French Revolutionary Wars and his time in the Impress Service was during the Napoleonic Wars.

Consitt should have appeared on the Navy List after he was promoted to lieutenant in September 1799. After a preliminary search of the few Navy Lists that were available online, physical editions were examined at TNA (1799-1853). Consitt's date of death was not entirely clear at that point, so the aim was to find out when his name came off the Navy List, O'Byrne having reported he was alive as of 1849. The information found is presented in table 2.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 2: Thomas Consitt in Steel's Navy Lists**

Date	Rank	Other Information
March 1800	Serving Lieutenant	
July 1803	Serving Lieutenant	Impress Service Sunderland
Sept 1810	Serving Lieutenant	Impress Service Sunderland
December 1810 disappeared from lists		
Dec 1829	Retired Commander	Commissioned 7 Sept 1799
Dec 1830	Retired Commander	Promoted to Commander 26 Nov 1830
April 1844	Retired Commander	16 March 1844
Jan 1850	Retired Commander	16 March 1844 7 Sept 1799 Three symbols denoting awards
March 1852 disappeared from lists		

<sup>4</sup> *The Navy List for March 1800*; John Murray, London. 1800. *The Navy List for September 1810*; John Murray, London. 1810; *The Navy List for December 1829*. John Murray, London. 1830; *The Navy List for December 1830*. John Murray, London. 1831; *The Navy List for April 1844*. Page 101. John Murray, London. 1844.

The Navy List of January 1850 included three symbols before Thomas Consitt's name which signified his three awards: the silver naval medal with three clasps; a recognition as an officer who served in Lord Howe's fleet in May and 1 June 1794 (the Glorious First of June); and as an officer who served under Nelson at the Battle of the Nile on 1 August 1798. Consitt did not appear in the Navy List of 1852, so it was expected that he died between 1850 and 1852. No mention of his death or obituary was found in the 1851-3 Navy Lists. No other Consitts were found in any Navy List.

An index of the Naval Chronicle<sup>5</sup> and an abridged version of the Naval Chronicle<sup>6</sup> were examined at TNA but no references to Consitt were found in either. A search of military records on Ancestry gave two entries for Consitt's naval general service medals (from ADM 171) but added nothing further.

### Admiralty Records: Survey Return of 1817

Online searches of the navy service records (ADM 196 and ADM 340 which were searchable by name) were undertaken on Discovery but no results for Thomas Consitt or variations were found. The only naval document that was identified from a search for Thomas Consitt on Discovery was an admiralty survey return from 1817<sup>7</sup> which was viewed at TNA. Survey returns were filled in by naval officers detailing their age, address and previous service. Consitt's is detailed in table 3.

**Table 3: Memorandum of the Services of Lieutenant Thomas Consitt<sup>8</sup>**

Several Bearings, or Ranks	Names of the Several Ships	Names of the Several Admirals, Captains, and Commanders	Stations on which the Ship was chiefly employed	Date of Entry	Date of Discharge
Midshipman	Defence	Captain J Gambier Captain Ths Wells Captain W Brown	Channel Mediterranean	Augst 1793	
Masters Mate	Defence	Captain Jn Peyton	Port of Cadiz Mediterranean	1 <sup>st</sup> May 1798	3 Augst 1798
Masters Mate	Conquerant	Lieutenant J Molineux	Nile	3 <sup>rd</sup> Augst 1798	Augst 1798
Masters Mate	Conquerant	Lieutenant J Molineux	Nile Mediterranean	Augst 1798	
Actg Lieutenant	Canopus	Captain B James	Lisbon Plymouth	22 <sup>nd</sup> Octr 1798	1 <sup>st</sup> Sept 1799
Lieutenant	Boneta	Captain H Vansittart	Coast of Africa Lisbon L	7 <sup>th</sup> Sept 1799	Jany 1800
Supernumerary	Brilliant	Captain C Paget	Lisbon Coast of France	Feby 1800	April 1800
Lieutenant	Pomone	Captain RC Reynolds	North Sea Downs Appt	13 May 1800	Jany 1801 Invalided
Lieutenant	Impress Service	Capt McKenzie Captain W Charleton	Sunderland	26 April 1803 App 18 Apr 03	July 1810

<sup>5</sup> Hurst, Norman. *Naval Chronicle 1799-1818: Index to Births, Marriages and Deaths*. 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Tracy, N. (Ed). *The Naval Chronicle: The Contemporary Record of the Royal Navy at War. Vols 1-5*. Chatham. 1998-9.

<sup>7</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Returns of Officers' Services. Name: Thomas Consitt, Rank: Lieutenant, Date of Seniority: 7 Sept 1799*.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



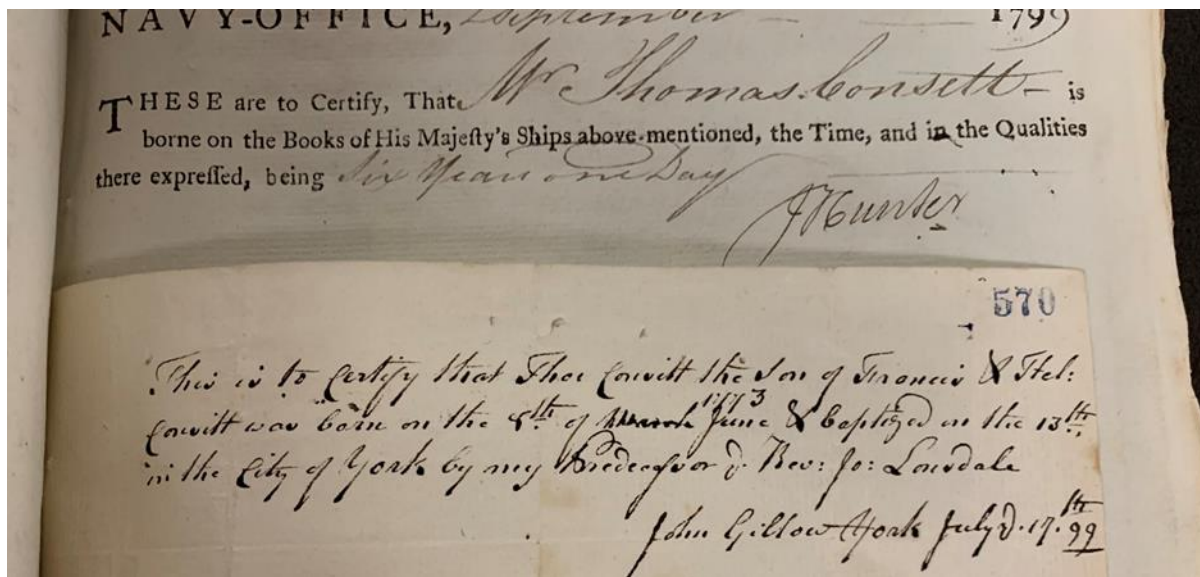
This survey return gave approximately the same information as O'Byrne but with greater detail. It was noted that Consitt was aboard Brilliant on supernumerary which meant attached to but not on the strength of a ship. The most interesting piece of information was that Thomas Consitt's address at the time of the survey in 1817 was given as Perth, Upper Canada.

### Admiralty Records: Lieutenants' Passing Certificates

Consitt would have had to pass an examination to qualify as a lieutenant and details of this can be found in the passing certificates. Pappalardo's index to the passing certificates<sup>9</sup> was used to identify two documents that referred to Consitt and these were viewed at TNA<sup>10</sup>. The first document was dated 2 September 1799 and was the order to examine Thomas Consitt for the rank of lieutenant<sup>11</sup>. It also recorded his age (26), the ships he had served on (Canopus and Defence) and the captains who he had served under. The second page of the document was a small slip of paper which gave the first detail of genealogical information found within the Admiralty records.

The final page gave a summary of Consitt's career up to September 1799 noting ships, entry, quality (rank), discharge and time on each ship. He had served a total of six years and one day, with most of that time spent on HMS Defence.

### Thomas Consitt's Passing Certificate Documents<sup>12</sup>



*This is to certify that Thos Consitt the Son of Francis & Hel: Consitt was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1773 & baptized on the 13<sup>th</sup> in the City of York by my Predecessor the Rev: Jo: Lonsdale  
John Gillow York July the 17<sup>th</sup> 99*

<sup>9</sup> Pappalardo, Bruno. *Royal Navy Lieutenants' Passing Certificates (1691-1902)*. List & Index Society. 2001. A

<sup>10</sup> Reference to Thomas CONSETT (sic) in Pappalardo 2001: CONSETT, Thomas, ADM 107/23 Pages 569-571 & ADM 6/97 Page 98. 1799.

<sup>11</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 107/23 Lieutenants Passing Certificates 1799*. Pages 569-571.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

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Ships	Entry	Quality	Discharge	Time			
				Y.	M.	W.	D.
<i>Defence</i>	<i>10 Aug. 1793</i>	<i>Am</i>	<i>21 Aug. 93</i>				<i>4</i>
<i>Do</i>	<i>22 Aug. 93</i>	<i>Mid</i>	<i>26 July 94</i>			<i>12</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Do</i>	<i>12 Aug. 94</i>	<i>Mid. Mat</i>	<i>23 Oct. 97</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Sanctus</i>	<i>24 October 98</i>	<i>Act. Lieut</i>	<i>Sept 1799</i>		<i>11</i>		<i>5</i>
<i>20 June 1799</i>		<i>Act. Lieut</i>	<i>Sept 1799</i>		<i>6</i>		<i>1</i>

NAVY-OFFICE, *20 September* 1799

THESE are to Certify, That *Mr Thomas Consitt* is borne on the Books of His Majesty's Ships above-mentioned, the Time, and in the Qualities there expressed, being *six Years one Day* *J. Hunter*

The second document was a copy of Consitt's lieutenant's passing certificate<sup>13</sup> dated 4 September 1799, which again gave his service record, and stated that he could splice, knot, reef a sail, navigate, use a compass, etc. and had produced the necessary journals.

### Admiralty Records: Entry Books of Officers' Appointments

Both O'Byrne and the Navy List stated that Consitt had been in the Impress Service in Sunderland from 1803 to 1810, so the records of appointments of officers to the Impress Service<sup>14</sup> were viewed at TNA, which contain details of officers appointed to shore duties. Unfortunately, no records exist for 1803 when Consitt was appointed and no references to Consitt were found in the remaining entry books.

### Admiralty Records: Succession Books

Succession books contained details of officers' ships, dates of appointment, transfer and discharge. Consitt became a master's mate in 1798 and a lieutenant in 1799 but no references to Consitt were found in the succession books<sup>15</sup> that cover mates of 1798-9<sup>16</sup>. He did appear in the succession books<sup>17</sup> for commissioned officers which confirmed that he was appointed as a lieutenant on the Bonetta in 1799 and on the Pomone in 1800.

<sup>13</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 6/97 Lieutenants Passing Certificates 1799*. Page 98.

<sup>14</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 11/14-16. Entry book of orders appointing officers to cutters, tenders, Sea Fencibles, signal stations, Impress Service and other shore appointments. 1804-1813*.

<sup>15</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 106/2900. Registers, Officers Appointed to Ships by the Navy Board 1783 & later; ADM 106/2901 Registers, Officers Appointed to Ships by the Navy Board 1799 & later*.

<sup>16</sup> Pappalardo (2002) says that mates are not listed in the book that covers from 1799, but it would be expected that Consitt be in the previous book that covers 1783 onwards.

<sup>17</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 11/56 Succession Books of Commissioned Officers 1797-1801*. Pages 44 and 224; *ADM 11/67/1-2 Succession books 1795-1803*.

The only additional piece of information gleaned from the succession books was that another lieutenant was appointed to the *Pomone* on 22 December 1800, the remark was *Vice Consitt sick* (vice meaning *in the place of*). Consitt did not appear in the succession book for 1801<sup>18</sup>.

### **Admiralty Records: List Books**

List books which showed ships' movements were viewed at TNA<sup>19</sup>. Consitt was named and the ships and locations were noted, however, it became clear that the list books were not an accurate account of where Consitt was, for example, he was named as being on two different ships in two different oceans for several months in 1800 (this coincided with his supernumerary on *Brilliant*). The only addition information was that he was in Newfoundland with *Bonetta* in late 1799.

