THE LIMNER COMPANY



NATHANIEL HONE (1718 - 1784)

Portrait miniature of Rear-Admiral Richard Tyrell (1691-1766), wearing naval uniform and powdered wig

Circa: Dated 1766

Dated 1766

Watercolour on ivory

Ivory licence number: B1XFLZJT

Set into a gold ring with diamond border (ring size8 US/Q UK)

Signed and dated ‘NH/ 1766’

Oval, 1 ½ in (18 mm) high

Richard Tyrell was born in Dublin in 1691, his Irish roots likely the reason for commissioning Dublin-born Nathaniel Hone to paint this intimate portrait. He was the nephew of Sir Peter Warren (1703-1752), acclaimed naval officer, known for his capture of the French fortress of Louisbourg in 1745, and politician who represented the House of Commons as the representative for the constituency of Westminster. Tyrell followed in his uncle’s naval footsteps later in his life and spent most of his career in the West Indies. In 1747, he married Mrs Russell Chester, née Tankard, a wealthy widow.

His first post came late in life - as a Lieutenant in 1741, aged 50, on HMS Launceston under his uncle’s command. Tyrell soon established his naval prowess and potential as a leader and in 1743, he was promoted to Captain and replaced Warren. The following year saw Tyrell transferred to the West Indies where his success continued and after a series of different posts, became Rear Admiral of the White in October 1762. Tyrell died in 1766 of fever onboard HMS Princess Louisa and was buried at sea. An extraordinary memorial in the south nave aisle of Westminster Abbey commemorates his life and achievements.

The present miniature was painted in 1766 by Hone presumably as a memorial piece as he died that same year. It appears to have been based on an impressive portrait by Thomas Hudson dating 1759-62. Now held in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the three-quarter length portrait portrays Tyrell in flag officer's full-dress uniform, with an ornate gold brocade, and a tie wig, holding a telescope in his left hand. Interestingly, there are signs that the portrait originally depicted Tyrell as a Captain and it appears therefore that it was altered on his appointment as Rear Admiral.