

= HMS Lowestoffe ( 1761 ) =

HMS Lowestoffe was a 32 @-@ gun fifth @-@ rate frigate of the Royal Navy . Built during the latter part of the Seven Years ' War , she went on to see action in the American War of Independence and the French Revolutionary War , and served often in the Caribbean . Lowestoffe has become famous as the ship in which a young Horatio Nelson served shortly after passing his lieutenant 's examination .

Originally commissioned near the end of the Seven Years ' War , Lowestoffe patrolled in British waters until 1773 , when it underwent repairs . She was recommissioned in 1777 and served throughout the American War of Independence , including at the Battle of San Fernando de Omoa . After the bulk of the fighting ended , she returned home to Portsmouth in 1782 , and did not see battle for the next decade . She spent most of her later years in British and Mediterranean waters , winning particular glory for her part in an engagement with two French frigates in 1795 . Her final duties were back in the familiar waters of the West Indies , where she was wrecked in 1801 while escorting a convoy in the Caicos Islands .

= = Construction and commissioning = =

Sir Thomas Slade based his design for Lowestoffe on that of HMS Aurora , which was a former French vessel named Abenakise . ( The Admiralty routinely " took the lines " , i.e. , drew up blueprints , of captured vessels , and these blueprints were available to designers such as Slade . )

Lowestoffe was the only ship built to her design , though over a decade later the Navy would have two more frigates , HMS Orpheus and HMS Diamond , built to a modification of the design of Lowestoffe and Abenakise . She was ordered on 15 February 1760 from Thomas West , Deptford Dockyard , with West contracted to launch her within 12 months , at a cost of £ 11.0.0d per ton . Lowestoffe was laid down on 9 May 1760 , launched on 5 June 1761 and completed by 1 August 1761 . She officially received the name Lowestoffe on 28 October 1760 . She had cost a total of £ 7 @, @ 715 1s 10 ¾ d to build , coming in just slightly under the contracted price of £ 7887 . The Navy spent a further £ 4 @, @ 281 7s 8d on having her fitted out .

= = Career = =

Commissioned late in the Seven Years ' War , she saw little action under her first captain , Walter Stirling , and the Navy paid her off in 1762 . Lowestoffe was initially moored at Portsmouth . Then in early 1763 she was armed and stored , sailing on 26 July 1763 under the command of her new captain James Baker .

After spending some time cruising in the English Channel and stopping neutral merchants for inspections , Baker sailed Lowestoffe to Madeira and then on to the West Indies . She arrived at Carlisle Bay on 13 September , and then sailed on to Antigua . During her time at Carlisle Bay , Lowestoffe carried out patrols between Barbados and Antigua .

She was part of a squadron under Rear Admiral Tyrrell . Four vessels of the squadron , Princess Louisa , Lowestoffe , Virgin and Beaver , shared in the prize money arising from the seizure in January and February 1764 of several vessels engaged in illicit trade near Dominica . The seized vessels were the Sarah , Union , Mary Anne , Pastora , Elizabeth , Two Sisters , and June and Betsey .

Baker died on 31 March 1765 . His successor , Joseph Norwood , sailed Lowestoffe home to be paid off in August 1766 . Lowestoffe underwent a small repair at Sheerness between December 1766 and April 1767 , and after a period out of service was recommissioned again in June 1769 under Captain Robert Carkett . Carkett returned her to the West Indies in October that year , returning in May 1773 to Britain after four years at Jamaica . She was paid off in 1773 , and reduced to a 28 @-@ gun Sixth Rate .

= = = American War of Independence = = =

Lowestoffe now underwent a large repair . She was recommissioned under Captain William Locker in early 1777 and prepared for service in the Leeward Islands . Joining her for this voyage was a young Lieutenant Horatio Nelson , who had passed his examination on 9 April , and was joining the Lowestoffe as her second lieutenant . Also serving on the Lowestoffe at this time was Cuthbert Collingwood , who would go on to have an enduring friendship with Nelson , serving with him on a number of occasions , including at the Battle of Trafalgar . The ship sailed in early May , escorting a convoy to the West Indies , where they arrived in mid July . She was coppered at Jamaica and then went on a number of cruises , capturing an American sloop with a cargo of rice in August 1777 .

A second cruise saw the capture of an American privateer , and a notable incident for Nelson . Lowestoffe sent her boat and first lieutenant to take over the prize , but the seas were too rough to allow the American to be boarded , so the lieutenant returned . Nelson stepped forward and volunteered to make an attempt ; he succeeded .

On 25 March 1778 Lowestoffe captured the sloop Swan , Daniel Smith , Master . She was of 60 tons , had a crew of seven men , and was carrying a cargo of molasses .