### **Admiralty Records: Captains' Logs**

Three captains' logs were viewed at TNA to try to find out further information on when and how Consitt was invalided. The captain's log for *Bonetta* (1799-1800)<sup>20</sup> did not mention Consitt but indicated that *Bonetta* was near Jamaica during this period and saw much action – spotting 'strange sails' and giving chase. The captain's log for the *Pomone* for 1800<sup>21</sup>, confirmed that Consitt came aboard *Pomone* as a lieutenant on 19 May 1800 and that he was sent to sick on 16 December 1800. No reference to Consitt was found in the captain's log for *Brilliant*<sup>22</sup>.

### **Admiralty Records: Digests and Indexes and Correspondence**

Further visits to TNA were made to examine any surviving naval correspondence regarding Consitt's entire naval career (1793-1810) using the digests and indexes to naval correspondence<sup>23</sup>. The digests and indexes were a guide to finding letters, minutes and other documents kept by the Admiralty. The TNA guide to these digests<sup>24</sup> suggested that even when an original document had not survived, the digest entries themselves could add useful information and this was the case in part here. In addition to the digests, all the lieutenants' letters (initial 'C') were examined for the years 1798-1810<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 11/57 Succession books of commissioned officers 1801*.

<sup>19</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 8/77-81 List Books 1799-1801*.

<sup>20</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 51/1348 Captains' Log, Bonetta 1799-1800*.

<sup>21</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 51/1320 Captains' Log, Pomone 1800-1*.

<sup>22</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 51/ 1368 Captain's Log, Brilliant 1800*.

<sup>23</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 12/56 Admiralty Digest A-K 1793; ADM 12/60 Admiralty Digest A-K 1794; ADM 12/64 Admiralty Digest A-K 1795; ADM 12/68 Admiralty Digest A-L 1796; ADM 12/72 Admiralty Digest A-L 1797; ADM 12/76 Admiralty Digest A-L 1798; ADM 12/80 Admiralty Digest A-L 1799; ADM 12/84 Admiralty Digest A-L 1800; ADM 12/88 Admiralty Digest A-F 1801; ADM 12/94 Admiralty Digest A-E 1802; ADM 12/100 Admiralty Digest A-F 1803.; ADM 12/106 Admiralty Digest A-G 1804; ADM 12/112 Admiralty Digest A-F 1805; ADM 12/118 Admiralty Digest A-G 1806; ADM 12/124 Admiralty Digest A-G 1807; ADM 12/130 Admiralty Digest A-G 1808; ADM 12/135 Admiralty Digest A-G 1809; ADM 12/140 Admiralty Digest A-G 1810*.

<sup>24</sup> The National Archives. *Royal Navy Correspondence Using ADM12 Indexes & Digests*.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/naval-correspondence-adm12-indexes-and-digests/> Accessed Mar 2022.

<sup>25</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2808 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1798; ADM 1/2809 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1799; ADM 1/2810 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1800; ADM 1/2811 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1801; ADM 1/2812 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1802; ADM 1/2813 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1803; ADM 1/2814 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1804; ADM 1/2815 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1805; ADM 1/2816 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1806; ADM 1/2817 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1807. ADM 1/2818 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1808; ADM 1/2819 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1809; ADM 1/2820 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1810*.

Consitt first appeared in the digests to naval correspondence in 1799 as follows<sup>26</sup>:

*Lieutenant Thos Consitt*

<i>Sep 7</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Prod &amp; appd to Bonetta</i>
<i>[Sep] 6</i>	<i>Pro C221</i>	<i>actg L confd Franklin</i>

The first line indicated that a board minute referred to the promotion and appointment of Consitt to the Bonetta of 7 September 1799. The two sets of board minutes<sup>27</sup> were viewed but nothing additional was found to what was in the digest. The second line referred to a letter of 6 September 1799 in ‘promiscuous’ (miscellaneous) correspondence, numbered 221 and under the initial ‘C’, which referred to Consitt being confirmed as acting lieutenant on Le Franklin. The appropriate file<sup>28</sup> was examined but no corresponding letter was found.

Consitt’s name appeared again in the 1800 digest<sup>29</sup> as follows:

*Lieut. Thos Consitt*

<i>Mar 26</i>	<i>Lt C166</i>	<i>ill health leave</i>
<i>May 13</i>	<i>167</i>	<i>appd to Pomone</i>
<i>May 11 N152</i>		<i>hastened</i>

This showed that on 26 March 1800, Consitt was on leave due to ill health and then appointed to the Pomone in May 1800. The lieutenants’ letters for ‘C’ for 1800<sup>30</sup> were examined and although letter 166 was not there, letter 167 was, which confirmed that Consitt was taken off half pay and appointed to Pomone:

*May 13*

*Thos Consitt Half Pay – Lieut Pomone – C Nichols*  
*Appd*

The third line referred to correspondence in captains’ letters, 1800, ‘N’, letter 152. The file<sup>31</sup> was examined but no document was found.

The entry for Thomas Consitt in the 1801 digests was as follows<sup>32</sup>:

*Lieut. Tho Consitt*

<i>Feb 19</i>	<i>Lts C128</i>	<i>Leave</i>
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<sup>26</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 12/80 Admiralty Digest A-L 1799*.

<sup>27</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 3/123 Admiralty Board Minutes. 1 Jul–31 Dec 1799. ADM 3/142 Admiralty Board Rough Minutes. 1 Jul–31 Dec 1799*.

<sup>28</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 106/1480 Navy Board, In Letters, Promiscuous Letters, C 1798-1803*.

<sup>29</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 12/84 Admiralty Digest A-L 1800*.

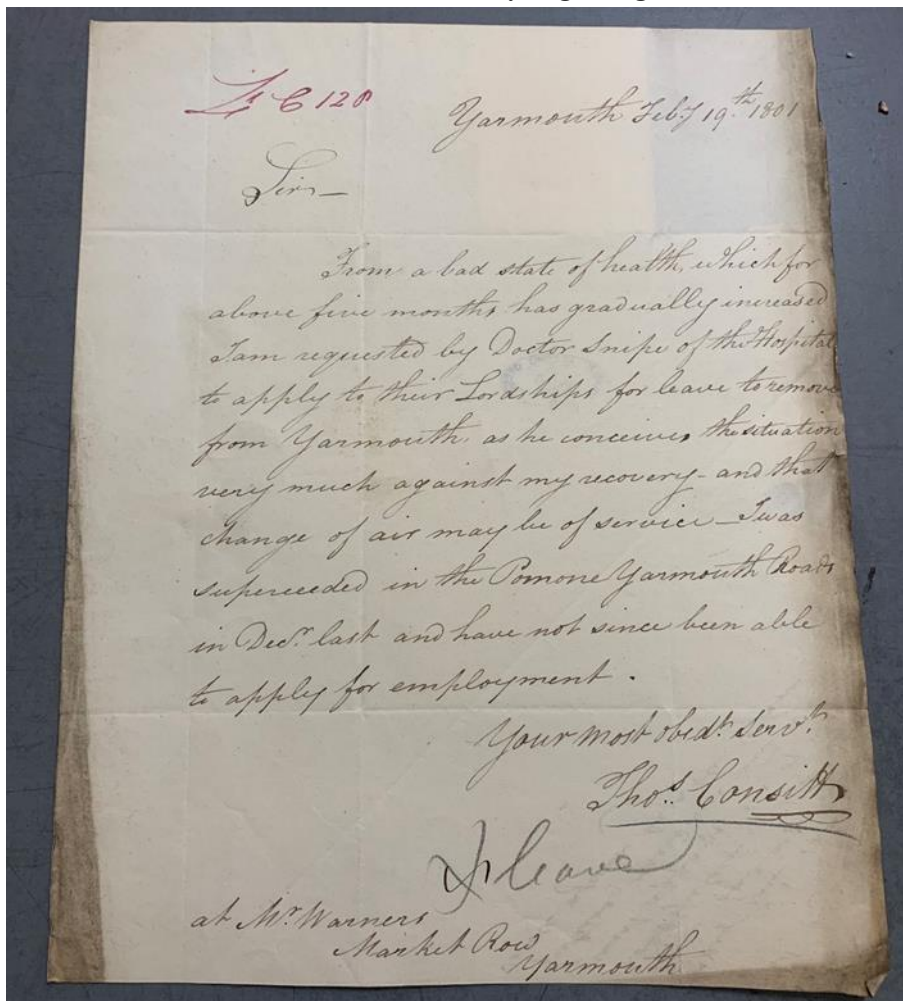
<sup>30</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2810 Admiralty Lieutenants’ Letters, C. 1800*.

<sup>31</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2227 Captains’ Letters, N. 1800-2*.

<sup>32</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 12/88 Admiralty Digest A-F 1801*.

The corresponding letter which Consitt wrote to the Admiralty in 1801<sup>33</sup> regarding his deteriorating health was as follows:

**Letter from Thomas Consitt to the Admiralty Regarding his Ill Health 1801<sup>34</sup>**



To Evan Nepean Esq, Admiralty Office, London

Yarmouth Feby 19<sup>th</sup> 1801

Sirs

From a bad state of health which for above five months has gradually increased. I am requested by Doctor Snipe of the Hospital to apply to their Lordships for leave to remove from Yarmouth as he conceives the situation very much against my recovery and that change of air may be of service. I was superceeded in the Pomone Yarmouth Roads in Decr last and have not since been able to apply for employment.

Your most obedt Servt

Thos Consitt

At Mr Warners, Market Row, Yarmouth.

<sup>33</sup> The National Archives. ADM1/2811 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1801:

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*

A note of the reply was found on the reverse stating:

*21 Feby. Acqu[ain]t him that their Lordships have no objection – that he must apprise me of his future residence and when he shall again be able to serve.*

The letter did not give any indication of what Consitt was suffering from but the suggestion that a change of air might have improved his condition was interesting. (It was also retrospectively noted that he was staying with a Mr Warner which was the surname of his future wife.) A search for records from the Royal Naval Hospital in Great Yarmouth<sup>35</sup> was undertaken on Discovery and the Norfolk Records Office online catalogue<sup>36</sup> but no patient records had survived from this time. A search for the medical records of both Brilliant and Pomone for 1800 was conducted on Discovery but no medical officers' journals had survived for either.

No references to Consitt were found in the 1802 digests and indexes<sup>37</sup> as he was not in service, but the following entry was in the book of 1803<sup>38</sup>:

*Lieut Thos Consitt*

<i>April 21</i>	<i>Lts C271</i>	<i>Employ</i>
<i>July 5</i>	<i>Cap C168</i>	<i>83 1</i>
<i>Aug 13</i>	<i>Cap C188</i>	<i>83 12</i>
<i>April 21 Cap M37</i>	<i>App to Imp Serv Sunderland</i>	

Three of the four letters cited in the digest survived (with the letter referred to in the first line the only one missing<sup>39</sup>). The fourth line referred to a letter dated 21 April 1803<sup>40</sup> from a Captain MacKenzie which resulted in the appointment of Consitt to the Impress Service. MacKenzie wrote to the Admiralty complaining that his current lieutenant and the previous one were not suited to the service, the press gang having been driven out of Sunderland by a mob. MacKenzie asked for a replacement lieutenant and Consitt was sent by the Admiralty.

The other letters from 1803 were found within the collection of captains' letters<sup>41</sup>. One, dated 5 July, was from Consitt's captain in North Shields, Captain Charleton who wrote defending Consitt after unsubstantiated charges had been made against him alleging that he was unacquainted with the ways in which the shipowners protected their men. Consitt had only been in Sunderland for about two months at that point, but Charleton defended him and suggested that the service was not in want of more men and that it was 'conducted in a very proper manner'. In August 1803, Charleton wrote to the Admiralty regarding information from Consitt that the keelmen and other seamen involved in the coal trade in Sunderland were not complying with the instruction to raise one in ten men for the Navy.

