

= Hugh Downman =

Hugh Downman (c . 1765 ? 4 January 1858) 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 Admiral .

Downman spent most of the American War of Independence as a midshipman , with a spell in French captivity after his ship was wrecked off the coast of Ushant while chasing an enemy frigate . He was promoted to lieutenant shortly before the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars and served with distinction during operations in the Mediterranean . Downman served under several Admirals , and fought with Jervis at Battle of Cape St Vincent . Shortly after the battle he was rewarded with his own command , going on to capture several privateers and fighting off an attack by a larger vessel . Promoted to post @-@ captain and given a frigate to command , he operated in the Mediterranean and performed services for the nobles and monarchs of the Italian states . Downman went on to command several ships of the line , often as a flag @-@ captain , and took part in the capture of the Cape Colony and operations on the Río de la Plata .

Left without active employment after the end of the wars with France , he briefly returned to service in 1824 @.@ before being promoted to flag rank the following year . Downman continued to rise through the ranks , reaching the rank of full admiral before his death in 1858 .

= = Family and early life = =

Hugh Downman was born in Plympton , Devon around 1765 . His uncle was Dr Hugh Downman , a physician and poet , who obtained for his nephew an offer to serve aboard the 32 @-@ gun HMS Thetis as a midshipman . Downman took up the offer , joining the ship , which was then under the command of Captain Mitchell Graham , on 10 October 1776 . He served aboard Thetis for the next two years , leaving the ship in August 1778 and joining HMS Arethusa . The Arethusa was wrecked off Ushant on 19 March 1779 while chasing a French ship , and Downman and the rest of the crew were taken prisoner by the French . Exchanged in January 1780 Downman went on to serve aboard HMS Emerald under Captain Samuel Marshall , before moving into the 74 @-@ gun HMS Edgar in May 1782 . Edgar at this time was flying the broad pennant of Commodore William Hotham , and in October that year was part of the fleet sent out under Lord Howe to relieve Gibraltar . In the brief encounter with the Spanish fleet that followed on 20 October Edgar had six men wounded .

= = French Revolutionary Wars = =

Little is known of Downman 's activities during the years of peace that followed , until his appearance in February 1789 with the fleet despatched to the East Indies under Commodore William Cornwallis . Cornwallis promoted him to lieutenant while serving in the East Indies on 5 March 1790 . He returned to England at the start of 1793 . With the commencement of the French Revolutionary Wars , Downman joined the 74 @-@ gun HMS Alcide and went out to the Mediterranean , where served with Commodore Robert Linzee 's squadron . He was present at the occupation of Toulon and assisted in the attack on the tower and redoubt at Fornelli in September 1793 . While helping in the reduction of Corsica , Downman cut out a French gunboat from under the guns of a battery at St Fiorenzo , and later led a party of 100 seamen and marines in scaling a cliff to place a gun overlooking the enemy 's defences . For these actions he received the thanks of Lieutenant @-@ General David Dundas .

Linzee was advanced to rear @-@ admiral on 11 April 1794 and shifted his flag to the 98 @-@ gun HMS Windsor Castle , bringing Downman with him as his second lieutenant . He was then moved into the 100 @-@ gun HMS Victory , the flagship of Admiral Lord Hood , and returned with Hood to England . Hood was preparing to return to the Mediterranean aboard Victory , when on 2 May he was ordered to strike his flag . Victory then went out to the Mediterranean as a private ship , whereupon she became the flagship of Rear @-@ Admiral Robert Mann , and then Sir John Jervis . Under Mann Downman saw action at the Naval Battle of Hyères Islands on 13 July 1795 , and

under Jervis he was at the Battle of Cape St Vincent on 14 February 1797 .

= = Command = =

= = = Speedy = = =

Several months after Cape St Vincent , on 20 July , Downman was promoted to the rank of commander and appointed to command the 14 @-@ gun brig HMS Speedy . He made several cruises with Speedy , capturing a number of enemy vessels . On 3 February 1798 she encountered the large enemy privateer Papillon , mounting 18 guns and carrying 160 men , while sailing off Vigo . The Papillon attacked Speedy , which had a reduced crew owing to her master Mr Marshall , and 12 men , being absent in command of a prize Speedy had taken earlier . The two ships fought each other for two days , and by the second Downman had exhausted his supply of shot , and resorted to firing nails and pieces of iron hoop at his opponent . Having observed the difficulty his captain was in , Master Marshall secured the Spanish crew of his prize below deck , and then took the prize crew off in a small boat to come to Downman 's assistance . After a fierce fight the Papillon was driven off , with Speedy suffering losses of five killed and four wounded . Downman then recaptured his prize that the master had been compelled to abandon , and returned to Lisbon to carry out repairs . During his time in command of Speedy Downman captured five privateers , altogether mounting 17 guns and 28 swivels , and carrying 162 men . For his efforts protecting British trade out of Oporto , the merchants presented him with a letter of thanks , and a piece of plate valued at £ 50 .