By the time of Lowestoffe 's third cruise , Nelson had taken command of the ship 's tender , the schooner Little Lucy . Locker and the Lowestoffe spent the rest of 1778 and the early part of 1779 carrying out routine cruises and patrols , until Captain Christopher Parker replaced him in March 1779 . Locker , who had by now been ill for some time , had recommended Nelson to Sir Peter Parker , who found a space for Nelson aboard his flagship , the 50 @-@ gun HMS Bristol . Nelson joined her as third lieutenant on 1 July 1778 .

On 8 February 1779 , Lowestoffe captured the Vigilant , near the Bite ( or Bight ) of Leogan . The 70 ton sloop was sailing from Dominique to Philadelphia with a cargo of sugar , rum , molasses , coffee , cotton and salt . John English was her master and she had a crew of five men .

Lowestoffe became part of Captain John Luttrell 's squadron and carried out operations in the Bay of Honduras in October and November 1779 . On 17 October Lowestoffe , together with Pomona , Charon , and Porcupine participated in the successful British attack on the Fort of San Fernandino de Omoa . During the attack Lowestoffe exchanged fire with the fort . While she was doing this she ran aground . Her immobility made her an easy target for the fort 's guns . Eventually boats were able to pull Lowestoffe off , but not before she had sustained extensive damage . She had contributed a landing party to the assault on the fort and in all lost three men killed and five wounded . As a result of the battle the British ships captured two Spanish prizes with a cargo of bullion worth in excess of \$ 3 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 . Lowestoffe and Pomona also shared in the prize money for the St. Domingo and her cargo , which included 124 serons ( crates ) of indigo .

On 26 March 1780 Lowestoffe captured the small sloop Fortune , of 25 tons , off Cape Francois . Under the command of William Nevill , she had a crew of three and was sailing from North Carolina to Cape Francois with provisions . Also in early 1800 Lowestoffe captured the Danish brig Diana , which was sailing from St. Domingo to St. Thomas with a cargo of mahogany . Then on 15 June Lowestoffe , Phoenix and Pomona captured the brig Delaware , William Collins , Master . She was of 120 tons , armed with guns and had a crew of 53 men . She was sailing from Philadelphia to Port @-@ au @-@ Prince , with a cargo of flour and fish . More importantly , they also captured the French navy cutter Sans Pareil , of 16 guns and 100 men , as she was sailing from Martinique to Cap @-@ Français . She was the former British privateer Non Such .

Later Lowestoffe detained a Danish schooner sailing from Acuba to Jacquemel with a cargo of cattle . She also recaptured the British brig John , which a French privateer had taken , and herself took a Spanish brig sailing from La Guaira to Tenerife with a cargo of cocoa and spices .

On 26 September Lowestoffe and Pallas captured two small vessels . One was the sloop Fair Henrietta , of 70 tons , sailing from Philadelphia to Cape Francois with a load of lumber and bricks . The second was the brig St. Salvatore , with a crew of 13 men , sailing from New Orleans to Havana with a cargo of lumber . In late 1800 or early 1801 Lowestoffe captured a Spanish brig ( name unknown ) of 110 tons , laden with sugar and staves .

Between 2 and 4 October Lowestoffe survived a hurricane that badly damaged numerous British warships . The hurricane also caused Barbadoes , Scarborough and Victor to founder , i.e. , to be

lost at sea with all hands .

Captain Christopher Parker transferred into Diamond on 1 November 1780 , Captain James Cornwallis briefly to replace him on Lowestoffe . Cornwallis requested and received a transfer to HMS Badger five weeks later . His successor was Captain Thomas Haynes . Under Haynes , Lowestoffe and Janus captured the sloop Dispatch , Giles Sagg , Master , on 18 January 1781 , off Heneauge . She was 60 tons , and carried four guns and a crew of 14 men . She was on her way from Port au Prince to Philadelphia with a cargo of coffee and sugar .

Haynes left in May 1781 to take over the 64 gun third rate Ruby . Her next captain was George Stoney , with Captain Thomas Windsor replacing him on 31 January 1782 . Windsor sailed Lowestoffe home and paid her off at Portsmouth . She was laid up there for nine months , before being moved to the River Thames .

== The years of peace ==

Robert Batson , of Limehouse carried out a great repair on Lowestoffe between July 1783 and March 1786 . She returned to service in the English Channel in October 1787 under Captain Edmund Dodd . She sailed to the Mediterranean in May 1788 , before returning to Britain where Captain Robert Stopford briefly took command in November 1790 . Lowestoffe was paid off later that year and was fitted out at Plymouth between July 1792 and January 1793 . Lowestoffe was then recommissioned in December 1792 under Captain William Wolseley .