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<sup>35</sup> It is Great Yarmouth, Norfolk rather than Yarmouth in the Isle of Wight as he refers to the Yarmouth Roads, an anchorage off Great Yarmouth in his letter.

<sup>36</sup> Norfolk Records Office Catalogue. <https://nrocatalogue.norfolk.gov.uk/> Accessed April 2022.

<sup>37</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 12/94 Admiralty Digest A-E 1802*.

<sup>38</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 12/100 Admiralty Digest A-F 1803*.

<sup>39</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2813 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1803*.

<sup>40</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2141 Captains' Letters, M, 1803, 1-200*.

<sup>41</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/1633 Captains' Letters, C, 1803, 1-200*.

The digest of 1804 had just one reference to Consitt<sup>42</sup>:

*Lieut. Consitt*

Sept 3                      Cap C275                      89 28

The corresponding letter was found and stated that Consitt and his men had been moved to Easington, Durham to find men fit to press into service<sup>43</sup>. This was clearly a busy year for the Impress Service in North Shields and the surrounding area who were recruiting for the war against Napoleon, as there were dozens of letters from Consitt's superior, Captain Charleton, to the Admiralty.

The lieutenants' letters from 1804 contained one letter from Consitt in which he wrote regarding being unable to find two deserters and the note of response from the Admiralty was to keep a sharp look out<sup>44</sup>.

The digest for 1805 showed multiple entries for Consitt<sup>45</sup>:

*Lieut. Thos. Consitt*

*Impress Service Sunderland*

Jan 27 Lt C203a                      19, Ca

Apl 11 Lt C204                      19, Ca

May 15 Lt C204a                      19, Ca

June 7 Lt C205                      23, 1

Oct 29 Lt C206                      23, 1

Feb 22 Solicitor 19, Ca

Sept 14

Under Oct 14 Solicitor                      83, 23 x19 5 5/6a

There was a flurry of correspondence from Consitt in 1805<sup>46</sup>. In his first letter, he mentioned that the River Wear keelmen even though then exempt from naval service, were impeding the Impress Service. Another letter<sup>47</sup> discussed Consitt's efforts to find a deserter using informants. The Solicitor of the Admiralty wrote about Consitt's gang's attempts to impress seamen in the house of a publican who then brought an action against them for entering his house without a warrant<sup>48</sup>. The solicitor agreed that as Consitt and a warrant were not there at the time, the gang did indeed enter illegally. Several letters of 1805 concerned the captain of a merchant ship who had filed a writ against Consitt for being illegally detained. Consitt said the captain had abused his men and tried to incite a mob. Consitt wrote to ask the Admiralty to pay the fees and damages of the ensuing litigation. A character reference from Consitt's captain was enclosed<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 12/106 Admiralty Digest A-G 1804.*

<sup>43</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/1638 Captains' Letters, C, 1804, 275.*

<sup>44</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2814 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1804: L238a. 2022.*

<sup>45</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 12/112 Admiralty Digest A-F 1805.*

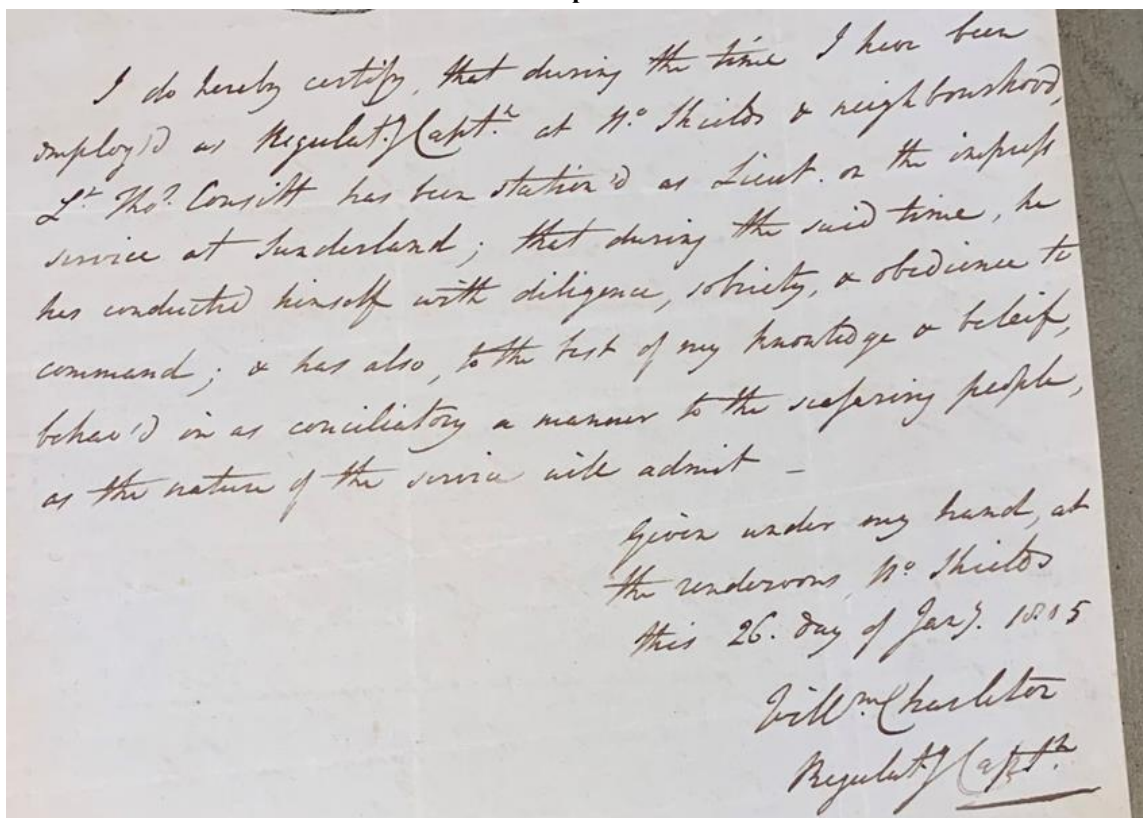
<sup>46</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2815 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1805: C203a, Lt C204, Lt C204a, Lt C205, Lt C206.*

<sup>47</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2815 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1805: Lt C206.*

<sup>48</sup> The National Archives. *ADM1/3691 Letters from the Solicitor of the Admiralty and other Crown legal officers 1805.*  
Letter dated 14 Sept but filed 14 Oct.

<sup>49</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 1/2815 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1805: C203.*

Character Reference for Thomas Consitt from Captain Charleton 26 Jan 1805



I do hereby certify, that during the time I have been employed as Regulat[or]y Capt[ain] at No[rth] Shields & neighbourhood, Lt Thos Consitt has been station'd as Lieut. on the impress service at Sunderland; that during the said time, he has conducted himself with diligence, sobriety, & obedience to command; & has also, to the best of my knowledge & belief, behav'd in as conciliatory a manner to the seafaring people, as the nature of the service will admit -

Given under my hand, at the rendezvous, No[rth] Shields this 26. day of Jan'y. 1805

Willm Charleton  
Regulat[or]y Capt[ain]

I do hereby certify that during the time I have been employed as Regulat[or]y Capt[ain] at No[rth] Shields & neighbourhood, Lt Thos Consitt has been station'd as Lieut. on the impress service at Sunderland, that during the said time, he has conducted himself with diligence, sobriety, & obedience to command; & has also, to the best of my knowledge & belief, behav'd in as conciliatory a manner to the seafaring people, as the nature of the service will admit. Given under my hand, at the rendezvous, No[rth]. Shields, this 26 Day of Jany 1805, Willm Charleton.

The digests for 1806-9 contained no references to Consitt<sup>50</sup>.

The next record of Consitt was from the digest for 1810 when Consitt left the Impress Service<sup>51</sup>:

Lt Consitt

July 29 Lts C192 askg employ

The above letter was not found in the file, however, a letter dated 22 July 1810 from Consitt was identified in the same file<sup>52</sup>. Consitt wrote to the Admiralty querying a letter he had received from Captain Charleton which stated that he had been replaced by a Lieutenant Lidle. Clearly surprised, Consitt asked for the reasoning behind this and wanted to know if there were any charges against him which he was unaware of. He wrote that he had a large family and that his removal at a moment's notice would be inconvenient. The note of response is barely legible and nothing else was found. This suggested that Consitt did not retire from the Impress Service, he was pushed.

<sup>50</sup> The National Archives. ADM 12/118 Admiralty Digest A-G 1806; ADM 12/124 Admiralty Digest A-G 1807; ADM 12/130 Admiralty Digest A-G 1808; ADM 12/135 Admiralty Digest A-G 1809.

<sup>51</sup> The National Archives. ADM 12/140 Admiralty Digest A-G 1810.

<sup>52</sup> The National Archives. ADM 1/2820 Lieutenants' Letters, C, 1810: Lt C183.



## Admiralty Records: Pension & Half Pay Records

In order to investigate Consitt's dates of sickness and whereabouts, the naval pension and half pay records were focussed on next. From Consitt's survey return, it was surmised that Consitt was on half pay from May 1800 when he was ill, until he started with the Impress Service in April 1803. Half pay registers were viewed to investigate this period. The first entry in the registers was from 1800 which stated that Consitt was 'Arrived from Abroad' (sic) from Bonetta in Brilliant, with half pay commencing 26 March. The half pay ended in May when he was employed again on Pomone on 19 May 1800<sup>53</sup>. This was useful in that it seemed to suggest he had fallen ill on Bonetta but had been taken home on Brilliant, which would account for why he was on supernumerary for the two months that he was on board Brilliant. Further entries for Consitt stated that he was discharged from the Pomone and was still on half pay at the end of 1802<sup>54</sup>. The final entry for Consitt was in 1803 when his half pay ended as he was employed again on 28 April 1803 with the Impress Service<sup>55</sup>.

O'Bryne<sup>56</sup> had reported that Consitt was on half pay from 1838, and as the half pay registers usefully recorded where the pay was received, these were viewed at TNA to isolate Consitt's whereabouts at that time<sup>57</sup>. From January 1838 to July 1839, Consitt received his half pay via an agent at Devonport. From April 1840, the addresses of retired officers were recorded and it was seen that Consitt moved around frequently. The table below shows that he had 15 addresses from 1840 until his death in 1851 as given in the half pay and retired pay books.

**Table 4: Addresses for Thomas Consitt from the Half Pay & Retired Pay Books 1840-52**

Record	Date	Address	
PMG 15/9	Apr 1840 – Mar 1843	Chester, Cheshire, Whitefriars	
		56 Kirkdale Road, Liverpool	
		Pembroke Place, Liverpool	
		13 College Green, Dublin	
		90 Lower Mount St, Dublin	
PMG 15/15	Apr 1843 – Mar 1845	Pembroke Place, Liverpool	
		Clifton Park, Birkenhead, Cheshire	
		32 Pembroke Place, Liverpool	
		Perth, Canada West	
PMG 15/21	Apr 1845 – Mar 1849	34 Russell St, Liverpool	
		Haggerston, Berwick on Tweed	
		15 Durnsford Street, Plymouth	
PMG 15/27	Apr 1849 – Mar 1852	Haggerston, Berwick	
		Wooler, Northumberland	

<sup>53</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 25/138 Officers' Half Pay Jan-June 1800*.

<sup>54</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 25/139 Admiralty Officers' Half Pay Jul-Dec 1800; ADM 25/140 Admiralty Officers' Half Pay Jan-Jun 1801; ADM 25/141 Admiralty Officers' Half Pay Jul-Dec 1801; ADM 25/142 Admiralty Officers' Half Pay Jan-Jun 1802; ADM 25/143 Admiralty Officers' Half Pay Jul-Dec 1802*.

<sup>55</sup> The National Archives. *ADM 25/144 Admiralty Officers' Half Pay Jan-Jun 1803*.

<sup>56</sup> O'Byrne, William R. *A Naval Biographical Dictionary Vol. 1*. 1849. Page 224.