= = = Santa Dorothea = = =

As a reward for his good service Downman was advanced to post @-@ captain on 26 December 1798 and was appointed to command the 32 @-@ gun HMS Santa Dorothea , a frigate that had recently been captured from the Spanish . On 28 November that year Santa Dorothea , operating in company with HMS Perseus , HMS Strombolo and HMS Bulldog captured the 16 @-@ gun San Leon on the Lisbon station . Captain William Brown was to have succeeded Downman in 1799 , but he was given another ship instead , and Downman retained Santa Dorothea . He cut out vessels from Bordiguera on 11 January 1800 and Hospitallier on 11 February 1800 , before taking command of a small squadron blockading Savona . The town surrendered after 41 days , on 15 May . Downman then destroyed all the fortifications on the Gulf of Spezia . He went on to land the Duke of Savoy at Naples and evacuated the gallery of Florence to Sicily , ahead of the invading French . For his services to the monarchies of Italy he received several presents of money and rings . In July 1801 he conveyed troops to Egypt and received the Order of the Crescent . Also during this time Downman captured three vessels sailing from Egypt carrying General Dessaix and some of Napoleon 's staff .

= = = Caesar , Diomede and Diadem = = =

Downman then took command of the 80 @-@ gun HMS Caesar , which was then the flagship of Sir James Saumarez on the Lisbon station . Downman was flag @-@ captain to Saumarez until Caesar was paid off at Portsmouth on 23 July 1802 . Saumarez then requested Downman to serve as his flag @-@ captain aboard the 50 @-@ gun HMS Diomede on the Guernsey station , where he spent the next 14 months . In November 1805 he took command of the 64 @-@ gun HMS Diadem , flying the broad pennant of Commodore Sir Home Popham . He was supported the operations under Lieutenant @-@ General Sir David Baird to capture the Cape Colony , and landed in Table Bay at the head of a party of marines and two howitzers . He was sent home with the despatches announcing the capture of the colony , after which he was sent out to the Rio de la Plata , where he resumed command of his old ship , Diomede . Downman supported the British assaults , and was present at the capture of Montevideo . After this he returned home , carrying General William

Beresford . Diomedé was paid off in September 1807 , and Downman went ashore .

= = = Prison ships and Princess Charlotte = = =

Downman 's next appointment was to superintend the prison ships moored at Portsmouth , a task he carried out until January 1811 , when he was given another seagoing command , the 74 @-@ gun HMS Princess Carolina and attached to the fleet in the North Sea . He took part in the destruction of the 40 @-@ gun French frigate Amazone off Cape Barfleur , conveyed a fleet of East Indiamen to Madeira and carried out cruises in the North Sea . In November 1813 he landed marines at Scheveningen in support of the Prince of Orange , and went on to visit Spitsbergen . Princess Carolina was paid off in 1814 and Downman spent the next ten years with no active service .

= = Later years , family and legacy = =

Downman briefly returned to active service in 1824 , taking command of the 74 @-@ gun HMS Windsor Castle . He commanded her until being promoted to flag rank in May 1825 . He was advanced to vice @-@ admiral in 1837 and a full admiral in 1847 . From 1851 he received a service pension of £ 150 a year . On 4 January 1858 , he died at his seat in Hambledon , Hampshire .

Downman married Dorothea Palmer , the youngest daughter of Peter Palmer of Portsmouth on 23 June 1803 . The couple had a son , the Reverend Hugh Downman , and two daughters , Dorothea Frances and Caroline . Caroline married Edward Hale and had two sons , Henry George Hale who joined the navy , and William Godfrey Hale , who joined the army . Henry Hale distinguished himself in the Baltic campaign during the Crimean War and was twice mentioned in despatches by Vice @-@ Admiral Richard Saunders Dundas . Lieutenant @-@ General T. Downman , superintendent at Woolwich , was a first @-@ cousin of Admiral Hugh Downman .

Politically Downman was an ardent supporter of Whig Charles James Fox and opposed the Melvilles , Henry and his son Robert , who were for a number of years powerful at the Admiralty . Downman attributed this political interest as being the cause of his period of unemployment after having reached flag @-@ rank . He was described as a " strict disciplinarian , but an accomplished gentleman ; well @-@ read ... [and] temperate ... " Whilst serving in the Mediterranean he was apparently especially disliked by Emma Hamilton , with Downman 's obituary noting that " from this fact some slight judgement of his character may be formed . "