

= George Eyre =

Sir George Eyre KCB KCMG (d . 15 February 1839) was an officer of the Royal Navy who saw service during the American War of Independence and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars , eventually rising to the rank of Vice @-@ Admiral of the Red .

Eyre served with James King in the Caribbean during the American War of Independence , seeing action in a number of engagements . With the conclusion of the war , he was based at times at Halifax , and later off the South American coast and in the Mediterranean . With the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars , Eyre served in the Mediterranean and was involved in the Siege of Toulon , before being given his first command , the 14 @-@ gun brig @-@ sloop HMS Speedy . The command was short @-@ lived , and Speedy was chased down and captured by a large French fleet . Taken into captivity , Eyre and his men endured harsh conditions until being exchanged back to Britain . Acquitted for the loss of his ship and given a new command , Eyre went out to the West Indies , but returned to Britain in 1799 and saw little further employment until 1806 , when he joined the Mediterranean fleet and was active off the coast of Spain , supporting Spanish resistance to the French .

In 1809 he went to the Adriatic and took part in the campaign there , helping to capture several islands . He launched an assault on Santa Maura and was wounded during the operations . After participating in the blockade of Corfu he returned to the Spanish coast and resumed operations there in support of the Spanish partisans . Returning to England again in 1811 , he went ashore and was not actively employed for the rest of the Napoleonic Wars , though he received a knighthood and was later appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath . He returned to service in 1823 , commanding the South American station during a time of particular diplomatic difficulties , and on returning home in 1826 retired ashore owing to illness . He died in 1839 .

= = Family and early life = =

George Eyre was born the fourth and youngest son of politician Anthony Eyre , who had represented the constituency of Boroughbridge in a number of parliaments , and his wife , Judith Letitia . George 's elder brother , Anthony Hardolph Eyre , also entered politics and represented Nottinghamshire during the 1800s . George attended Harrow School and after spending several months at an academy in Chelsea , entered the navy in 1782 . His first ship was the 44 @-@ gun HMS Resistance , under the command of Captain James King . They went out to Jamaica escorting a convoy , and remained in the area for the rest of the American War of Independence .

On 2 March 1783 , while sailing in company with HMS Duguay Trouin , two ships were discovered anchored in Turks Island passage . On being spotted the two ships cut their cables and stood to the southwest , upon which Resistance promptly gave chase . The rearmost ship , carrying 20 guns , sprang her main topmast , and surrendered after Resistance came up and fired a broadside . She then gave chase to the other , carrying 28 guns , and after enduring fire from her stern chasers , came alongside and the Frenchman promptly surrendered . The ships were discovered to be two transports that had taken troops to Turks Island , garrisoning it with 530 men . One of the ships , the 28 @-@ gun Coquette was commanded by the Marquis de Grasse , nephew of the Comte de Grasse . One or two days later Resistance fell in with a small squadron under Captain Horatio Nelson , consisting of HMS Albemarle , HMS Tartar , HMS Drake and the armed ship Barrington . Nelson decided to attack the recently garrisoned Turks Island , and 250 men were landed under the cover of supporting fire from the ships . The French were found to be heavily entrenched , and the British withdrew after being unable to dislodge them .

With the end of the war Eyre returned to England with King aboard HMS Diamond , but soon rejoined the Resistance and went out to Halifax to join Sir Charles Douglas . As Douglas ' flagship spent most of her time in port , Eyre was sent out to cruise on other ships , including HMS Mercury under Captain Stanhope , and HMS Atalanta under Captain Thomas Foley . Eyre returned to Britain with Resistance in 1786 , and the following year joined the 44 @-@ gun HMS Adventure under Captain Francis Parry . Parry went out as commodore to Guinea , but ill @-@ health obliged him to

resign his command , and Eyre went to Newfoundland aboard Captain Trigge 's HMS Nautilus . Eyre joined Admiral Lord Howe 's flagship HMS Queen Charlotte during the Spanish Armament , and in November 1790 was promoted to lieutenant . He then joined HMS Scipio under Captain Edward Thornbrough , and after Scipio was paid off , HMS Aquilon under Captain Robert Stopford , in which he sailed to the Mediterranean .