<sup>57</sup> The National Archives. *PMG 15/3 Navy Half Pay & Retired Pay: Naval Officers Oct 1837 – Mar 1838; PMG 15/5 Navy Half Pay & Retired Pay: Admirals, Captains, Commanders Apr 1838 – Mar 1840; PMG 15/9 Navy Half Pay & Retired Pay: Naval Officers A-C Apr 1840 – Mar 1843. PMG 15/15 Navy Half Pay & Retired Pay: Naval Officers A-C Apr 1843 – Mar 1846; PMG 15/21 Navy Half Pay & Retired Pay: Naval Officers A-C Apr 1846 – Mar 1849; PMG 15/27 Navy Half Pay & Retired Pay: Naval Officers A-C Apr 1849 – Mar 1852*.

The final entry in the registers stated:

*Dead The Son Augustine Consitt one of the Exrs £200<sup>58</sup>.*

### **Records of Baptism, Marriage and Death**

Attention was turned to finding Thomas Consitt's life outside the navy. A search for Thomas Consitt on Discovery revealed his probate record<sup>59</sup>. The will of Thomas Consitt, a retired Commander of the Royal Navy was signed at Birkenhead in 1843 and probate was granted in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 18 March 1851 to his son, Augustine Consitt. This date matched the time that Consitt came off the Navy Lists. The will revealed that Thomas Consitt had a daughter Mary Ann and sons Charles, Frank, Augustine, Edward and Henry. He left a house in Plymouth and a substantial amount of land in Canada.

#### **Abstract of the Will of Thomas Consitt<sup>60</sup>**

Thomas Consitt, retired commander in Royal Navy of Clifton Park, Birkenhead, Cheshire.

Daughter, Mary Ann(e) - residue of monies and interest on £1041 13s 4d during her life. At her death, the money to revert to purposes stated in wife's marriage settlement.

All his sons receive his freehold land in Perth Settlement on the Rideaux, Upper Canada called 'Clifton'.

Son, Frank - 100 acres NE half of no 22, 1<sup>st</sup> concession in Bathurst.

Son, Charles - 167 acres no 18, 9<sup>th</sup> concession in Burgess.

Sons, Edward & Henry - 175 acres no 2, 4<sup>th</sup> concession in Beckwith equally divided.

Executors are his three older sons now in England - Charles Clifford, Augustine and Edward Consitt.

Dated 15 August 1843 at Birkenhead.

Proved in London 18 March 1851 by his son Augustine Consitt.

Thomas Consitt's death certificate<sup>61</sup> confirmed that Thomas Consitt, Commander R.N. died on 21 January 1851 at St Ninian's, Wooler, Northumberland aged 78 years. The cause of death was irritable Bladder 8 years, Chronic Bronchitis 2 years and Paralysis 4 days certified. The informant was Edward Consitt of St Ninian's.

An entry in the Post Office Directory of Durham and Northumberland 1879<sup>62</sup> described the Catholic church of St Ninian in Wooler, Northumberland as follows:

*In the south of the chancel are two stained windows to the memories of Thomas Consitt, Commander R.N. and Captain Charles Consitt, his son, both in the attitude of prayer, over which are the words, "Ecce panis angelorum factus cibus viatorum"<sup>63</sup> and under which are the family arms and mottoes.*

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<sup>58</sup> The National Archives. *PMG 15/27 Navy Half Pay & Retired Pay: Naval Officers A-C Apr 1849 - Mar 1852.*

<sup>59</sup> The National Archives. *PROB 11/2128/323 PCC: Will of Thomas Consitt, Retired Commander in the Royal Navy of Birkenhead, Cheshire. 18 Mar 1851.*

<sup>60</sup> The National Archives. *PROB 11/2128/323 PCC: Will of Thomas Consitt, Retired Commander in the Royal Navy of Birkenhead, Cheshire. 18 Mar 1851.*

<sup>61</sup> *Consitt, Thomas Death Certificate.* GRO Ref: 1851 M Quarter, Glendale, Vol 25, Page 205. General Register Office.

<sup>62</sup> Kelly, E.R. (Ed). *The Post Office Directory for Durham & Northumberland.* Kelly & Co, London. 1879.

<sup>63</sup> Translation: 'Behold the bread of angels, made the food of wayfarers'.

A baptism for a Thomas Consitt was found on the from 13 June 1773 in the Catholic chapel in Little Blake Street, York.<sup>64</sup> Written in Latin, it stated that Thomas Consitt was born on 8th June 1773 to Francis and Helen or Eleanor Consitt. It was noted that the information given with the passing certificate prudently avoided any reference to Consitt being a Catholic. A further search on Ancestry for marriages for Francis Consitt for the twenty years prior to Thomas Consitt baptism, revealed that Thomas’s father, Francis Consitt, was an engraver and had married Eleanor Gledhill in York by licence in 1767<sup>65</sup>.

O’Byrne stated that Consitt was married and had issue as of 1849, so a nationwide search for marriage records for Thomas Consitt was undertaken on Findmypast and Ancestry. A marriage by licence between Thomas Consitt and Mary Warner was found on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1802 at St Helen’s Stonegate, York<sup>66</sup>. Consitt was described as a lieutenant in his Majesty’s Navy. A transcript of the marriage licence was also viewed but added no further information<sup>67</sup>.

### Census Records

A search of the 1841 census of England and Wales on Findmypast showed that Thomas Consitt lived in Kirkdale, Liverpool<sup>68</sup>, see table 5.

**Table 5: 1841 Census Entry for Thomas Consitt and Family<sup>69</sup>**

Scotland Road, Walton on the Hill, Kirkdale, Liverpool.				
Name	Age	Sex	Profession, Trade, Employment	Born in County
Thomas Consitt	45	M	Royal Navy	No
Henry “	15	M	Mariner	No
Mary “	20	F	-	No

As a result of finding the Consitts in Liverpool, the online catalogues for Liverpool Record Office<sup>70</sup> and Lancashire Archives<sup>71</sup> were searched but there were no matches for Consitt or variations.

<sup>64</sup> Ancestry.com. *England & Wales, Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1936*. RG 4/4056. York, Little Blake Street Chapel (Catholic), 1771-1838. Thomas CONSITT, baptism, 13 Jun 1773, Little Blake Street Catholic Chapel, York. Original Data: TNA, RG 4/4056. Digital image accessed March 2022.

<sup>65</sup> Ancestry.com. *England & Wales, The Registers of St Michael Le Belfrey York Part II*. Francis CONSITT, marriage, 3 Dec 1767, York St Michael Le Belfrey. Original Data: Publications of the Yorkshire Parish Register Society Volume XI. Yorkshire Parish Register Society 1901. Page 304. Transcript accessed March 2022.

<sup>66</sup> Findmypast.co.uk. *Yorkshire Marriages, York St Helens Stonegate. 1767-1812*. Original Data: Borthwick Institute for Archives, PR-Y-HEL-5. Thomas CONSITT, marriage, 9 Mar 1802, St Helen, Stonegate, York. Digital Image accessed March 2022.

<sup>67</sup> Findmypast.co.uk. *Yorkshire, Archbishop of York Marriage Licences Index, 1613-1839, 24, 64*. Thomas CONSITT, marriage licence, 27 Feb 1802, York. Original Data: Borthwick Institute for Archives. Transcript accessed Mar 2022.

<sup>68</sup> *1841 England, Wales & Scotland Census*. Walton on the Hill, Lancs. 6 Jun 1841. HO 107/519/10/20. CONSITT, Thomas. Original Data: TNA HO 107/519/10/20.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> *Liverpool Record Office Catalogue*. <http://archive.liverpool.gov.uk/calmview/> Accessed April 2022.

<sup>71</sup> *Lancashire Archives Catalogue*. <https://archivecat.lancashire.gov.uk/calmview/> Accessed April 2022.

## Search for Thomas Consitt's Children

A search of Findmypast for baptisms of Thomas Consitt's children from 1800 to 1840 produced two results for children of Thomas and Mary Consitt: Thomas baptised at the Catholic Chapel in Hull, Yorkshire in 1802<sup>72</sup> and Edward baptised at Little Blake Street Catholic Chapel, York in 1807<sup>73</sup>. Three further children were found on Ancestry in the baptisms of the Catholic chapel in Esh Laude in County Durham: George, 1810; Augustine, 1812; and Alfred, 1814<sup>74</sup>. A search of Findmypast produced a burial record for an infant Robert Consitt at the church of St Michael, Esh, Durham in 1816<sup>75</sup>.

No baptism records were found for the four other children mentioned in Thomas Consitt's will: Charles Clifford, Frank, Henry and Mary Ann. However, a search on Ancestry revealed three of Thomas Consitt's sons were in the merchant navy and appeared in The Masters' and Mates' Certificates collection: Charles Clifford Consitt born in Durham, Durham circa 1806<sup>76</sup>; Augustine Consitt born in Durham, Durham circa 1812<sup>77</sup>; and Henry Horatio Consitt born in Perth, Upper Canada circa 1822<sup>78</sup>.

A search for Consitts in Canada on Ancestry revealed a census return from 1851 for Bathurst, Canada<sup>79</sup> which recorded Francis Consitt, a farmer, aged 44, born in England, so he was born about 1807.

From the 1841 census entry for Thomas Consitt in Liverpool<sup>80</sup>, it was gleaned that Thomas Consitt's daughter, Mary Ann was at least older than her brother Henry.

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<sup>72</sup> Findmypast.co.uk. *England & Wales, Nonconformist Births & Baptisms. Yorkshire, Sculcoates, The Hull Catholic Chapel, formerly North St, and since in Jasset St., Births & Baptisms. 1802.* Thomas CONSITT, baptism, 11 Dec 1802, Hull Catholic Chapel. Original Data: TNA RG 4/3686. Accessed March 2022.

<sup>73</sup> Findmypast.co.uk. *England & Wales, Nonconformist Births & Baptisms. York, Little Blake Street Catholic Chapel, Births & Baptisms. 1807.* Edward CONSITT, baptism, 18 Apr 1807, Little Blake St Catholic Chapel, York. Original Data: TNA RG 4/4056. Accessed March 2022.

<sup>74</sup> Ancestry.com. *England & Wales, Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1936. Esh Laude, Esh Laude Chapel (Catholic), 1795-1828.* George CONSITT, birth, 8 Oct 1810, Esh Laude Catholic Chapel, Durham; Augustine CONSITT, birth 11 Aug 1812, Esh Laude Catholic Chapel, Durham; Alfred CONSITT, birth, 18 Jun 1814, Esh Laude Catholic Chapel, Durham. Original Data: TNA RG 4/2280. Digital images accessed March 2022.

<sup>75</sup> Findmypast.co.uk. *Durham Burials. Bishops' Transcripts. Esh 1763-1867.* Robert CONSITT, burial, 7 Mar 1816, Esh, Durham. Original Data: Durham University Library, DDR/EA/PBT/2/103. Digital image accessed March 2022.

<sup>76</sup> Ancestry.com. *UK and Ireland, Masters and Mates Certificates, 1850-1927.* Certificate Range 2: 1700 – 1899. Charles Clifford CONSITT, Merchant Navy Certificate, No 1836, 1806, London. Original Data: Master's Certificates. Greenwich, London, UK: National Maritime Museum. Accessed March 2022.

<sup>77</sup> Ancestry.com. *UK and Ireland, Masters and Mates Certificates, 1850-1927.* Certificate Range 2: 1900-2099. Augustine CONSITT, Merchant Navy Certificate, No 2085, 1812, London. Original Data: Master's Certificates. Greenwich, London, UK: National Maritime Museum. Accessed March 2022.

<sup>78</sup> Ancestry.com. *UK and Ireland, Masters and Mates Certificates, 1850-1927.* Certificate Range 2: 5050 - 5199. Henry Horatio CONSITT, Merchant Navy Certificate, No 5071, 1851, London. Original Data: Master's Certificates. Greenwich, London, UK: National Maritime Museum. Accessed March 2022.

<sup>79</sup> Ancestry.com. *1851 Census of Canada East, Canada West, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Lanark, Canada West (Ontario), Sub-district: Bathurst; Schedule: A; Roll: C\_11732; Page: 73; Line: 1.* Francis CONSITT, Census, 12 Jan 1852, Bathurst, Canada. Original Data: Census of 1851, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Canada. Census of Nova Scotia, 1851. Accessed March 2022.

