

= HMS Romney (1762) =

HMS Romney was a 50 @-@ gun fourth rate of the Royal Navy . She served during the American War of Independence , and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in a career that spanned forty years .

Launched in 1762 , the Romney spent most of her early career in North American waters , serving on the Newfoundland station , often as the flagship of the commander @-@ in @-@ chief . The ship was involved in the tensions leading up to the American Revolution when she was sent to support the Boston commissioners enforcing the Townshend Acts in 1768 . Her actions involved impressing local sailors , confiscating a vessel belonging to John Hancock and providing a refuge for the unpopular commissioners when rioting broke out . She remained in American waters for part of the ensuing war , but towards the end operated in European waters after the French entry to the conflict .

The Romney was laid up in ordinary or under repair for most of the subsequent years of peace , but returned to active service on the outbreak of war with Revolutionary France . She was in the Mediterranean supporting Lord Hood 's occupation of Toulon in 1793 , and remained there for several years . During this time she captured the 44 @-@ gun French Sibylle . The Romney briefly returned to North America and then served in the Red Sea . Assigned to blockade the Dutch coast , the Romney ran aground in November 1804 while sailing to join the fleet off Den Helder . She broke up after attempts to float her off failed .

= = Design and construction = =

HMS Romney was built to a unique design by Sir Thomas Slade , which was based on William Bately 's plans for HMS Warwick , but altered to make the ship shorter . She was ordered from Woolwich Dockyard on 20 July 1759 , and laid down there on 1 October 1759 . Built by Master Shipwright Israel Pownoll , she was launched on 8 July 1762 , and completed by Joseph Harris by 4 September 1762 . She was given the name Romney in November 1760 .

= = Career = =

= = = North America = = =

HMS Romney was commissioned in August 1762 under her first commander , Captain Robert Walsingham , but was paid off by February the following year . When she recommissioned in June 1763 , it was under the command of Captain James Ferguson . Romney became the flagship of the commander of the North American station , Rear @-@ Admiral Lord Colvill , and served in this capacity for the next three years . After a brief refit at Portsmouth The Romney recommissioned in March 1767 under Captain John Corner , as part of a squadron sent to North America under Samuel Hood . While serving off North America , Romney achieved a degree of notoriety after being sent to Boston Harbour to support the commissioners , who had asked Hood for help in enforcing the Townshend Acts . She arrived on 17 May 1768 , but being short of men , Captain Corner began to impress seamen from the harbour . This was unpopular with the locals , who took to attacking the press gangs . Events escalated when the commissioners in the town ordered the seizure of the merchant vessel the Liberty , which belonged to John Hancock . When sailors and marines from the Romney attempted to seize the vessel , mobs attacked them and then turned on the commissioners . Many of the officials took refuge aboard the Romney , before transferring to Castle William . These incidents heightened tensions that would eventually lead to the Boston Massacre in 1770 .

= = = American War of Independence = = =

In 1770 Romney was briefly under Captain Hyde Parker , followed by Captain Robert Linzee in

October that year . She was paid off in March 1771 and repaired and refitted at Deptford between 1773 and 1775 , recommissioning under Captain George Elphinstone in April and becoming the flagship of the commander of the Newfoundland station , Rear @-@ Admiral Robert Duff . Duff was succeeded by Vice @-@ Admiral John Montagu the following year . Montagu retained the Romney , by now under the command of Captain Elliott Salter , as his flagship . Salter was replaced by Captain George Montagu , the son of Vice @-@ Admiral Montagu , in February 1777 , who remained in command of the ship for the next two years .

Captain George Johnstone took over in early 1779 and served in the English Channel . On Johnstone 's advancement to commodore in April that year , Captain Robert Nicholas took over as the Romney 's commander , though she remained part of Johnstone 's squadron and flew his broad pendant . After a refit she returned to sea in 1779 as Sir John Ross 's flagship , with Johnstone back as captain . She was involved in the operations in the Channel during the attempted Franco @-@ Spanish invasion , after which she sailed to Lisbon . On 11 November 1779 she and HMS Tartar captured the 34 @-@ gun Spanish frigate Santa Margarita , which was subsequently taken into the navy as HMS Santa Margarita . With Johnstone 's return to the post of commodore in December 1779 , command passed to Captain Roddam Home , though Johnstone remained aboard . On 1 May 1780 , Romney was involved in an incident with the cartel ship Sartine . The Romney captured two French ships off Cape Finisterre in July , the 38 @-@ gun Artois on 1 July , and the 18 @-@ gun Perle five days later on 6 July .