= = French Revolutionary Wars = =

On the outbreak of war with France in 1793 Eyre was appointed to HMS St George , the flagship of Rear @-@ Admiral John Gell , a relation of Eyre 's . He was present at the capture of a French privateer and her Spanish registered prize St Jago . St George went on to join Admiral Lord Hood 's fleet at Gibraltar , and went with him to Toulon . Eyre took an active part in the Siege of Toulon , volunteering to command the detachment of marines landed from St George and sent to defend Fort La Malgue . He went from there to command the battery at Fort Pharon , and after some time attracted Hood 's attention with his good service . Hood appointed him to his flagship HMS Victory . After the fall of Toulon and the British evacuation he was advanced to commander and appointed to command the sloop HMS Speedy , succeeding Commander George Cockburn , who had been appointed to command HMS Inconstant . He assisted in the capture of Bastia , and was then ordered to join HMS Diadem off Nice .

= = = Capture = = =

While making his way there he ran into the French fleet on 9 June , the French having sailed from Toulon some days earlier and headed east along the coast . Despite pressing on sail Speedy was overrun and captured . Eyre was taken aboard one of the French ships , and later transferred to the flagship of the fleet 's commander , Rear @-@ Admiral Pierre Martin . Martin asked him if he had heard of the decree from the National Convention which declared that ' no quarter should be given to either the English or the Hanoverians ' . Eyre replied that they had not , on which he was told by Martin that " ... I must tell you that it is now un guerre à mort [a war to the death] ; and if I had been the first to come alongside of you , I should have instantly sent you to the bottom . " At this point the main British fleet was seen approaching , and Eyre was hurried back to the first ship he had been brought onto , and the French hurried into Gourjean roads , taking Speedy and the captured British crew with them .

Eyre and the crew were landed and marched to Antibes , where they were imprisoned with the crew of a Sardinian frigate that had been captured the day before Speedy . The crew had been imprisoned on Martin 's flagship Sans Culotte and had been severely treated , with their captain , Ross , not being allowed to wash or shave . The British were placed in a dungeon at Antibes , with only straw to lie on , awaiting the decision of the authorities . After three weeks in this state , they were marched to Aix @-@ en @-@ Provence and were confined in the prison there . After a month imprisoned in Aix , Maximilien Robespierre fell and the Reign of Terror came to an end . The British were paroled . Eyre and the officers were taken to Romans , in Dauphiné where Eyre remained until May 1795 when he was released in exchange for a French officer . He faced a court @-@ martial for the loss of Speedy , but was honourably acquitted .

= = = West Indies = = =

Eyre was next appointed to command the sloop HMS Albacore , before being made post @-@ captain on 6 June 1796 and given command of the 20 @-@ gun HMS Prompte . He went out with Sir Hugh Cloberry Christian to the West Indies and took part in the reduction of Saint Lucia . While there he was appointed by Sir Hyde Parker to command the 44 @-@ gun HMS Regulus and carried out a number of cruises , capturing several prizes and winning himself riches and recognition . While cruising off Puerto Rico on 11 July 1798 Eyre located five merchant ships at anchor under a shore battery at Aguada , and decided to attempt to capture or destroy them . The ship 's boats were sent

in under Lieutenants Good and Holman while Regulus and a prize schooner stood close by to support them . The wind failed however , and neither ship could get near enough to support them , but Lieutenant Good pressed on , and boarded the ships . With no wind he was unable to bring them all out , and so destroyed the two he was unable to sail out . British casualties , despite being under fire for the whole operation , amounted to one man wounded . Eyre returned to Britain in September 1799 , transporting Vice @-@ Admiral Richard Rodney Bligh .

= = Napoleonic Wars = =

= = = Spanish coast = = =

Eyre was then unemployed for a while , with the exception of a brief period in temporary command of HMS San Josef from 11 February to 18 March 1801 , succeeding Thomas Hardy and in turn being succeeded by William Wolseley . He finally received a posting in July 1806 when he was appointed to the 64 @-@ gun HMS Ardent , but was soon moved to command the newly built 74 @-@ gun HMS Magnificent . Magnificent initially served with the Channel Fleet , which was then under Admiral Lord St Vincent , before going out to the Bay of Biscay with Sir Eliab Harvey 's squadron . Eyre moved to the Mediterranean in June 1807 , coming under Lord Collingwood 's orders while based off Cadiz . With the Spanish rising on 2 May 1808 and the surrender of the French squadron in Cadiz on 14 June , Collingwood sent Eyre to patrol off Toulon . Shortly afterwards he was sent to Rosas to support the Spanish there , and several days later evacuated Lord Cochrane and his garrison from Fort Trinidad .