<sup>80</sup> *1841 England, Wales & Scotland Census.* Walton on the Hill, Lancs. 6 Jun 1841. HO 107/519/10/20. CONSITT, Thomas. Original Data: TNA, London. HO 107/519/10/20.

A search was made for Mary Ann Consitt on later censuses on Ancestry. There were no candidates in 1851, but the 1861 census had a Mary Ann Consitt, born in Durham in 1817 living as a sister of mercy in a convent in West Derby, Liverpool<sup>81</sup>.

A search of Archive.org and Findmypast produced two obituaries<sup>82</sup> of the Right Reverend Provost Consitt who was born to Thomas Consitt in 1819 in Clifton, Canada. The obituaries gave further information about the family's life and stated that Edward was one of the younger members of the large family of Thomas Consitt RN and that when he was seven, he moved from Canada to London with his father, which was then followed by three years living in Bruges, Belgium. (The online catalogue of the State Archives of Belgium<sup>83</sup> was searched but no references to Consitt were found.) Edward was a priest at the mission at Wooler, Northumberland from 1855 which explains why Thomas Consitt died in Wooler.

### Land Tax & Property Records

The Durham County Record Office catalogue<sup>84</sup> was searched for Consitt and land tax and title deeds were discovered which revealed where he had lived during his time with the Impress Service. He had rented a property at Bishopwearmouth (Sunderland) in 1804, and both owned and rented properties in Esh in 1813 and 1814<sup>85</sup>. He was then absent from the lists but letting out his property in Esh in 1817, 1819<sup>86</sup>, 1824<sup>87</sup> and 1825 (when he was in Canada).

A search of Ancestry for Thomas Consitt found him on the land tax records for London in 1827 living in Jubilee Place, off the King's Road in Chelsea<sup>88</sup> on his return from Canada.

Searching Durham Record Office catalogue pinpointed records in the Ushaw College, Durham estate records catalogue<sup>89</sup>. (Ushaw College was where Thomas's son Edward trained to be a priest according to his obituary<sup>90</sup>.)

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<sup>81</sup> 1861 England Census. Lancashire, W Derby, 10F. 7 Apr 1861. CONSITT, Mary Ann. Original Data: TNA RG 9/2728/107/18; Roll: 543020.

<sup>82</sup> *The Tablet*. 30 July 1887. Pages 182-3. Death of Provost Consitt. Findmypast.co.uk. Accessed March 2022. Old Alumnus. *Records & Recollections of St Cuthbert's College, Ushaw*. Pages 256-60. E Buller & Son. 1889.

<sup>83</sup> State Archives in Belgium. *Searching the State Archives' Collections*. (English) <https://search.arch.be/en/> Accessed April 2022.

<sup>84</sup> *Durham Record Office Collections Catalogue*. <http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/article/10527/Search-the-Catalogue>. Accessed March 2022.

<sup>85</sup> Durham Record Office. *Land Tax Returns: Chester Ward West 1813-4*. Q/D/L31. <http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/> Transcript accessed March 2022.

<sup>86</sup> Durham Record Office. *Land Tax Returns: Chester Ward West 1817 & 1819*. Q/D/L32. <http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/> Transcript accessed March 2022.

<sup>87</sup> Durham Record Office. *Land Tax Returns: Chester Ward West 1821 & 1824* Q/D/L33. <http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/> Transcript accessed March 2022.

<sup>88</sup> Ancestry.com. *London, England, Land Tax Records, 1692-1932*. Kensington & Chelsea, St Luke, Chelsea, 1827. Original Data: London Metropolitan Archives. Digital image accessed March 2022.

<sup>89</sup> Durham University Library Archives & Special Collections. *Ushaw College Library Special Collections Catalogue*. <https://reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/search>. Original Data: Ushaw College Administration, Estate Records GB-0298-UC/AC. Catalogue description accessed March 2022.

<sup>90</sup> *The Tablet*. 30 July 1887. Pages 182-3. Death of Provost Consitt. Findmypast.co.uk. Accessed March 2022.

## Property Deeds Referencing Thomas Consitt listed in Ushaw College Estate Records (Catalogue Descriptions)

**UC/AC7/10/28** 13 May 1813

(7) Thomas Consitt, gentleman, and Mary his wife, of Flass, Durham  
A Release Signed by TC.

**UC/AC7/10/29** 13 May 1813

Supplemental abstract of title of Lieutenant Thomas Consitt to certain freeholds and copyhold lands in the parishes of Brancepeth and Lanchester, Durham, contracted to be sold to the Rev John Gillow  
11f

**UC/AC7/10/30** 28 April 1817

(1) Thomas Consitt, gentleman, of Flass, Durham  
Lease by (1) to (2) of premises at Hareholm Chapel

**UC/AC7/10/31** 29 April 1817

(1) Thomas Consitt, gentleman, of Flass, Durham  
Release of premises at Hareholm Chapel and a covenant to surrender a copyhold allotment on Ushaw Moor, Durham

**UC/AC7/10/32** 12 May 1826

(1) Thomas Consitt, gentleman, of Brompton, Middlesex,  
Lease by (1) of freehold premises at and around Hareholm Chapel

**UC/AC7/10/33** 13 May 1826

(1) Thomas Consitt, gentleman, of Brompton, Middlesex  
(2) Release by (1)

A deed<sup>91</sup> from 1813 referred to Lieutenant Thomas Consitt and Mary his wife of Flass, Durham selling freehold and copyhold lands<sup>92</sup>. In 1817, Thomas Consitt, gentleman of Flass, Durham was renting out property and surrendered a copyhold allotment<sup>93</sup>. In 1826, Consitt was letting out his property and was described as Thomas Consitt, gentleman of Brompton, Middlesex<sup>94</sup>. The property documents all pointed to Consitt having left Durham for Canada in 1817 from where he filled in his 1817 naval service survey, then coming back to England and living in London by 1826.

As it had been discovered that Consitt had lived in London, Plymouth, Chester, Birkenhead, Berwick upon Tweed, Wooler and Dublin, the online catalogues for the archives in these areas were searched but no references to Consitt and variations were found<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> Durham University Library Archives & Special Collections. *Ushaw College Administration: Estate Records* UC/AC7/10/28 & UC/AC7/10/29. Dated 13 May 1813. <https://reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/search>. Catalogue description accessed March 2022.

<sup>92</sup> Interestingly, it was sold in 1813 to a Reverend John Gillow who may or may not have been the same Reverend John Gillow who provided baptismal proof for Thomas Consitt within the passing certificates in 1799.

<sup>93</sup> Durham University Library Archives & Special Collections. *Ushaw College Administration: Estate Records*. UC/AC7/10/30 & UC/AC7/10/31. Dated 28/9 April 1817.

<sup>94</sup> Durham University Library Archives & Special Collections. *Ushaw College Administration: Estate Records*. UC/AC7/10/32 & UC/AC7/10/33. Dated 12/3 May 1826

<sup>95</sup> *London Metropolitan Archives Collections Catalogue*. <https://search.lma.gov.uk/>; *The Box Plymouth Archives & Local Studies*. <https://web.plymouth.gov.uk/archivescatalogue/>; *Northumberland Archives Catalogue*.

<https://calmview.northumberland.gov.uk/>; *Cheshire Archives Catalogue*. <https://calmview.cheshirearchives.org.uk/calmview/>; *National Archives Ireland*. <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/search-the-online-catalogue/> Accessed May 2022.

## Canadian Records

A search of the Canadian records on Ancestry for Thomas Consitt showed him on the Census of Lower Canada from 1825<sup>96</sup>. He was recorded in the borough of William Henry (also known as Sorel) and stated that he had seven people in his family: one male between 40 and 60 years old, one female between 14 and 45 years old, one male aged 18 to 25, two children aged 6 to 14 and two children under six.

An online search was made of the National Canadian Library and Archives and four entries for Thomas Consitt were found in the Land Petitions of Upper Canada (1763-1865). These documents reference Consitt's land in the Perth Military Settlement. The first two entries stated that he was a lieutenant in the navy and detailed his land holdings. In 1819, Thomas Consitt had two plots in Burgess totalling 300 acres<sup>97</sup> and in 1820 he had six plots in Bathurst, Beckwith and Burgess totalling 800 acres<sup>98</sup>. The second two documents were letters from 1824 written by Thomas himself where he discussed his plots of land and some missing deeds<sup>99</sup>.

Two more digitized letters were found via the National Canadian Library and Archives website. One letter merely had a reference to Consitt<sup>100</sup>. Another letter<sup>101</sup> was written by Consitt in 1823 from William Henry, where he was asking to purchase a plot of land for his family home.

In addition to giving a time period when Consitt was in Canada, the most interesting piece of information from these Canadian records was that he signed the letters as Thomas Consitt, Lieutenant Royal Navy and Captain of the Lady Sherbrooke.

A Google search for the ship the Lady Sherbrooke revealed that she belonged to the St Lawrence Steamboat Company and transported both passengers and cargo on the 180-mile trip up and down the St Lawrence River from Quebec to Montreal<sup>102</sup>. A book about the Lady Sherbrooke<sup>103</sup> and her ship's log from 1823<sup>104</sup> were viewed online, but Consitt was not named in either, although Consitt may have been the author of the log.

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<sup>96</sup> Ancestry.com. *1825 Census of Lower Canada*. Borough of William Henry. Richelieu, Quebec, Canada. Page 560, Vol 2, MG 31 C1. Thomas CONSITT. Original Data: Public Archives, Ottawa, Canada. Digital image viewed April 2022.

<sup>97</sup> Library & Archives Canada. *Land Petitions of Upper Canada, 1763-1865*. 1819 Volume 420, Perth Military Settlement, Petition 23, Page 23r, Ref RG 1 L3, Microfilm C2729, Page 110. Digital image viewed April 2022.

<sup>98</sup> Library & Archives Canada. *Land Petitions of Upper Canada, 1763-1865*. 1820 Volume 420, Perth Military Settlement, Petition 24, Page 24c, Ref RG 1 L3, Microfilm C2729, Page 123. Digital image viewed April 2022.

<sup>99</sup> Library & Archives Canada. *Land Petitions of Upper Canada, 1763-1865*. 1824 Volume 67, Pages 35496-8, Microfilm C4613 & Volume 68, Pages 35857-60, Ref RG 5 A1 Land Petitions in Upper Canada Sundries. Microfilm C4613. Digital image viewed April 2022.

<sup>100</sup> Library & Archives Canada. *British Military and Naval Records*. RG 8, C Series. Volume 281, Pp64-5, Microfilm C2861, website Pp871-2. Digital image viewed April 2022.

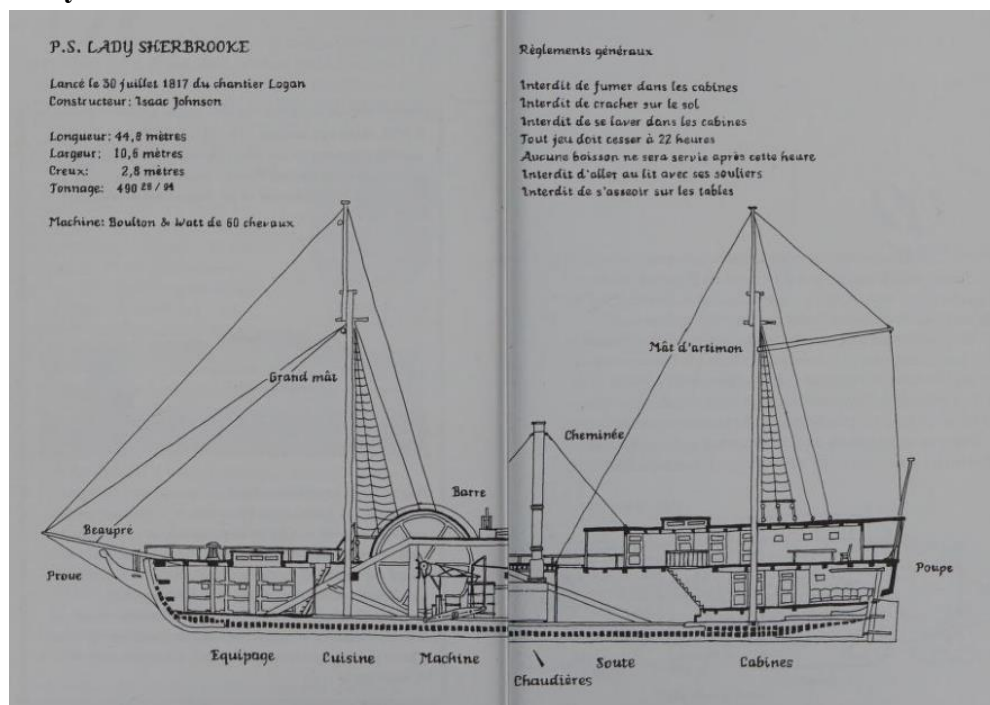
<sup>101</sup> Library & Archives Canada. *British Military and Naval Records*. RG 8, C Series. Volume 281, Pp49-50, Microfilm C2861, website Pp849-50. Digital image viewed April 2022.