Johnstone sailed to the East Indies with a convoy in March 1781 , and the Romney saw action at the Battle of Porto Praya on 16 April 1781 . The battle was inconclusive , but on 21 July the ship was part of Johnstone 's squadron which succeeded in capturing several Dutch East Indiamen in Saldanha Bay .

HMS Romney returned to Britain in November that year , at which point Captain Robert McDougall took command . By March 1783 she was sailing in the Western Approaches under Captain John Wickey and flying the broad pendant of Captain John Elliot . Wickey was replaced by Captain Thomas Lewes in July 1782 , who went on to capture the 12 @-@ gun privateer Comte de Bois @-@ Goslin off Ushant on 17 October 1782 . The Romney 's next commander was Captain Samuel Osborn , from January to April 1783 , after which she was paid off . After a period spent in ordinary , she underwent a repair and refit at Woolwich , eventually recommissioning in March 1792 under Captain William Domett , as the flagship of Rear @-@ Admiral Samuel Goodall . She served in the Mediterranean until the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars , recommissioning under Captain William Paget in March 1793 , and returning to the Mediterranean to take part in the British occupation of Toulon .

= = = French Revolutionary Wars = = =

While sailing off Mykonos on 17 June 1794 , Paget spotted a French frigate in the harbour with three merchantmen . Paget approached and demanded that the French surrender . The French captain refused , whereupon Paget approached and the two exchanged broadsides for an hour and ten minutes . The French ship , which was discovered to be the 44 @-@ gun French frigate Sibylle , then struck her colours , having suffered casualties of 46 dead and 112 wounded , nine mortally . The Romney had suffered casualties of eight dead and thirty wounded , two mortally in the Battle of Mykonos . In 1847 this action earned for the survivors the Naval General Service Medal with clasp " Romney 17 June 1794 " .

Command then passed to Captain Charles Hamilton . Henry Inman was briefly in command for her return to Britain in March 1795 , whereupon Captain Frank Sotheron took over in June when the Romney became the flagship of Vice @-@ Admiral Sir James Wallace and returned to Newfoundland . The vessel spent the next several years sailing to and from Newfoundland , under the command of Captain Percy Fraser from June 1797 , and then Captain John Bligh from July 1797 when Vice @-@ Admiral William Waldegrave took over the station .

= = Final years = =

Captain John Lawford took command in March 1798 , and in August the following year the Romney was assigned to Vice @-@ Admiral Andrew Mitchell 's squadron in Den Helder during the Vlieter Incident . Captain Sir Home Popham took over in August 1800 and sailed Romney to the Red Sea to support the British forces working to expel the French from Egypt . Because Romney served in the navy 's Egyptian campaign (8 March to 2 September 1801) , her officers and crew qualified for the clasp " Egypt " to the Naval General Service Medal that the Admiralty issued in 1847 to all surviving claimants .

After a refit at Chatham in 1803 Captain William Brown recommissioned her for operations on the African coast and in the West Indies . Captain John Colville replaced Brown in October 1804 .

= = Loss = =

On 18 November 1804 Romney sailed from Yarmouth to join the force under Rear @-@ Admiral Russell blockading the Texel . She ran aground when her pilots lost their way in thick fog while sailing off the Haak bank the following day . Attempts to float her off failed .

Realising that his ship was doomed , Colvill attempted to save his men and sent out two boats to seek help from nearby merchant vessels . One boat overturned while returning to the Romney , drowning the boat 's crew . The other made for shore , hoping to summon assistance from the Dutch authorities . The following morning , and with the Romney fast breaking up , Colvill supervised the construction and launching of a number of rafts . As the final raft was being launched , seven boats approached from shore . On reaching the Romney , the Dutch commander of the boats called on Colvill to surrender , promising that he would endeavour to save the British sailors . Colvill agreed and the Dutch rescued the remaining members of the crew . The total loss of life in the wreck was between nine and eleven men .

The Dutch conveyed the British to shore , where Dutch Admiral Kirkhurt treated them well . Kirkhurt then sent Colvill and eight of his officers back to join Russell .

As was standard practice , Colvill was subsequently tried by court martial aboard the Africaine on 31 December for the loss of his ship . The court acquitted him , his officers and his men of all blame . The court found the cause of the accident to be the thick fog and the ignorance of the pilots . The court required the pilots to forfeit their pay , barred them from piloting any of His Majesty 's ships , and imprisoned them for a time in the Marshalsea .