= = = Adriatic = = =

Eyre was next appointed by Lord Collingwood to take command of the squadron in the Adriatic in April 1809 , a command that then consisted of three ships of the line and seven or eight frigates . In October 1810 he was sent with Magnificent , HMS Belle Poule and HMS Kingfisher to join Captain John William Spranger 's squadron and assist in the capture of Cephalonia , Zante and Cerigo , part of a long running campaign in the Adriatic . Santa Maura initially remained in French hands , and became a base for small cruisers which were an annoyance to the British forces . Eyre resolved to attack and capture it and together with General John Oswald and troops of the 35th Regiment of Foot made a landing on 22 March 1810 . The French withdrew to a citadel , protected by three redoubts , which the British attacked . During the heavy fighting Eyre was hit in the head by a musket ball and knocked to the ground , narrowly avoiding death as three other balls passed through his clothing . Eyre handed over command of the expedition to Captain James Brisbane of HMS Belle Poule while he recovered , and was well enough to resume command on 25 March . The British forced the French to surrender on 16 April , the British casualties being seven dead and 39 wounded . Eyre was personally thanked by Admirals Sir George Martin and Sir Charles Cotton , and the Lords of the Admiralty .

With the islands secure Eyre enforced the blockade of Corfu . On 6 February 1811 he encountered an enemy relief convoy bound from Otranto to Corfu , consisting of 25 ships . Eyre captured 22 of them , carrying grain , ordnance and 500 troops . Eyre also stationed several frigates in the northern part of the Adriatic under the command of Captain William Hoste . Hoste went on to win a significant victory over a French squadron under Bernard Dubourdieu at the Battle of Lissa . Eyre spent a total of two years commanding the station , the time spent almost constantly at sea , only briefly putting into port to refit and replenish supplies . He was succeeded in the post by Captain Charles Rowley and went to join the fleet of Toulon . On the occasion of his departure his subordinate , James Brisbane wrote

= = = Return to Spain = = =

The Mediterranean fleet was by now under Sir Edward Pellew , and Eyre was sent to the Spanish coast to support the Spanish forces fighting the French . Eyre was particularly active off the coast of Valencia and evacuated the garrison of Oropesa del Mar , earning the thanks of General Joaquín Blake y Joyes . On being ordered back to England in 1811 Pellew also wrote a private letter of thanks , following on from his earlier declaration that ' I have to express my complete approbation of Captain Eyre 's methods , and have much satisfaction of employing the services of that most excellent officer in the aid of the Valencia patriots . ' Eyre arrived in England in 1812 , his health having been affected by his five years on a foreign station , and requested and received permission to go ashore . As a mark of his services in the Adriatic and off Spain he was knighted by King George III . Eyre was appointed a Colonel of Marines on 4 June 1814 and was nominated as a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath following the expansion of the order on 12 January 1815 .

= = Flag rank and South America = =

Eyre was promoted to rear @-@ admiral on 12 August 1819 and shortly afterwards received an offer from Lord Melville to take command of the Cape and St Helena stations , but was unable to accept owing to matters of a personal nature . In 1823 he was able to accept the offer of the command of the South American station , at a time when several of the former Spanish colonies were declaring independence . Eyre was able to successfully manage delicate diplomatic and military duties , and was able to protect British rights and possessions in the area during periods of upheaval . His actions in the region included signing treaties with Spain and Portugal involving the prevention of illegal slave trafficking . He stepped down after the expiration of his posting and was succeeded by Admiral Sir Robert Otway .

= = Family and later life = =

Eyre returned to Britain , arriving at Spithead on 10 December 1826 , and was almost immediately offered command of a squadron fitting out for Lisbon . The changes in climate had brought on an attack of gout , and on being informed that as Sir Thomas Hardy 's squadron was already on the spot , he was at liberty to refuse the offer . Eyre did so , and retired ashore . He appears to have had no further commands , and was advanced to vice @-@ admiral in 1830 . He had married Georgiana Cooke , the daughter of Sir George Cooke , 7th Baronet , at Doncaster on 1 November 1800 , with whom he had a family of eight children , including two sons named George @-@ Hardolf and William . Sir George Eyre died on 15 February 1839 at the rectory , Carlton , Derbyshire .