<sup>102</sup> Molson, Karen. *The Molsons: Their Lives & Times 1780-2000*. 2001. Accessed via archive.org April 2022.

<sup>103</sup> Bélisle, Jean. *À Propos d'un Bateau à Vapeur*. HMH, Quebec, Canada. 1994. Accessed via archive.org April 2022.

<sup>104</sup> McGill University Library, Montreal, Quebec. *Journal of the Lady Sherbrooke*. MS 475/87 [http://digitalarchives.library.mcgill.ca/RBSC/MSG475/rbse\\_MS475\\_87\\_molson\\_1823.pdf](http://digitalarchives.library.mcgill.ca/RBSC/MSG475/rbse_MS475_87_molson_1823.pdf) Digital image accessed April 2022.

## Lady Sherbrooke<sup>105</sup>



A search was made for Consitt on Ancestry limiting the results to Canada and the nineteenth century which produced several entries for Thomas Consitt and family on the St Lawrence Steamboat passengers lists during the period 1823-6<sup>106</sup>. For example, Mrs Consitt can be seen as one of the passengers on the Lady Sherbrooke on 20 August 1823. The passenger records indicated that the Consitt family did not pay for any of their travel with this company, presumably as Thomas Consitt was an employee.

The search of Canadian records on Ancestry also produced a reference to Consitt in the church records of Quebec<sup>107</sup> as the husband of Marie Clifford Consitt who was buried in Sorel in 1824. Written in French, the record stated that she was the wife of Thomas Consitt esquire, previously of the Royal Navy and current captain of the steamboat Lady Sherbrooke. This was actually the Mary Warner that married Thomas Consitt in 1802 but there was some mystery surrounding her father and this has been written about by various descendants of Thomas Consitt<sup>108</sup>, in addition to their second son having Clifford as a middle name.

<sup>105</sup> Bélisle, Jean. *À Propos d'un Bateau à Vapeur*. Pages 10-11. HMH, Quebec, Canada. 1994. Accessed via archive.org April 2022

<sup>106</sup> Ancestry.com. *Canada, St. Lawrence Steamboat Company Passenger Lists, 1819-1838*. MSS 475, Vol 13, Lady Sherbrooke (Apr 30 - Oct 16, 1823 - Passengers and Freight). Original Data: Molson Coors Canada; Toronto, Ontario, held McGill University Library, Montreal, Quebec. Accessed April 2022.

<sup>107</sup> Ancestry.com. *Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1968*. Institut Généalogique Drouin. Sorel, St Pierre, Co Richelieu, Registres. Marie Clifford CONSITT, burial, 29 May 1824, St Pierre, Sorel. Original Data: Drouin Collection, Montreal, Canada. Accessed April 2022.

<sup>108</sup> For example, *What Happened to Ann Wingate?* [http://www.windeatt.f2s.com/windeatt/strays/ann\\_wingate.htm](http://www.windeatt.f2s.com/windeatt/strays/ann_wingate.htm) Accessed March 2022.



Another online search for Canadian documents for Consitt was carried out on the Archives Canada website<sup>109</sup> which holds information on 800 repositories across Canada. This produced no results. A search of the Canadiana website<sup>110</sup>, a Canadian heritage site which contains documents and publications, showed Thomas Consitt listed as a Commissioner of the Peace in Bathurst in The Upper Canada Almanac and Provincial Calendar for the years 1824, 1826 and 1827 (although the land tax records suggested he was actually in London, England in 1826, so was probably out of date or it may have been his son).

A search of the online resources for the Lanark County Genealogical Society<sup>111</sup> which covers Perth, Bathurst and Beckwith, was undertaken and Thomas Consitt was found in an article taken from the Perth Courier in 1877<sup>112</sup>. Lieutenant Thomas Consitt was described as one of the half pay officers of the Imperial Service who had been granted lands in the settlement.

None of the searches of the major genealogical websites produced any record of when Thomas Consitt left Canada and returned to England. A search on Ancestry for worldwide documents for Consitt in the nineteenth century did produce a record of him returning to North America. He was named in the manifest of the Gratitude which arrived in New York on 3 June 1834<sup>113</sup>. No other family members were recorded. The record showed Captain Consitt aged 56, a native of England, captain in navy and his last place of residence was Devon.

### Newspapers and Publications

Letters written by Thomas Consitt himself were found in the Naval and Military Gazette in 1839<sup>114</sup> and 1845<sup>115</sup>. In 1839, he began his letter by saying that he had dwelt in Plymouth ‘for some years’. He wrote about the Russian Fleet, the value of naval apprenticeships and what the navy could do without impressment at a time of national emergency. (Unsurprisingly, Consitt was pro-impressment.) In 1845, Consitt wrote from the Athenaeum, Liverpool to the Naval and Military Gazette. He lamented the new designs of naval ships and described the Canopus (formerly the French ship Le Franklin), which he served on after her capture at the Battle of the Nile.

The only reference to Consitt in The Times was regarding his promotion to Commander in 1844<sup>116</sup>. The Perth/Bathurst Courier only began in 1834, after most of the Consitts had left, but did appear to have had family announcements about some of Consitt’s descendants.

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<sup>109</sup> Archives Canada. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Pages/home.aspx> Accessed March 2022.

<sup>110</sup> Canadiana. <https://heritage.canadiana.ca/> Accessed March 2022.

<sup>111</sup> Lanark County Genealogical Society. <https://lanarkgenealogy.com/> Accessed April 2022.

<sup>112</sup> Lanark County Genealogical Society. *Centennial of the Perth Settlement*. <http://lgsresource.library.com/articles/A-CENT.HTM> Accessed April 2022.

<sup>113</sup> Ancestry.com. *New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957*. Gratitude, 1834, New York, New York, USA; Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Line: 1; List Number: 378 Original Data: 6256867, National Archives, Washington DC, USA. Accessed April 2022.

<sup>114</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette*. Letter. 9 February 1839. Page 91. The British Library.

<sup>115</sup> *Naval & Military Gazette*. The Experimental Squadron & Innovation in Shipbuilding. 29 November 1845. Page 765. The British Library

<sup>116</sup> The Times Archive. *The Times*. 15 April 1844. Page 8. Accessed via Gale.com April 2022.

A search of newspapers on Findmypast produced an article from the Yorkshire Gazette dated 29 June 1889 entitled 'Yorkshire in the Last Century' which stated that Thomas Consitt acquitted himself well at the Battle of the Nile<sup>117</sup>. There was no indication where this information had come from and, as the Yorkshire Gazette was printed from 1819 onwards, it cannot have been from an earlier edition.

by the Rev. W. Fenlon, Archbishop of ...  
land.

**DECEMBER.**

Dec. 6.—“ Mr Thomas Consitt, son of Mr Francis Consitt, engraver, of York, midshipman on board the Defence, discharged his duty as Officer of the Signals, in the memorable engagement off the Nile, so much to the satisfaction of the Commander, that as soon as it was over Captain Peyton came down to the wardroom amongst the officers and said : ‘ Mr Consitt, I take this opportunity of returning you public thanks for your gallantry and exertions last night ; the mateship of this ship is vacant, and I appoint you to it.’ The captain having since made application to Lord Nelson to get him made a lieutenant, he has received a commission under cover to Sir J. Saumaurez, who in the handsomest manner congratulated him on his merited promotion.”

Dec. 8.—Died at Northallerton, deservedly lamented Mrs. Lascelles, widow of the late Law

Dec. 6. [1798]- Mr Thomas Consitt, son of Mr Francis Consitt, engraver of York, midshipman on board the Defence, discharged his duty as Officer of the Signals, in the memorable engagement off the Nile, so much to the satisfaction of the Commander, that as soon as it was over Captain Peyton came down to the wardroom amongst the officers and said: ‘Mr Consitt, I take this opportunity of returning you public thanks for your gallantry and exertions last night: the mateship of this ship is vacant, and I appoint you to it.’ The captain having since made application to Lord Nelson to get him made a lieutenant, he has received a commission under cover to Sir J. Sammaurez, who in the handsomest manner congratulated him on his merited promotion.

There was a chapter on Thomas Consitt in a self-published book on the history of Perth, Canada<sup>118</sup>. It gave his year and place of birth, parentage and some details of his naval career. It mentions his being invalided out due to ‘wounds or injuries to his arm’. There were details of his marriage, children, emigration to Canada in 1817 and his returning to England in 1827. Most of the details are the same as what had been found, but the date and place of death (1852, Wareham, Dorset) was certainly incorrect and has been used for most of the family trees for Consitt on Ancestry.com.

Family Search Books revealed a family history book that a John Consitt McKenzie had written about his heritage including a chapter on the Consitt family<sup>119</sup>. McKenzie is/was a direct descendent of Consitt and he stated in the book that he had personal notes from Thomas Consitt from the early 1830s. The book was found after this research had all but been completed but provided some additional information which was not able to be verified by other sources. McKenzie wrote that Consitt joined the navy as a landsman but four days later was commissioned as a midshipman on the Defence by Captain Gambier. McKenzie stated that Consitt’s career was cut short when he broke his leg in a fall on board ship.

There are some additional family details which have not been able to be verified but seem credible: Consitt had another son Walter (1808-1824); another daughter Margaret (1824-1824); and two of his sons died enroute to Canada. Consitt took the youngest children, Mary Ann, Edward (II) and Henry back to England in 1827, moved to Bruges 1829 where he was recognised by the Burgomaster for saving a child from drowning<sup>120</sup>.

<sup>117</sup> *Yorkshire Gazette*. 29 June 1889. Page 10. Yorkshire in the Last Century.

<sup>118</sup> Shaw, Ron. *First We Were Soldiers: The Long March to Perth*. Self-published Ebook. 2015.

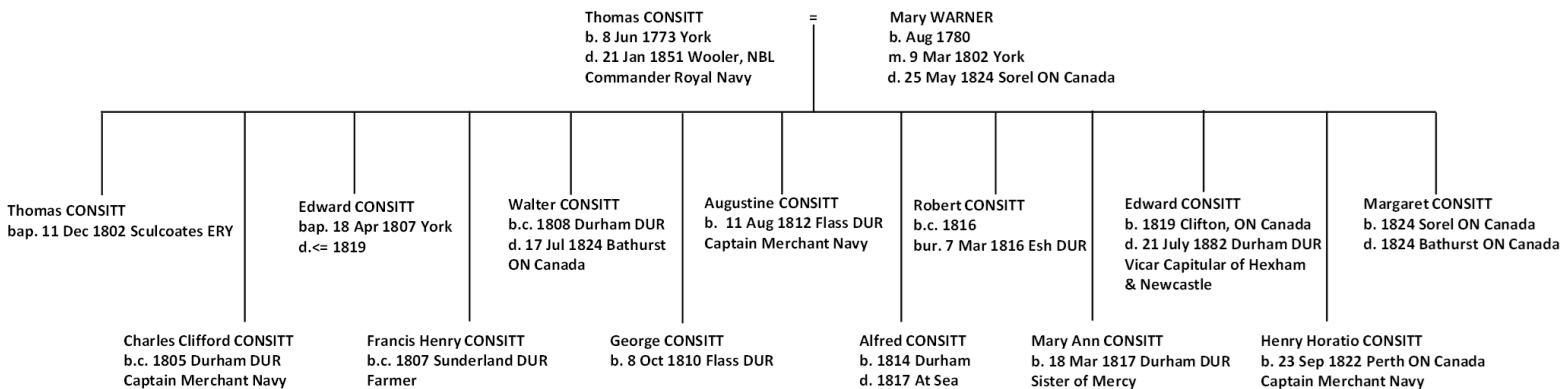
<sup>119</sup> McKenzie, John C. *The McKenzies of Kenmore*. Chapter 4: The Consitt Heritage. Pp52-66. 2006

<sup>120</sup> The State Archives of Belgium’s online catalogue was searched but no references to this were found.