== French Revolutionary War ==

Wolseley sailed to the Mediterranean in May 1793 , joining Hood 's fleet then blockading Toulon . She joined a flying squadron under Commodore Robert Linzee to act against French forces in the Mediterranean . On 30 September 1793 , Commodore Robert Linzee took his squadron , including Lowestoffe , into the Gulf of San Fiorenzo to attack the redoubt of Forneilli on Corsica . Lowestoffe fired two broadsides at a tower at Mortella Point that protected the deep entrance to the gulf . The fire caused the tower 's French defenders to abandon the tower and its three guns , allowing a landing party from Lowestoffe under the command of Lieutenants Francis Annesley and John Gibb to capture the tower . Linzee , however , delayed his assault on the city until he could bring his larger ships into action . These larger ships bombarded the town from 1 October , but sustained considerable damage from the garrison , which forced Linzee to withdraw .

Lowestoffe remained in the area , supporting British operations against the French garrisons on Corsica during 1794 . On 7 March 1794 Captain Charles Cunningham took over command from Wolseley . A little over a month later , on 13 April Lowestoffe captured the Etoile du Nord . HMS Dido , Aimable and Imperieuse shared in the capture . Lowestoffe then was among the British warships that shared in the capture , on 24 May , of the French brigs Jacobin and Natine .

Captain Benjamin Hallowell replaced Cunningham on 12 August . Hallowell commanded Lowestoffe during the Naval Battle of Genoa on 14 March 1795 , during which she received some damage from long range shots from the French fleet . Captain Robert Gambier Middleton replaced Hallowell in June 1795 .

== Dido and Lowestoffe defeat Minerve and Artémise ==

Admiral Hotham then sent Lowestoffe , and the 28 gun Dido under Captain George Henry Towry to reconnoitre the French fleet at Toulon . While off Minorca on 24 June 1795 the two frigates encountered two French frigates , the 42 gun Minerve and the 36 gun Artémise . The French were initially wary , but when they realised that they were larger and stronger than the British vessels , the French captains manoeuvred to attack . Minerve attempted to run down Dido but when Dido turned to avoid the impact Minerve 's bowsprit became entangled in Dido 's rigging , costing Dido her mizzenmast and colours . Lowestoffe came along the port side of the Frenchman to discharge a broadside that carried away Minerve 's foremast and topmasts , crippling her .

Lowestoffe pursued the retreating Artémise , which eventually escaped . Lowestoffe returned to Minerve , firing on her until she struck . Lowestoffe had three men wounded , the Dido six killed and 15 wounded . Minerve lost about 10 percent of her crew of over 300 men . The British took Minerve into service as the 38 @-@ gun frigate HMS Minerve . The weight of Minerve 's broadside alone was greater than that of the two British frigates together , making the battle a notable victory ; the Royal Navy duly awarded the two captains a Naval Gold Medal each . In 1847 , Naval General Service Medals with clasps " Lowestoffe 24 June 1795 " or " Dido 24 June 1795 " were awarded to six surviving crew members .

= = Later service = =

Captain Robert Plampin relieved Middleton in December 1795 , going on to serve with a squadron under Thomas Troubridge . After a refit in Britain , Lowestoffe escorted convoys in the West Indies .

On 14 September 1796 she captured the Lesou . Lowestoffe was also among the vessels that in late 1799 captured the Spanish Letter of Marque Navarra ( alias Diligent ) . Diligent was of 150 tons and was armed with eight guns . She was sailing from Bilboa to Veracruz with a cargo of wine , iron and writing paper . Lowestoffe also shared in the capture of the Spanish " zartan " Ambrosia , which was sailing from Cadiz for Veracruz with a cargo of 26 @.@ 5 tons of quicksilver and 10 tons of writing paper . Lowestoffe alone captured the Spanish brig San Francisco , of 90 tons , sailing from Campeachy to Havana with a cargo of sugar and logwood .

= = Loss = =

Lowestoffe sailed from Kingston , Jamaica on 22 July 1801 , and met a convoy five days later at Port Antonio . The escorts consisted of Lowestoffe , Acasta the sloop Bonetta , and the schooners Muskito and Sting .

While Lowestoffe was sailing through the Caicos passage late on 10 August , Pamplin realised that the strong currents known to run through the channel had reversed direction and Lowestoffe was running into shallow waters . He attempted to avoid grounding , but to no avail , and the Lowestoffe ran broadside onto Little Inagua ( ? Heneaga ? ) Island . The crew threw stores and equipment overboard to lighten the ship , and boats came from other ships in the convoy to try to pull her off . The attempts to refloat her failed and her crew abandoned her by mid @-@ afternoon . The only casualties were five men who drowned when their boat capsized in the surf . The change in currents also caused the wreck of five merchantmen . In the late afternoon of 11 August Acasta left Bonetta and three of her own boats to help the wrecked vessels and then took command of the convoy .

The subsequent court @-@ martial at Port Royal on 3 September ruled that a sudden change in the current after dark had caused the loss . The board acknowledged that Pamplin had sailed in a judicious manner and exonerated Pamplin and his officers of blame both for the loss of Lowestoffe and the vessels in convoy .

In April 1803 the officers and crew of Lowestoffe and of Bonetta received payment for the salvage of the specie that Lowestoffe was carrying .