

= Edward Rotheram =

Captain Edward Rotheram CB RN (27 December 1753 ? 6 November 1830) was a senior officer of the British Royal Navy , who served for many years during the American War of Independence , French Revolutionary War and Napoleonic Wars . During his service , Rotheram saw action at several major naval engagements , including as a lieutenant at the Glorious First of June in 1794 and as captain of HMS Royal Sovereign at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 . Although he was highly praised for his actions at both battles , he was not well regarded in the service , being once described by his admiral at Trafalgar , Cuthbert Collingwood , as " a man of no talent as a sea officer " and " a stupid man " .

Rotheram gained a reputation as a difficult officer to serve with , and he rapidly alienated his fellow officers and the sailors who served under him . Ultimately this character trait resulted in his removal from service and overlooking for promotion in 1808 after being court martialled for inappropriate behaviour towards junior officers . The rest of his life was spent requesting the Admiralty , often in an aggressive manner , for both further service and the rewards he felt were his due .

= = Early career = =

Rotheram was born in 1753 at Hexham in Northumberland to Dr. John Rotheram , a local physician , and his wife Catherine Roberts . Rotheram was the second of the couple 's seven children and was educated , with his brothers , at Head School in Newcastle @-@ Upon @-@ Tyne , where the family moved when Edward was seven . His elder brother John Rotheram was later a senior professor in natural philosophy at St Andrew 's University . Edward Rotheram went to sea at a young age , joining a collier sailing from Newcastle and serving aboard merchant ships for several years . In 1777 however , Rotheram joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman during the American Revolutionary War .

Initially serving on HMS Centaur , Rotheram moved to HMS Barfleur in 1780 and HMS Monarch shortly afterwards as a lieutenant , serving under Lord Howe . Monarch was heavily engaged in the West Indian campaign during the latter stages of the war , and Rotheram saw action at the Battle of Martinique in 1780 , the Battle of the Chesapeake in 1781 and the Battle of St Kitts and the Battle of the Saintes in 1782 . Following the end of the war at the start of 1783 , Rotheram returned to Britain as a reserve officer on half @-@ pay .

= = Lieutenant and commander = =

In 1785 , Rotheram married Dorothy Harle of Newcastle , with whom he had three daughters . He returned to naval service in 1787 aboard HMS Bombay Castle and over the next four years moved between HMS Culloden and HMS Vengeance , all in the Channel Fleet . In 1792 Rotheram was made first lieutenant of HMS Culloden and was still in this position when the French Revolutionary War broke out a year later . Culloden was part of the Channel Fleet under Rotheram 's old commander Lord Howe , and the ship was captained by Isaac Schomberg during the Atlantic campaign of May 1794 , in which Howe pursued a French fleet deep into the Atlantic , bringing it to battle at the Glorious First of June .

Culloden was not closely engaged in the opening stages of the battle , for which Schomberg would later be heavily criticised . Rotheram , however , gained acclaim in the battle 's aftermath by organising the Culloden 's boats and the boats of other nearby ships into a rescue party that saved hundreds of French sailors from the sinking Vengeur du Peuple . In recognition for this operation , Rotheram was promoted commander on 6 July 1794 and given command of the storeship HMS Camel in the Mediterranean Fleet . In 1797 Rotheram moved to the sloop HMS Hawke , which he commanded in the West Indies until 1800 , returning to Britain in 1800 aboard HMS Lapwing to be made a post captain .

Rotheram commanded Lapwing for the next two years , operating with the Channel Fleet and capturing several small French prizes . In 1802 Rotheram returned to reserve ashore during the

Peace of Amiens . This retirement lasted until 1804 , when Rotheram was recalled up to service as flag captain of HMS Dreadnought , a second rate ship of the line that flew the flag of Vice @-@ Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood . Collingwood and Rotheram had a poor relationship , Collingwood commenting by letter to his brother that " He [Rotheram] is a man of no talent as a sea officer , and of little assistance to me . " Nevertheless , when Collingwood moved to HMS Royal Sovereign in October 1805 as second @-@ in @-@ command of the fleet under Lord Nelson blockading the Franco @-@ Spanish fleet in Cadiz , he brought Rotheram with him . Nelson was aware of the personal conflict between the men , and invited both Collingwood and Rotheram to dinner in a partially successful effort to reconcile them .

= = Trafalgar = =

At the Battle of Trafalgar on 21 October 1805 , Royal Sovereign was the first ship in Collingwood 's division to breach the enemy lines , and Collingwood and Rotheram appear to have reconciled some of their differences as they cooperated well in handling the ship . Collingwood even called to his captain ; " Rotheram , what would Nelson give to be here ! " , Nelson 's HMS Victory being several minutes behind Royal Sovereign in engaging the enemy . Rotheram was also noted during the action for refusing to remove his full dress uniform and large cocked hat , apparel which was not only impractical in a naval engagement but which also marked him as a target for enemy snipers .

Royal Sovereign 's main opponent was the large Spanish first rate Santa Ana , with whom she was engaged for several minutes at the start of the action without support . During this time , Royal Sovereign was at one point engaged with five different enemy ships , and suffered heavy damage and casualties during the engagement , finally subduing the 112 @-@ gun Santa Ana after a duel lasting several hours . Both ships were left unmanageable at the end of the engagement , Royal Sovereign being taken in tow by HMS Euryalus into which Collingwood transferred his flag . Royal Sovereign had suffered nearly 150 casualties , Santa Ana over 300 by the end of the battle . Santa Ana was later abandoned by her captors and ultimately fell back into Spanish hands , but Royal Sovereign reached the safety of Gibraltar soon after the battle .

In the aftermath of the action , Rotheram left Royal Sovereign to take command of HMS Bellerophon , whose captain , John Cooke had been killed by a French sniper . Cooke had been targeted due to the dress uniform he had worn during the battle . Bellerophon escorted Victory carrying Nelson 's body back to Britain , and Rotheram carried the guidon behind the coffin at Nelson 's funeral in London . Rotheram was presented with a gold medal and sword of honour in recognition of his services in the action , and continued in command of Bellerophon .

= = Retirement = =

Rotheram remained in command of Bellerophon in the English Channel and the North Sea until 1808 , when he was court martialled and reprimanded for unacceptable conduct towards his ship 's junior officers and chaplain . Rotheram remained in the service , but was never again employed at sea . Collingwood summed the situation up in a letter to his sister , stating " Though I think him a stupid man I was in hope he might have gone on in the ship I put him in , which I believe was the only chance he had of being in a ship " .

Although his career was over , Rotheram continued to request sea service and honours from the Admiralty , becoming increasingly irate and intemperate in his demands . At the reorganising of the knightly orders in 1815 , a number of senior naval officers were given knighthoods , but Rotheram was only made a Companion of the Order of the Bath , a step below knighthood . He retired to Bildeston in Suffolk and from there continued to request appointments , finally being made one of the captains of the Greenwich Naval Hospital in 1828 . Rotheram died in Bildeston in 1830 and was buried in St Mary Magdelene Church in the village , where his grave and a memorial plaque are still legible today . Rotheram was never awarded any further honours or promoted to admiral , having lost his seniority in the court martial of 1808 .