All these details fitted in with what had already been found and were likely to be correct, given that McKenzie had notes from Consitt. The only information that was incorrect was again the date and place of death Consitt's death, 1852 in Wareham, Dorset.

## Pedigree and Timeline

Following the research, a timeline showing Thomas Consitt's life and a pedigree illustrating his marriage and children were drawn up.



**Key:**  
b. Born  
bap. Baptised  
b.c. Born Circa  
bur. Buried  
d. Died  
d.<= Died in or before  
m. Married  
DEV Devon  
DUR Durham  
ERY East Riding of Yorkshire  
NBL Northumberland  
ON Ontario, Canada

## Timeline

Date	Age	Event	Source
8 Jun 1773		Born to Francis & Helena/Eleanor	ADM 107/23 Passing Certificates
13 Jun 1773		Baptised 13 June 1773, York	ADM 107/23 Passing Certificates
Aug 1793	20	Joined navy as midshipman on Defence	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
1 May 1798	24	Promoted to master's mate	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
3 Aug 1798	25	At Battle of the Nile on Defence then captured ship Conquerant	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
22 Oct 1798	25	Acting lieutenant on Canopus	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
4 Sep 1799	26	Passed lieutenants' exam	ADM 107/23 Passing Certificates
7 Sep 1799	26	Promoted to lieutenant on Bonetta	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
Feb 1800	26	Supernumerary on Brilliant	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
26 Mar 1800	26	Sick Leave & put on half pay	ADM 12/84 Admiralty Digest A-L 1800 ADM 25/138 Officers' Half Pay
13 May 1800	26	Appointed as Lieutenant on Pomone	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
16 Dec 1800	27	Sent to sick whilst on Pomone	ADM 11/67/1 Succession book
Feb 1801	28	Lived in Yarmouth and in ill health	ADM 1/2811 Lieutenants' Letters 1801
9 Mar 1802	29	Married Mary Warner in York	FMP Yorkshire Marriages, York St Helens Stonegate. 1767-1812
11 Dec 1802	30	Son Thomas baptised in Hull	FMP Eng & Wales, Nonconformist Births & Baptisms. Yorkshire, Sculcoates, 1802
18 Apr 1803	29	Appointed to Impress Service Sunderland	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
1804	31	Lived in Bishopwearmouth, Sunderland	Durham Land Tax Records
1805	32	Sued for illegal detainment Sunderland	ADM 1/2815 Lieutenants' Letter 1805
1806	33	Son Charles born Durham	Ancestry. Master's certificate from the National Maritime Museum

1807	34	Son Edward baptised/born York	FMP England & Wales, Nonconformist Births & Baptisms. York, 1807
July 1810	37	Superseded in Sunderland and left navy	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
1810-1817	36-44	Five children born in Durham	Ancestry Eng & Wales, Non-Conformist and Non-Parochial Registers, 1567-1936. Esh Laude, 1795-1828
1817	45	Emigrated to Canada	ADM 9/7/2147 Survey Return 1817
1819	47	Son Edward born in Clifton, Canada	FMP Obituary of Ed. Consitt, The Tablet, 30 Jul 1887 Pp 182-3
23 Sep 1822	49	Son Henry born in Perth, Canada	ADM 73/200/54 Royal Greenwich School Admission Papers
1824-7	51-54	Commissioner of the Peace, Bathurst, Canada	The Upper Canada Almanac and Provincial Calendar 1824, 1826 & 1827
1824	51	Captain of the steamboat Lady Sherbrooke	Ancestry Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1968
25 May 1824	51	Wife Mary died (aged 43) Sorel, Canada	Ancestry Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1968
1825	52	Lived in Sorel (formerly William Henry), Canada	Ancestry 1825 Census of Lower Canada. Borough of William Henry, P560, Vol 2, MG 31 C1
1827	54	Lived in Chelsea, London	Ancestry London, England, Land Tax Records, 1692-1932
c. 1830	57	Lived in Bruges, Belgium	FMP Obituary of Ed. Consitt, The Tablet, 30 Jul 1887 Pp 182-3
1834	61	Lived in Plymouth, Devon	Ancestry New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists
1834	61	Visited North America	Ancestry New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists
1839	66	Still lived in Plymouth, Devon	Naval & Military Gazette. 9 Feb 1839
Apr 1840	67	Lived in Chester, Cheshire	PMG 15/9 Half Pay & Retired Pay
1841	68	Lived in Liverpool with Henry & Mary Ann	FMP TNA HO 107/519/10/20
c. 1842	69	Lived in Dublin	PMG 15/9 Half Pay & Retired Pay
1843	70	Lived in Birkenhead, Cheshire	PROB 11/2128/323
1849	76	Lived in Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland	PMG 15/21 Half Pay & Retired Pay
21 Jan 1851	78	Died at St Ninians Wooler, Northumberland	Death certificate 1851 Q Mar, Glendale, Vol 25, Page 205

## Conclusion

In conclusion, by using the naval records at TNA, the career of Commander Consitt was investigated in great detail from the basics of what ships he served on and where he was stationed, to gaining insight into his daily life at sea and with the Impress Service. The very first record seen of his survey of service may have sufficed as a basic outline of his time in the navy, however, other naval sources uncovered so much more information about the man and his career.

The second half of Consitt's life when he emigrated to Canada, then returned to Europe, frequently travelling and changing address, was researched and illustrated using a wide variety of sources in addition to the navy half pay records

At the beginning of this research, Commander Thomas Consitt was just a name with the same surname as a family line that had been traced, but by the end there was a well-sourced documentary record of his fascinating life.

## THE BIGAMOUS CASE OF ROBERT BOYLE

Dy Deborah Brambill

This piece involves the surviving ecclesiastical court case papers of *Topott v Boyle otherwise Handleby*<sup>1</sup>, a case heard by the Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham between 1732 and 1734. The papers are part of the Archdeaconry of Nottingham Collection held by the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department.

The plaintiff in this case was Susannah Topott from Nottingham who successfully petitioned to have her marriage annulled due to the proven bigamy of her supposed husband, Robert Boyle alias Handleby, who had stated that he was a bachelor when they married. Susannah and Robert were married by licence at Colwick, St John the Baptist, on 13 August 1727<sup>2</sup>. Colwick is just a short distance from Nottingham.

The parish register entry from 1727 recorded: *'Robert Boyle Gent[leman] of Lowndesborough in Yorkshire [and] Susannah Tepotts Spinster of St Mary's Parish Nottingham were married by a Licence granted by M[aste]r Chappell on Aug[us]t 13'*

It seemed probable that Lowndesborough referred to Londesborough in the East Riding.

The libel<sup>3</sup> revealed that in the brief time Robert and Susannah were living together in Nottingham, reports had begun to circulate that he already had a wife or wives living. After just a few days together as man and wife, Robert had fled Nottingham to avoid being faced with a prosecution for bigamy. But not without having first pocketed Susannah's marriage portion of 100 guineas and a ring worth £50.

Several depositions were recorded for this cause. The one examined belonged to Margaret Boyle who had the misfortune to marry Robert Boyle alias Handleby in Bedfordshire just a couple of months before he married Susannah. Margaret responded formally to 10 articles in Susannah's lengthy libel, which contained 29 articles in total.

Margaret's statement painted a picture of Robert Boyle as a larger-than-life character who liked to play the part of a gentleman, dressing nicely and travelling with a servant.

Not only did he succeed in deceiving her but also her sister and brother-in-law.

As well as being abandoned and defrauded of money, Margaret subsequently found herself to be pregnant. Her testimony from the deposition may be summarised as follows.

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<sup>1</sup> *Topott v Boyle otherwise Handelby*, Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, cause papers split between AN/LB 237/11/1 28, AN/LB 237/2/8 & AN/LB 237/4/10, held by the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department

<sup>2</sup> Robert Boyle & Susannah Topott marriage, Colwick, St John the Baptist, 13 Aug 1727 - digital scan accessed 22 Aug 2024 on Ancestry, data set: Nottinghamshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812. Original data: Nottinghamshire Archives, ref: PR5338

<sup>3</sup> *Topott v Boyle libel*, Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/4-7

<b>Deposition of Margaret Boyle, dated 2 April 1734, admitted as witness for Susannah Topott</b>	
Name	Margaret Boyle
Birthplace	Deardsend in Hertfordshire
Age	26 years and upwards
Relations	Sister Elizabeth Greatorex, married to William Greatorex
In response to articles one, two, three, six, eight and nine	<p>That she had come to know Robert Boyle otherwise Handleby some seven years previously when he paid court to her at the beginning of June 1727 with a view to marriage. She was a spinster at the time and living in Biggleswade in Bedfordshire.</p> <p>On 12 June 1727, they were married by licence in the parish church of the town of Bedford according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. Her sister Elizabeth Greatorex and brother-in-law William Greatorex - since deceased - were present at the wedding.</p> <p>The marriage was duly consummated and in the month of March 1728, she was <i>'brought to bed of a male child begotten on her body by him'</i>.</p> <p>Margaret described Robert as a middle-sized plump man, broad over the chest and shoulders, with black eyes and a tattoo of a crucifix and the initials R.H. on one arm. He also bore a tattoo on the other arm although she could not remember precisely what it was. She had also heard and seen him beat a drum.</p>
In response to articles 10, 11, 25 and 26	<p>She further stated that she and Robert lived together in Biggleswade for about seven weeks before he left her and their habitation, never returning.</p> <p>While they were together, Robert sometimes wore a suit of black clothing, with a cloth of gold waistcoat, black silk stockings with large silver clocks, a grey coat trimmed with black and a light tie-wig. He also bore a sword, a gold-headed cane, a gold watch and two rings - one a rose diamond and the other enamelled.</p> <p>That he took from her about £60. Since 13 August 1727, she had been reduced to living with friends and acquaintances.</p> <p>She had subsequently heard that it was publicly reported in Biggleswade and other places that he went by several surnames, particularly Boyle alias Handleby. Further that he had been married to other women and made it his business to delude and marry young women for their fortunes and then leave them.</p>

The Topott v Boyle cause papers contained three items linked to Margaret's deposition. The first was this marriage bond<sup>4</sup> (left) signed by Robert Boyle and Margaret's brother-in-law, William Greatorex, in which Robert Boyle stated that he was a bachelor, aged 25 years and upwards, and his bride-to-be, Margaret Harris, was described as being 19, a spinster from Ampthill.

The second item was a parish register marriage extract<sup>5</sup> provided by the vicar of Bedford, St Paul, stating:

*'June 1727 Married Robert Boyle of Biggleswade Esq[ui]re and Margaret Harris of Ampthill by lic[ence]: the 12th'*

<sup>4</sup> Marriage bond for Robert Boyle and Margaret Harris, dated 12 Jun 1727 - Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/2

<sup>5</sup> Marriage extract made 4 Feb 1732 from register of Bedford St Paul re Boyle/Harris marriage in 1727 - Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/3

The third item was a letter<sup>6</sup> from a member of the clergy who signed himself simply as '*Rev Sr*', residing at Yardley near Buntingford, Hertfordshire.

His letter made clear that he was responding to an enquiry to discover more about Robert Boyle. Although not mentioned in the text, its informality suggested he was already known to someone at the Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham.

