THE LIMNER COMPANY



ROBERT BOWYER (c.1758 - 1834)

Portrait miniature of Sir Andrew Snape Douglas (1761-1797) in naval uniform

Circa: circa 1780-1783

circa 1780-1783

Watercolour on ivory (licence EFCH7CPN)

Oval, 34 mm (1 ⅜ in) high

Gold frame with seed pearl surround

Captain Sir Andrew Snape Douglas (1761-1797), shown here in naval uniform, was born in Edinburgh to William Douglas of Springfield and his wife Lydia, the first daughter of Robert Hamond, a merchant and shipowner in London. Douglas is best known for his service in the Royal Navy during the American War of Independence and the French Revolutionary Wars.

Shortly after his father's death in 1770, a young Andrew joined his maternal uncle Captain Sir Andrew Snape Hamond (1738-1828) aboard the *Arethusa* to sail to North America. There they travelled the coast, familiarising themselves with the coastline and its harbours. Douglas then spent time in the West Indies, before returning to join his uncle on the *Roebuck* in 1775 at the outbreak of the American War of Independence.

Douglas was commissioned lieutenant on 23rd April 1778 and later promoted to master and commander on 16th February 1780 and then post captain on 15th May of that year. The uniform he wears most closely resembles the full-dress coat of a Commander or a Captain of less than three years' seniority,[1] suggesting that this portrait miniature dates to sometime after his promotion to Commander and before May 1783, when he would have become a Post Captain of more than three years seniority. Perhaps the portrait was commissioned to celebrate his marriage to Anne Burgess of New York in

His achievements during the American War of Independence were extensive. For example, he took command of a floating battery at the Siege of Charlestown (now Charleston), and after the town fell is when he was made post captain and appointed to the captured American frigate *Providence*.[2] He then became commander of the *Roebuck* in April 1780, capturing the American ships the *Confederacy* and the *Protector* in April and May 1781.[3] Douglas was then made captain of the Chatham in July 1781, with which he took the French ship *La Magicienne* off the coast of Boston in September of that year, a move which saved British mast ships on the St John River from an attack planned by the French. [4]

During peacetime, Douglas studied naval architecture at Chatham dockyard, later serving in the Mediterranean and the Channel. While in the Channel, his command the *Southampton* was made guardship at Weymouth where he had the honour of taking King George III for his first voyage on a warship.[5] Afterwards, on 13 September 1789, the king appointed Douglas a knight bachelor.[6] Also in 1789, Douglas and his uncle served on the court for the court martial of the infamous Bounty Mutineers.[7] In fact, both of their signatures can be spotted on the final page of the verdict.[8]

On the French declaration of war in February 1793, Douglas was appointed to command the *Phaeton*, later moving to the *Queen Charlotte* as flag captain in April 1794. It was on this ship that he fought in the battle of the Glorious First of June in 1794, remaining on deck even after sustaining a head injury that would eventually prove to be fatal.[9] Douglas was struck in the forehead by a piece of grapeshot, a kind of cannon ammunition made up of a cluster of small iron or lead balls. He continued to fight afterwards:

‘[He] ordered the tourniquet to be applied… even with a piece of the shot still remaining in it: and in that state, holding the tourniquet with one hand, and grasping his speaking trumpet with the other, he instantly returned to the quarter-deck; where a gloominess and even a despair prevailed, which his activity and unparalleled exertions soon dissipated’.[10]

This famous battle and Douglas’s role in it, were immortalised in a painting by Mather Brown and a print which resulted from a collaboration of artists and engravers, including the miniaturist Robert Bowyer (circa 1758-1834). The painting, which now resides in the collection of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich [BHC2740], shows Douglas on the far right struggling to stand after receiving that grave blow to the head. The print, a version of which is in the National Portrait Gallery in London [NPG D15177], displays the portraits of the figures instrumental in the victory, including Douglas (shown in the bottom section, second from the left on the third row from the top). Robert Bowyer is known to have produced portraits for prints like this, with one particularly impressive example being the members of the House of Commons during the session of 1821-3, a version of which is in the British Museum [1927,0107.7].

Douglas’s head wound continued to trouble him,[11] eventually forcing him to come ashore. In June 1797, Douglas passed away at thirty-five years of age. Following his death, King George III apparently requested a bust of him, so the late captain’s uncle brought one to the Queen’s house on a Sunday and placed it in a room where the king and his family would pass on their way back from the chapel. The king recognised the bust and placed it on one of his bookcases after showing it to his family. [12]

We are grateful to Stephen Wood for his assistance in identifying this sitter's uniform.

[1] One cannot say with certainty his rank in this portrait miniature, seeing as the cuff detail and buttons differentiated a Commander from a Junior Captain at that time, and neither are visible here.

[2] Letter from Douglas to his uncle dated to 23 November 1796 on board the *Queen Charlotte*, printed in *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 25 (London: Joyce Gold, 1811), p. 354.

[3] Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714-1792: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates* (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2007), p. 176.

[4] Nicholas Tracy, *Who's who in Nelson's Navy: 200 Naval Heroes* (London: Chatham, 2006), p. 120.

[5] Douglas to his uncle, 23 November 1796, in *Naval Chronicle*, vol. 25, p. 354.

[6] Tracy, *Who's who in Nelson's Navy*, p. 120.

[7] For a transcription of the trial, see *The Court-Martial of the "Bounty" Mutineers* (Edinburgh; London: W. Hodge & Co, 1931).

[8] *'A.S. Hamond'* and *'A.S. Douglas'* in image from Douglas O. Linder, "Verdict and Sentence in the Court-Martial of the Bounty Mutineers," *Famous Trials: Accounts and Materials for 100 of History's Most Important Trials*, https://famous-trials.com/bounty/390-verdict. https://famous-trials.com/bounty/390-verdict.

[9] Tracy, *Who's who in Nelson's Navy*, pp. 120-121.

[10] *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 25, p. 362.

[11] He said in a letter to his uncle on 22 September 1794 (printed in *The Naval Chronicle,* vol. 25, 363) : “As to myself, I am quite well; but my head is still troublesome, and there is a small piece of iron, or bone, to come away, which will take time; for it cannot be moved by the probe”.

[12] *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 25, p. 382.