He indicated that a man calling himself Boyle had come to stay at an inn in Biggleswade run by William Greatorex and that his wife had a sister '*whose beauty brought admirers and she with much care maintained the reputation of being a considerable fortune*'. Boyle, he said, had persuaded her to matrimony with his talk of birth and estate in Yorkshire.

Stating he was returning to Yorkshire some weeks after the wedding, Boyle had apparently set off in a hired coach with Margaret and his servant on board. This anonymous correspondent wrote:

*'He [and] she [and] the serv[an]t set forward [and] rode about 10 miles or something more [and] then he [and] his man went off [and] left her on the Road alone. He has not been heard of since. I think the Lady of Fortune [and] her sister, now a widow, keep a coffee house at Kingston'.*

Robert Boyle was clearly prepared to go to great lengths to make his charade as a gentleman convincing. The letter gave an insight into Robert's ruthless behaviour as well as the distress and humiliation Margaret must have experienced at being abandoned in this way.

With the information from Margaret's deposition and the supporting evidence, a marriage entry was located on FindMyPast for a Robert Boyle<sup>7</sup> who married a Margaret Harris in Bedford on 12 June 1727. A baptism was also located for a John Boyle alias Nannibal [sic] who was baptised in Biggleswade on 29 March 1728<sup>8</sup>, his mother being shown as Margaret Boyle.

Based on Margaret's stated age, a strong match for this young woman would appear to be the Margaret Harris, daughter of John and Elizabeth Harris, who was baptised at Knebworth on 19 October 1707<sup>9</sup>. Knebworth is just a short distance from what was then the hamlet of Deard's End in Hertfordshire.

Comparing Margaret's deposition with those of the other deponents, it was clear that Robert Boyle made a strong impression on everyone he met. Despite the number of years that had passed before Susannah's case came to court, the various descriptions of his appearance and behaviour were almost identical. A few additional pieces of information were provided by the other deponents.

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<sup>6</sup> Letter from Hertfordshire clergyman, 31 Jan 1732/33 - Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by the University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/21

<sup>7</sup> Robert Boyle & Margaret Harris marriage, 12 Jun 1727 - transcription accessed 21 August 2024 on FindMyPast, data set: Bedfordshire Marriages, transcription source FamilySearch

<sup>8</sup> John Boyle baptism, 29 Mar 1728 - transcription accessed 21 August 2024 on FindMyPast, data set: Bedfordshire Baptisms, transcription source FamilySearch

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Harris baptism, 19 Oct 1707, Knebworth, St Mary & St Thomas - digital scan accessed 21 August 2024 on FindMyPast, data set: Hertfordshire Baptisms. Original data: Hertfordshire Archives, composite register 1596-1720, ref: DP/62/1/1

As well as Boyle and Handleby, Elizabeth Greatorex<sup>10</sup> reported Boyle using the surname of Hannibal as another 'travelling name'. Edward Chappell<sup>11</sup>, the priest who married Robert and Susannah, said it was reported that after leaving Nottingham, Robert had made his way to Cornwall where he presented himself as Robert Hastings and paid court to the daughter of a Mrs Mander. When this mother grew suspicious and sent off to Nottingham for an account of his character, he abandoned the attempt to marry this young woman and fled again. Edward also stated that Robert was reported to have married another woman in Yorkshire.

Boyle's servant was evidently complicit in the fraud. Nottingham innkeeper Charles Sully<sup>12</sup> described this man coming to his inn for some wine just after Susannah's marriage with Robert. He was described as remarking that Susannah's father *'seemed very fond of it but if he knew all he had no reason to be fond of his master'*.

Nearly all of the deponents stated they had observed Robert Boyle's habit of drumming upon any ready surface. Charles Sully, Henry Chappell<sup>13</sup> and Joshua Smallpage<sup>14</sup> reported variously that Boyle had been in the army, a drummer in a regiment of foot and a drummer in the army in Gibraltar. Chappell, a visitor to Sully's inn, also reported Boyle saying that his uncle was Lord Burlington.

Curious to discover if Robert Boyle's stories contained any genuine information, a search was made for Lord Burlington. An entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* suggested that the most likely candidate for Robert's 'uncle' was Richard Boyle (1695-1753)<sup>15</sup>, 3rd Earl of Burlington. He was a renowned architect - responsible for Burlington House in London - whose family had an estate at Londesborough in Yorkshire. A family relationship seemed unlikely based on the information featured about the Boyle family. It no doubt served as a convenient fiction for Robert to seem respectable and well-connected to a public figure. In light of the letters R.H. tattooed on his arm and his choice of aliases, it seemed plausible that his real surname probably began with the letter 'H'.

Although the cause was brought by Susannah Topott, Margaret's deposition was ample proof that she came off far worse in her encounter with Robert Boyle / Handleby / Hannibal / Hastings. Susannah, with her marriage officially declared null and void, was free to make a fresh start. She married again in 1734<sup>16</sup>. In contrast, the unfortunate Margaret was left in legal limbo, unable to re-marry and stuck raising a child without a father.

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<sup>10</sup> Deposition of Elizabeth Greatorex, 3 Apr 1734 - Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/20

<sup>11</sup> Deposition of Edward Chappell, 12 Feb 1733/34 - Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/24

<sup>12</sup> Deposition of Charles Sully, 13 Apr 1734 - Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/26

<sup>13</sup> Deposition of Henry Chappell, 23 Apr 1734 - Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/27

<sup>14</sup> Deposition of Joshua Smallpage, 23 Apr 1734 - Archdeaconry Court of Nottingham, held by University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections Department, ref: AN/LB 237/11/1/25

<sup>15</sup> Boyle, Richard, third earl of Burlington and fourth earl of Cork - article accessed on 22 Aug 2024 on Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3136>

<sup>16</sup> John Reeves & Susannah Topott marriage, 11 Jun 1734, Nottingham, St Mary - accessed on 2 Aug 2024 on Ancestry, data set: Nottinghamshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812. Original data: Nottinghamshire Archives, ref: PR2023



## BOOK REVIEW: THE SUFFOLK TRILOGY BY NORAH LOFTS

Liz Yule, DipGen

Writing in the middle of the last century, Norah Lofts lived for most of her life in Bury St Edmunds and is lauded as their most famous author. With the majority of my ancestry from Suffolk, and Bury in particular, she had been on my radar for a while, and this year I finally got around to reading her Suffolk Trilogy – *The Town House*, *The House at Old Vine* and *The House at Sunset*.

The books chart the history of a property – ‘Old Vine’ – situated outside the fictional Abbey town of Baildon, based on the real-life Bury St Edmunds. They begin with ‘Martin Reed’s Tale’, who was born in 1381, the year of the Peasants’ Revolt, and end with the house in a rather dilapidated state in the mid-1950s – but with a spirit of optimism and a buyer looking for a new life for herself, and in turn for the property.

In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, young Martin Reed is part of the manorial system, and very much tied to his manor. The workings of the manor are intricately depicted, with the limitations this placed on Martin’s life abundantly clear. Circumstances then take Martin to Baildon, where the Abbey was at the heart of the town – at least for the time being.

The house remains the focus of the story – families come and go and their fortunes impact on the building. The flourishing wool trade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century led to added extensions, whilst in later centuries the property was divided up into shops, as the town expanded to where Old Vine was situated outside the walls of the Abbey. The fortunes of the various families who lived at Old Vine also fluctuate (with the odd ‘non paternal event’ in evidence to the reader).

To say these books surpassed my expectations would be an understatement. The research Norah Lofts undertook sits lightly (although I didn’t recognise the description of a ‘kin book’ as kept by the parish priest, but I’ll let that pass!), and what is interesting from the point of view of a genealogist is that they depict the real life experience of our ancestors – young and old and of differing social status – from the medieval manor to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and everything in between.

And don’t just take my word for it. In 2014, author and historian Alison Weir published a review of the Suffolk Trilogy in the *Independent’s* ‘Book of a Lifetime’ feature (<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/suffolk-trilogy-by-norah-lofts-book-of-a-lifetime-an-outstanding-historical-novel-9582322.html>) in which she calls the books, considered altogether, as ‘the most outstanding historical novel that I have ever read.’ And if that isn’t a recommendation to go out and read these books, I don’t know what is.



## IHGS FESTIVE QUIZ DECEMBER 2024



This year's mind-bending platter consists of a generous portion of genealogy, served with a side of general knowledge and garnished with heraldry. It is also designed to bring a smile to your face. And just because it's Christmas, we're pushing the boat out with a prize of £30 in IHGS vouchers, which can be used to help fund that Distance Learning Course you've been meaning to sign up for, attend the Institute's varied range of online tutorials or buy books from our online shop.

All you need to do is submit your answers to Chris Broom (ihgstutorchris@gmail.com).

1. After the celebration of Christmas was restored by Charles II in 1660, in which year did the 25<sup>th</sup> of December again become a public holiday in Scotland? (1 point)
2. You could have bought your Christmas sprouts from William Robson, aged 51, who was living alone in Newcastle Upon Tyne in 1911. But what was his exact address? (1 point)
3. This 'doubly festive' child, aged 2¼, was aboard the vessel 'Georgic' in July 1948, arriving into Southampton, with his mother Pam and brothers, Peter and Jeremy. What was his full name, as recorded at the time, and at which University did he subsequently read French and English? (2 points)
4. What was the name of the property in which Walter Harris, born the 26<sup>th</sup> September 1889, was living in 1939? With which regiment was he stated to be serving on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1914? (2 points)
5. In which year are turkeys believed to have been first introduced to Britain and by whom? (2 points)

Which seasonal dessert proved fatal for two members of the East family of Stratford, East London in May 1892 and what the cause of their untimely deaths? (2 points)

7. What does the motto 'Stare super vias antiquas' mean and by which armiger, of Camberwell, Surrey, was the motto used in conjunction with the coat of arms 'Or, three fusils in fess Azure, a baton Gules'? (2 points)
8. What was the name of the child baptised at All Souls, Eastbourne, East Sussex on 24<sup>th</sup> the March 1892 and what was the slightly unusual occupation of her brother Frederick, as later recorded on the 1911 Census? (2 points).
9. Described as a 'Wholesale Confectioner' in a National Probate Calendar entry dated the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1869, with which festive tradition is the deceased, Thomas Smith, famously associated? (1 point)
10. Who was the first British Monarch to broadcast a Christmas message and in which year? (2 points)

11. How many yuletide mischief makers were living at 13, Old Gravel Lane, St. George in the East on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1911? Where was the head of the family born and which school was his 'lupine' son attending in November 1904. (3 points)
12. Sir Charles Monck, 6th Baronet, and his family did what on Christmas Day, 1817? What was Sir Charles' surname at birth? (2 points)
13. By which alias was Edward Colston Purnell, who died on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1893, known? (1 point)
14. According to British tradition, what should be eaten on each of the twelve days of Christmas to bring good luck for the year ahead? (1 point)
15. With which family name are the arms 'Gules, a chevron between three owls Or' associated and how do the arms depicted in the Harleian Society's Volume 17 (Visitation of London 1633-4) differ? (2 points)
16. The will of John SNOW was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1776. What was his profession and where specifically did he express his desire to be buried? (2 points)
17. With a name suggesting that he may not have received a full complement of gifts on Christmas morning, this young chap, baptised on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 1899, later married Maud Jane Noden at the church of St. Mary Magdalene, Bermondsey. What was his name and what was his occupation at the time of their marriage? (2 points)
18. With more than enough strength to prepare the Christmas turkey with a traditional filling, this aptly named individual was baptised at Pleasley, Derbyshire on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1649. What were the more common names of his parents? (1 point)
19. Far away from Mount Crumpit, what breed of dog was owned by this 'festive grump' (and victim of mis-transcription?) on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1898? (1 point)
20. We all know that 'Good King Wenceslas once looked out on the feast of Stephen', but how is the feast of Stephen known more widely? (1 point)

Maximum possible score: 33

Our many thanks go to Chris Broom for setting such a great range of quizzes and challenges this year. We hope you have enjoyed them.

Visit our website or subscribe to our newsletter for more heraldic and genealogical challenges and quizzes.



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